The Tomaszow-Lubelski Memorial Book

ספר זכרון דקהילה קדושה טאמאשאוו- לובעלסקי



Joseph M. Moskop, Editor

The Editorial Committee
Sh. Licht, Joseph Moskop, Moshe Gordon, Fishl Hammer (Nat), Shammai Drilman

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Dedication

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

בֶּן־אָדָם הַתִּחְיֶינָה הָעַצְמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה

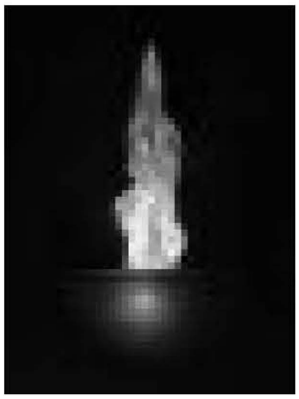


וְאֹמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אַתָּה יָדָעְתָּ׃

ב״ה



Happy Sixtieth Anniversary to
The Jewish State of Israel!



The rubric of the dedication begins with an excerpt from Ezekiel's vision
in the Valley of Bones (Ezekiel 37:3), where the Lord asks him:

He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

This is followed by one of the many images of the grisly slaughter of Jews by the Nazis

Below this, is Ezekiel's reply:

And I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."

The use of Hebrew *gematria* (counting of the value of letters) would normally
elicit the use of the Hebrew letter *Samakh*, whose numerical value is sixty.

However, in this case, we resort to the more symbolically significant
combination of a *Nun* and *Yud* (fifty plus ten).
The *roshei tevot* (abbreviation) *Nun-Yud* traditionally connotes the words
Nayro Ya'ir – May his (their) candle continue to shed light

Below this, we display the flag of the State of Israel,
battle-worn, not unlike Old Glory flying over Fort Sumter

It symbolizes our wish – nay – fervent hope, that the Jewish State, reborn from
the ashes of the death of its people in Eastern Europe, will continue to shed its light
on all of us, in the same hope that we ask God to shed his grace on us.

Supporters Honor Roll

The following members of our extended family of landsleit, friends and well-wishers, provided financial contributions to help make the publication of this book possible. Their generosity assures the preservation of this heritage for future generations, by which they have earned a large measure of our collective gratitude.

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Table of Contents

Translator's Foreword. xv

Foreword. 1

The Yizkor Book Committee in New York. 4

Members of *Va'ad Sefer HaYizkor* in Israel. 4

A Few Words to the Reader. . . . . **By J. Moskop** 5

A Headstone for Our City. . . . . **By Rae Fust** 9

The History of Jews in Tomaszow-Lubelski. . . . . **By Mordechai W. Bernstein** 10
- Introduction. 10
- Beginning of the Settlement. 11

The First Jews in Tomaszow. 13
- The Privilege of the Tomaszow Jews. 15
- Jewish Barber-Surgeons (Physicians) in Tomaszow. 20
- Jewish Tradespeople in Tomaszow. 22
- Contentious Relations between the Jews and Poles in Tomaszow. 23
- Comparative Data about the Jews in Different Time Periods. 25

The Martyr, R' Pinchas of Tomaszow, ה"יד. 27

The Girl Martyr. . . . . **By Sh. Lemar** 28

The Synagogue. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 29

The *Pinkas* of the Synagogue. . . . . **By Shmuel Eliezer Branner** 34

My Grandfather R' Pinchas, and the Seat of Elijah in the Tomaszow Synagogue. . . . . **By Rae Fust-Lehrer** 36

The Synagogue and the *Bet HaMedrash*. . . . . **By Israel Zilberman** 38

Nahum the *Shammes*, ה"יד. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 39

The *Mishna* Study Group in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*. . . . . **By Aharon Pitluck** 40

Jews of the *Bet HaMedrash*. . . . . **By Shmuel Elazar Branner** 41

The Belz *Shtibl* and its Influence in Tomaszow. . . . . **By Asher Reis** 42

Sanz-Cieszanow *Shtibl*. . . . . **By Y. Nierengang** 46
- The Study of Torah. 46
- The Curriculum. 47
- The Sabbaths & Festivals. 47
- Charity & Good Deeds. 47
- Guests. 48

