



Lithuania: The 2023 documentary film – The Secrets of the Great Synagogue of Vilna – can now be viewed free online

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We have posted a number of times about the extraordinary discoveries archaeologists have made over the past few years at the site of the destroyed Great Synagogue in Vilnius, Lithuania. Now the 2023 documentary film about the excavations and discoveries — The Secrets of the Great Synagogue of Vilna, by Loïc Salfati — can be viewed for free in full, online, on Vimeo.

The film has been described as “both an archaeological adventure and a historical investigation.” It follows the 2019 and 2021 archaeological excavation campaigns day by day.

The Great Synagogue was built in the early 1600s in Renaissance-Baroque style. It became the center of Jewish life in Vilnius (Vilna), towering over the Shulhoyf, a teeming complex of alleyways and other Jewish community buildings and institutions including 12 synagogues, ritual baths, the community council, kosher meat stalls, the Strashun library, and other structures and institutions.

It was ransacked and torched by the Nazis in World War II, and the postwar Soviet regime torn down the ruins and in the 1950s built a school on the site.

Archaeologists have been excavating at the site since 2016, after first preparing the way with ground-penetrating radar scans.

Major finds have included the foundations of the Ark and the Bimah, as well as the discovery of two ritual baths (mikvehs), and remains of the polychrome decorated floor and walls of the main prayer hall, huge collapsed columns, and other evidence of “the intensity of the destruction of the synagogue.”

The excavations have been carried out on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Association of Lithuanian Archeology (Kultūros paveldo Išsaugojimo sąjoka), the Good Will Foundation, and the Jewish Community of Lithuania.

To see the full documentary, [go here...](#)

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