Books. . . . 48
Agudah Activities. . . . 48
The Dress. . . . 49
The Worshipers of the Sanz *Shtibl*. . . . 49

The Chelm *Shtibl*. . . . **By Zusha Kawenczuk** 50

The *Hevra Kadisha*. . . . **By Joseph Moskop** 52

Memories of Tomaszow. . . . **By Mikhl Weinblatt** 55
Linat HaTzedek. . . . 55
The Ritual Slaughterer from Markuszow. . . . 55
The Collection Box of Rabbi Meir *Baal HaNess*. . . . **By Sh. Leibowitz** 55

The Rabbis of Tomaszow. . . . **By Sh. Licht** 57

The Rabbi of CieszanowRabbi, R' Aryeh Leibusz Rubin, k"mz. . . . **By Y. Weintraub** 60

The *Tashlikh* River. . . . **By Rae Lehrer Fust** 62

A Few Facts about My Family from Tomaszow. . . . **By Isaac Bashevis** 64

My *Shtetl* Rising. . . . **By Rae Fust** 68

Tomaszow – Before The First World War. . . . **By Moshe Garzytzensky** 69
The *Rebbe*, R' Mendele זי"ל. . . . 70
R' Hirsch Tomashover זי"ל. . . . 76
Rabbi Yehoshua'leh Tomashover זי"ל. . . . 76
My Grandfather. . . . 78
Rabbi R' Shmuel Singer זצ"ל. . . . 81

My Father. . . . 81

Rabbi Chaim Aharon Zvi Shidkovsky זי"ל. . . . 84

Spring in Tomaszow. . . . **A. H.** 93

The Jewish Way of Life in Tomaszow. . . . **By Joseph Moskop** 94

The Tomaszow Box Factories. . . . **By Rae Fust** 103

My Father's Factory. . . . **By Rachil Fust-Lehrer** 105

The Bulak-Balakhovich Pogroms in Tomaszow-Lubelski. . . . **By M. Zeldin** 109
Document Number 1. . . . 110
Document Number 2. . . . 110
Document Number 3. . . . 112
Document Number 4. . . . 112
Document Number 5. . . . 113
Document Number 6. . . . 113
Document Number 7. . . . 113

Document Number 9. . . . 114
Document Number 10. . . . 114
Document Number 11. . . . 114
Document Number 12. . . . 115
Letter from the Laszczow and Komarow Communities to the Jews of Tomaszow. . . . 115
Letter from Laszczow. . . . 116
Letter from Komarow. . . . 116

The Re-established, Liberated Poland. . . . **By Shmuel Shiflinger** 118

Halutzim in Tomaszow. . . . **By Fishl Hammer** 120

The War and the Birth of *Tze'irei* Zionist Parties. . . . **By Rae Fust (Lehrer)** 123

The *Bund* Movement in Tomaszow-Lubelsk(i). . . . **By David Geyer** 130
The City Library. . . . 132
The *Bund* Helps to Organize the Polish Workers. . . . 135
Far-Flung Work with the Masses. . . . 136
Youth and Children's Movement. . . . 137
Contentious Relationships in the Surrounding Jewish Area. . . . 137
The Bund Committees. . . . 137

A Gallery of *Bund* Activists in Tomaszow-Lubelski. . . . 138
Yaakov-Shia Grohman. . . . 138
Mordechai Weissberg. . . . 138
Shlomo Lieber. . . . 139
Peltik Lederkremmer. . . . 139
Leibusz Kaffenbaum. . . . 140
Shevakh Kornworcel. . . . 140
Nahum Schuldiner. . . . 141
Koppel Szpizajzen. . . . 141

Histadrut 'Tze irei HaMizrahi' in Tomaszow. . . . **By Nahum Ratzimer** 143

The Establishment of the *HaShomer HaTza'ir* Chapter in Tomaszow-Lubelski. . . . **By David Y. Levenfus** 146

A Short Overview of 'The Working of the Land of Israel' in Tomaszow. . . . 148

The '*Agudah*,' Its Establishment and Development. . . . **By Rabbi Yitzhak Meir Gartler** 153

The *Agudah* Movement. . . . **By Sh. Licht** 156
Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael. . . . 156
Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael. . . . 156
Poalei Agudat Yisrael. . . . 157
*Heder Yodei HaTorah*157
Beth Yaakov. . . . 157

A Monument to Unforgettable Friends. . . . **By Isaac Krass** 158
Israel Pearl. . . . 158
Mordechai Ganzer. . . . 158
Yitzhak Meir Pflug. . . . 158

Sinai Stender. 159
Leib'l Lehrer 159
Leib'l Mermelstein. 159

The *Agudah* Boycott. . . . . **By Sh. L.** 161

The Leftist Movement in Tomaszow. . . . . **By Leah Friedlander** 162

The Jewish Youth in the City Tomaszow Lubelski. . . . . **By Pinchas Ehrlich** 165

The *Yavneh* School. . . . . **By Aryeh Arbesfeld** 173

The Leaders of *Mizrahi*. . . . . **By Ch. Y. Lehrer** 177
First and Foremost, R' Eliezer Lederkremmer. 177
R' Sholom Zilberman, הי"ד. 178
R' Benjamin Tepler, הי"ד. 178
R' Mordechai Ratzimer, הי"ד. 179
R' Mordechai Blank הי"ד. 179
R' Pinchas Brass, הי"ד. 180
R' Nahum Dov Glas , הי"ד. 180
R' Yaakov Arbesfeld , הי"ד. 180

The Yeshiva of Novardok. . . . . **By Joseph Friedlander** 182

Bread for the Poor. 185
Objective of the Organization. 185
Sources of Income. 185
Distributing the Products. 186

Taharat Israel. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 187
Stores. 189
The Spoldzielnia. 190
The '*Liatnicze Brigada*' (The Flying Brigade). 190
The Tricks of the Flying Brigade. 191
Retail Stores. 191
Saloons. 193
Soda Stands and Confectioneries. 193
The Bitter Circumstances of the Storekeepers. 194
The Relationship of the Polish Authorities to the Jewish Storekeeper. 194
The Tax Authority (*Urzad Skarbowy*). 194
The Tax Authority Staff. 194
The Jewish Quandary. 196
The Jewish Craftsmen. 197
The Social Improvement!. 197
The Bank of the Manual Tradespeople. 198
Tailors. 198
Shoemakers 199
Glaziers. 199
Hat Makers. 199

The High Level of Jewish Work. . . . 199
The Spiritual and Religious State of the Jewish Worker. . . . 200
Concerning the Religious Side. . . . 200
Sabbath at the Time of '*Shaleh-shudes*'. . . . 200
Youth. . . . 201
The New Registration Laws as a Means to Excise the Jews from the Manual Trades. . . . 201
The '*Spolka* ' (Partnership). . . . 201
Foreign Currency Traders. . . . 204
The Meat Industry. . . . 205
The Tomaszow Porters. . . . 206

Livelihoods. . . . **By A. H.Wroclaw** 210
Ber'leh Katriel's. . . . 210
On the Marketplace. . . . 211
Hilkeh'leh. . . . 213
Deaf Moshe and the Pony. . . . 214

This was Tomaszow. . . . **By Sh. Leibowitz** 216
The Commercial Center. . . . 216
Craftsmen; Free Occupations. . . . 216
The Magistrate. . . . 217
The Way of Living. . . . 217
Religious Life. . . . 217
Rabbis and Yeshiva Headmasters between the Two World Wars. . . . 217
Ritual Slaughterers. . . . 218
The *Shamashim*. . . . 218
Educational Institutions. . . . 218
Secular Studies. . . . 219
Philanthropic and Charitable Institutions. . . . 219
Productive and Economic Institutions. . . . 219
Leisure Amusements of the Young. . . . 219
Emigration. . . . 220

Attributes of our City. . . . **By Sholom Licht** 221

Memories of a Tomaszow Scion. . . . **By Fulya Haut** 228

Our City. . . . **By Yaakov Laneil** 228
The Market. . . . 228
The Houses of Worship. . . . 230

Tomaszow-Lubelski – The City Where I Was Born. . . . **By Mordechai Ehrlich** 233
Sabbath and the Festivals. . . . 234
Educational Institutions. . . . 235
Talmud Torah. . . . 238
Groups and Youth Movements. . . . 238

Elections in the Town. . . . **By Sh. Licht** 240
The B.B.W.R. (Pilsudski's *Sanacja)* and the Jewish Voters. . . . 240

Community Elections. . . . 241
Municipal Council Elections. . . . 243

In Passing. . . . **By Neta Eisen (A. Roum)** 243

The Spiritual State of Tomaszow Jewry. . . . **By Sh. Licht** 245
The Spiritual Nourishment of the Last Era. . . . 246
The Spiritual Situation Up To 1905. . . . 246
New Currents. . . . 247
The Spiritual Revolution. . . . 248

Unique Jewish Sartorial Choices. . . . **By Sh. Leibowitz** 250

The Preparations for Sabbath and Festivals. . . . **By Sh. Leibowitz** 252
Passover Preparations. . . . 254
The Eve of *Shavuot*. . . . 255
The Eve of *Rosh Hashana* & *Yom Kippur*. . . . 256
The Eve of *Sukkot* & *Simchat Torah*. . . . 257
Preparations for Hanukkah & Purim. . . . 257

The Black Pillar. . . . **By Yoss'l Shepsel's** 258

The First and Last Theater Performance on the Sabbath. . . . **By Hirsch Reis** 259

Sabbath and Holiday Time in Tomaszow. . . . **By Kh. Y. Biederman** 261
Erev Shabbat in the City. . . . 262
Kabalat Shabbat. . . . 262
At the *Rebbe's Tisch*. . . . 263
Rosh Hashana to *Tashlikh*. . . . 264
Simchat Torah. . . . 264
The *Siyyum* Celebration of *Daf Yomi*. . . . 265
The Joy of Purim. . . . 265
The *Bet Yaakov* Movement. . . . 266
The *Heder Yesodei HaTorah*. . . . 266
Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael. . . . 267
The Activists Among the Youth. . . . 268
Talmud Torah. . . . 268
The *Shtibl* of R' Nachman Neuhaus ל"ז. . . . 269
The Angel of Death [in the form of] Typhus. . . . 269
The Ger *Shtibl*. . . . 270

The Great Wedding. . . . **By Asher Reis** 272

Reminiscences of Youth. . . . **By Isaac Krass** 274

A Cure for One Who Was Sick. . . . **By Sh. Leibowitz** 275
A Catarrh or Cold. . . . 275
An Evil Eye. . . . 275
Pouring Wax. . . . 276

Broken or Hyper-extended Limbs.. 276
A '*Lemung*'.. 276
Feldscher or Doctor.. 276
Pregnancy.. 277
Birth.. 277
The Seriously Ill. 277
'Tearing In'. 277
Cures & Prayers. 278
Toothaches.. 278
Baby Teeth. 279
Prescriptions.. 279

Memories of My Childhood.. **By Leah Ardinatsky-Barnstein** 280

Unforgettable Impressions. **By Yaakov Minkowsky** 282
The Synagogue. 282
The Situation on the Eve of War. 283
The Institutions and Their Activists. 284
Between the World Wars. 285
The Lesson. 285

A Threnody for Tomaszow.. **By Yaakov Herbstman** 286

The Life and Death of Our *Shtetl*, Tomaszow Lubelski. **By Y. Schwartz** 291
The *Gabbaim* in our Beautiful Synagogue. 291
The Jewish Community. 292
The Free Loan Society Bank. 292
The City Council. 292
Keren-Kayemet. 293
Keren HaYesod. 293
Volks-Bank. 293
The Merchants Union. 293
The Manual Trades Union. 294
Competitors. 294
The Fire Fighters. 294
The *Bund*. 294
The Drama Circle. 294

Little Jewish Snows. **By A. H.** 296

Portraits, Names and Personalities. 297

Shmuel Meldung. **By Sh. Licht** 299
David Schwindler. **By Dov ben David** 299
Noah ben Abraham Herbstman. **By Asher Herbstman** 300
In Memory of my Son, of Moshe ה"יד. **By Zusha Kawenczuk** 300
Avigdor Eidelsberg. **By Sh. Zamoyski** 301
Shlomo Goldzamd. **By Sh. Zamoyski** 301
Moshe Reichenberg. **By Sh. Zamoyski** 302

Pinchas Goldstein. . . . . **By Sh. Zamoyski** 302
Gershon Brand. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 302
Ary' Heller. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 303
Yaak'li Lederkremmer. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 304
Yitzhak Karper. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 304
Sholom Singer. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 305
Yaakov Moshe Guthartz. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 305
Shlomo Akst. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 306
R' David Weitzman. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 307
R' Ben Zion Faber. . . . . **By Sh. L(icht).** 308
Benjamin Weinberg. . . . . **By Sh. Lamed (Licht)** 308

R' Shmuel Putter הי"ד. . . . . **By Leah Moskop (Friedlander)** 310
R' Sinai Putter ז"ל. 311

Yekhezkiel Lehrer and the Krasnobrod *Gasse*. . . . . **By Eli' Lehrer** 313

My Father, R' Shabtai ז"ל. . . . . **By Moshe Friedlander** 316
In Bayrakh'eh's Mill in Belzec. 318

R' Tevel ז"ל. . . . . **By Israel Zilberman** 323

Rabbi Dov Ber'l Fershtman הי"ד. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 325

The Dornfeld Family. . . . . **By Leah Dornfeld** 326
R' Yaakov Mordechai Dornfeld ז"ל. 326

My Father, R' David Tevel Nat, הי"ד. . . . . **By Ephraim Fishl Hammer** 327

My Grandfather and Grandmother ז"ל. . . . . **By Ephraim Fishl Hammer** 329

My Unforgettable Friends. . . . . **By Y. Liebowitz** 331
Moshe Szparer. 331
Mihkl Reis. 331
Henikh Koch. 332
Hertz Feldsehn. 333

To the Memory of My Acquaintances. . . . . **By Sh. Khanowich** 334
Moshe Weissleder. 334
Elazar Ader. 334
Abraham Sztajnworcel. 334
Yaakov Arbesfeld. 335
Dr. Shulman. 335
Advocat Mandeltort. 336
Itcheh Bernstein. 336
Eli' Shtruzler. 337
Ary' Levenfus. 337
Yekhezkiel Kaffenbaum. 337
Eliezer Dorenfeld. 337

Fyvel Holtz. 337
Abraham Yitzhak Blonder. 338

The City Elders. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 339
Old Heschel. 339
Old Yaak'leh. 339
Old Shmuel Mikhl'eh's (Bodenstein). 339

A Headstone for Acquaintances and Friends. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 339
Alter Stahl. 339
R' Nathan Neu. 340
Shmuel Lubert. 340
Eli' Chaim Gershon's. 340
Dud'l Goldstein. 340
Reuveh'leh Chay'tcheh's (Gartler). 341
Pesach Putter. 341
Yisroel'keh Lehrman. 341
Anshel Szur. 342
Eliezer Bergenbaum. 343

Shtibl Youth. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 344
Mott'l Fish. 344
Yekhezkiel'i Zekhari[ah]'s. 344
Yoss'li Gelber. 344

Sinai Friedlander. . . . . **By Leah Hertzig** 345

Frieda Tyerstein. . . . . **By Rekhil Friedlander** 345

Sarah Dvora Friedlander. 346

Meshullam Borg. . . . . **By Y. M.** 346

Personalities. 347

Yoss'l Wassertreger. . . . . **By Sh. Licht** 347

The Matchmaker with the Crooked Head. . . . . **By Ephraim Fishl Hammer (Nad)** 348

Nahum the Blind One. . . . . **By Yaakov Schwartz** 349

"Blind Nahum". . . . . **By A. H.** 351

Crazy Tema'leh. . . . . **By A. H.** 352

Destruction and Annihilation 354

Tomaszow-Lubelski ..... **By Yaakov Schwartz** 355

At the Outbreak of the War ..... **By Shammai Drilman** 357

The First Days of the War in Tomaszow ..... **By Asher Herbstman** 362
The Last Look at My Former City – Tomaszow 365

German Acts of Brutality in the First Days of the War ..... **By Chaim Yehoshua Biederman** 366

The Black Sabbath ..... **By Mordechai Lehrer** 373
The Black Sabbath 373

A Model of Salvations ..... **By Shmuel Ehrlich** 375

The Destruction and Annihilation of My *Shtetl*, Tomaszow-Lubelski ..... **By Sheva Kempinsky-Krieger** 376
The Second *Aktion* 377
The Last *Aktion* 377

My Experiences Under the Germans ..... **By Abraham Singer** 381

I Am the Sole Survivor of My Entire Family ..... **By Chana Ruduler (Krieger)** 391

In the Struggle for One's Life ..... **By Herman & Sabina Keitel** 397

During the Years of Horror ..... **By Rachel Schwartzbaum (Klarman)** 404
My First Fright on the Way from Warsaw to Tomaszow 404
My Arrival in Tomaszow 405
My Lonely Existence in Rawa RuskaUntil the Outbreak of the German-Russian War in June 1941 405
My Return to Tomaszow and My Frightening Experiences 406
I am Slandered as a Communist 407
The *Aktion* in Tomaszow 407
The *Aktion* in Belzec 408
Judenrein 408
My Experiences in Tarnowska 409
In Majdanek 410
In Auschwitz 411
Torture at Work 412
My New Workplace with Better Conditions 413
The Liquidation of the Good Workplaces 414
My New Work in the Union Factory 414
I Am Drawn into the Underground 414
The Judgement 415
The General Evacuation of the Auschwitz Camp 416
Our Wanderings 416
The Liberation 417

My Experiences. . . . . **By Charna Kaufman-Eilen** 419
My Four Good Years in Wloclawek. 419
My Three Frightful Months with the German Executioners. 419
My Husband Flees to Tomaszow. 420
I Go Off To Bialystok. 421
My Life in Russia. 422
Our Return to Poland, and the Effect on Me of the Bad News. 422

On the Waves of the Hitler Storm. . . . . **By Beryl Hirschensohn** 424

A Gentle Christian Woman Saved Me. . . . . **By Chana Szpizajzen-Weissleder** 432

Dark Days In My Life. . . . . **By Feiga Pess'l Bergman** 434

Joel the Wit and His Wartime Experiences. . . . . **Transcribed By Yaakov Schwartz** 437
The Beginning of the War. 438
Yom Kippur in Jarczów. 438
In Lubicz. 439
Back in Tomaszow. 439
In Rawa Ruska. 439
We Travel Voluntarily to Russia 440
The Outbreak of the German-Russian War. 440
In Zmerynka Under the Germans. 441
In the Ghetto Under the Rumanians. 442
A Rumanian-Jewish Doctor – Head of the Ghetto. 442
Dr. Hershman and His Activities. 443
In Brailiv Under the Germans. 445
How We Were Rescued. 446

The Last Times and the Great Miracles in the Ghetto of Zmerynka. 447

The Testimony of Maria Kopiecka. 450

Statistical Inquiry. 451

Translation from Polish. 452

A Few Words About the Questionnaire. . . . . **By Y. Moskop** 453

My Tortured Brothers & Sisters Who Fell In Sanctification of The Name. . . . . **By Yaakov Schwartz** 455

"Bones Lie In Belzec". . . . . **By A. H.** 456

The Sorrowful End of 500 Years of Jewish Settlement in Tomaszow. . . . . **By Sholom Licht** 458
The Beginning of the Destruction. 458
The Anxious Mood. 460
Homes Are Requisitioned. 460
The Bombardment. 460
The Results of the Bombardment. 461

Brought to Rest in Burial. . . . 462
The Entry of the Germans. . . . 462
Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur Under the German Occupation. . . . 463
Interregnum. . . . 463
Under the Russians. . . . 464
The Reason I Left Tomaszow. . . . 464
In Rawa Ruska. . . . 465
The Germans Occupy Tomaszow for the Second Time. . . . 466
Efforts to Obtain Entry Permission from the Russians. . . . 466
A New Delegation is Sent to Lvov (Lemberg). . . . 467
The Fate of the Jews Who Left Tomaszow. . . . 467
The Passport Transaction. . . . 468
The Fate of the Jews Who Remained in Tomaszow. . . . 468
The *Judenrat* . . . 469
Religious Life. . . . 469
During the Difficult Years of Dying . . . 470
The Collaboration of the Poles with the Germans. . . . 470
The Permanent Enmity Towards the Jew. . . . 471
The Ultimate Liquidation. . . . 472
The German Tactic . . . 472
An Example of German Barbarism. . . . 473
An Act of Martyrdom. . . . 473
Jewish Partisans. . . . 474

The Survivors in Russia. . . . **By Chaim Joseph Lehrer** 475
Where Did the Rawa [Ruska] Echelon Go To?. . . . 476
How Did They Survive Living in Russia?. . . . 476
Where Did They Live?. . . . 477
What Did They Live From?. . . . 477
Amnesty for Polish Citizens. . . . 477
The Wandering Through Central Asia. . . . 478
The Situation After Liberation. . . . 478
The First News of the Holocaust. . . . 479
Traveling Back to Poland. . . . 480

At the Site of the Destruction. . . . **By Dov ben David Schwindler** 482

In Tomaszow, After the Holocaust. . . . **By Moshe Taubenblatt** 483

Tomaszow [Jews] After the Holocaust. . . . **By Leah Moskop-Friedlander** 486

The *Tomashover Hilfs Commitet* in New York. . . . 488

The Free Loan Society of the Tomaszow–Lubelski Émigrés. . . . **By Zusha Kawenczuk** 489
R' Abraham Goldschmid ז"ל. . . . 489

The *Yizkor Book* Commission in Israel. . . . **By Yaakov Herbstman** 491
Circular. . . . 493

The Assistance Committee. . . . . **By Yaakov Laneil** 495

The Tomaszow Free Loan Society in Israel. . . . . **By Mordechai ben Ben-Zion Honigsfeld** 496

Tomaszow People in *B'nai Brak*. . . . . **By L. Wermuth** 498

Cornerstone Laying Ceremony for Talmud Torah Kol Ary'. 499

Memories of Tomaszow-Lubelski. . . . . **By Shmuel Shiflinger** 500
A Theater Presentation. 500
Dr. Zawadski. 501
A Victim in Illegally Crossing the Border. 501

The Common Folk Get A Place. . . . . **By Y. Moskop** 502
A Protest Demonstration. 502
The Dispute of the *Shokhtim* and Election of the Spiritual Leader. 503

Necrology. 508

Memorials. 527

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Translator's Foreword

This seventh translation, in a series, provides a memorial to a *shtetl* that is in the ambit of that corner of modern day Southeastern Poland, centered on the city of Zamość. It lies in that politically ambiguous corner of Eastern Europe, where the borders between the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany and Russia were indistinct, and where a Jew could reside in 'Galicia,' but be in any one of several nation states. Tomaszow Lubelski goes by a double name, so that it is not confused with perhaps a half dozen other Polish cities, that have the same name.

This compendium about the *shtetl* of Tomaszow Lubelski offers us a counterpoint to some of the books we have seen to date. It also parallels the prior translation of the *Cieszanow Memorial Book* in depicting a place that was not unusually distinguished, even though it boasted its own share of outstanding Jewish sages, scholars, and men revered for their holiness and piety. Indeed, one of the most prominent of the latter day Chief Rabbis of Tomaszow came there from Cieszanow.

The degree, to which the Tomaszow Lubelski record complements the Cieszanow record, lends credence to very important trends in the Jewish history of those times. Here too, we are told that, even in this seeming backwater, the winds of modernity could not be kept out. Again, there is a testament to younger, and more enlightened age cohorts, as they give battle to their more recalcitrant elders, unwilling to let go of traditions, forged over centuries of placid and relatively static agrarian life, inexorably being swept away by the forces of industrialization and political upheaval. This is a very valuable record, because the tensions, in *shtetl* life that they describe, are often overlooked, or not documented at all, in conventional histories. Accordingly, an unrealistically idealized view of the *shtetl* often emerges, that does not reflect the rough and tumble contest of ideas that was taking place in Eastern Europe in the century prior to, and leading up to, the Holocaust.

While, again, it is true that the tragic outcome of the telling is known in advance, the record is enriched by the endeavor of these writers, to tell this tale from their own unique perspective.

It is also auspicious that this work be completed in the 60th Anniversary year of the establishment of the State of Israel. It is to this event, and the implicit rebirth that the Anniversary heralds, that this work is dedicated

I am indebted to Tomasz Panczyk, late of Rohnert Park, California, and now of Warsaw, Poland, and Leon Szyfer of Vancouver Canada, for their assistance in assuring that my rendition of Polish names and places, transliterated from Yiddish into English, were done correctly. I am also grateful to my wife's cousin, Oskar Kleinberg of Toronto, Canada, for his assistance with the several occurrences of German in the text. Finally, my thanks also go to Yeshaya Metal, the reference desk librarian at YIVO in New York City, who, as usual, was ever ready with a suitable insight regarding the occasional esoteric word that would surface from time to time.

FALL 2008

Jacob Solomon Berger

Tomaszow

Lubelski

טאמאשאוו

לובעלסקי

Verso Smut Page

The Tomaszow-Lubelski Memorial Book

To the memory and honor of the sacred congregation, ה"ד which was cruelly exterminated by all manner of lurid deaths by the German murderers with the assistance of the brutal Polish murderers during the gruesome was years 5700-5705, 1939-1945, along with the six million Jews and thousands of communities throughout the entire European diaspora.

Not to Forget, and Not to Forgive!

Remember What *Amalek* Did to You

Included is the Modern Amalek of the 20th Century, the accursèd Germans along with their helpers.

May the fires of animosity and vengeance burn forever
in our hearts, against the exterminators of our people.

Guard the Sacred Memory of Our Martyrs!

Carry on the Tradition of Our Ancestors, Light the Eternal Memorial Candle in your Heart!
Fulfill the last wish of the martyrs, to continue to promote Jewish existence!

Implant their last will and testament in the hearts of your children, and grandchildren, and thereby assure the continuation of the Jewish people to spite all enemies.

The People of Israel Live!

עם ישראל חי !

Prepared and edited by the Tomashover Yizkor Book Committee
in New York in cooperation with the *Va'ad Le'Ma'an HaSefer*
in Haifa and Published by the Tomashover Relief Committee in New York.

●●●●●

The Yizkor Book Committee in New York

Chaim Yehoshua Biederman
Moshe Gordon
David Geyer
Shammai Drilman
Shimshon Holtz
Fishl Hammer (Nat)
Shlomo Weissleder
Eli' Lehrer
Vova Neu
Rekhil Fust-Lehrer
Jonah Feldsehn
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Va'ad Le'Ma'an HaSefer in Haifa

Yaakov Herbstman
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Yaakov Minkowsky
Yaakov Schwartz

Zusha Kawenczuk

Editorial Committee

Sh. Licht
Moshe Gordon
Joseph Moskop
Fishl Hammer (Nat)

Shammai Drilman

Foreword

Finally, after three sabbatical cycles (e.g. 21 years) since the destruction of Tomaszow, we bring before you the result of ten years of work and strenuousness: here it is, this book, which must serve as memorial and grave marker for the Jewish community in Tomaszow-Lubelski that was cut down.

After the start of the decade of the 1950s, when the survivors of Tomaszow had more-or-less begun to consolidate, and a little bit at a time began to reconstruct their lives in Israel as in America, the compelling demand to permanently memorialize our city was brought out at annual memorial observances by many *landsleit,* as was the case with what many other *landsmanschaften* had done – and in a manner that was most appropriate for The People of the Book – by publishing a Yizkor Book.

The Book and the Sword – both descended on the world – let it be that the people – so brutally cut down by the sword and fire – be committed to eternal memory in a book – in a 'Book-Monument' written by those who escaped the sword, those smoking embers rescued from the fire, and let the shame of the murderers also be placed on a permanent, eternal record there, for condemnation and obloquy for all time to come.

It was not easy to assemble the material, and simple testimony to this is given by the fact that the work to do this went on for over 10 years, and it is only thanks to the patience and forbearance of a few individuals, that the undertaking was, in the end, crowned with success, and it is **you** – the men and women of Tomaszow, that must now provide the evaluation and assessment of this piece of work.

We, representing the Yizkor Book Committee, know that this book could have come out better, but the responsibility for this is not entirely ours – regrettably, many people from Tomaszow were derelict in their responsibility and were either late in providing their memoirs for this Yizkor Book, or failed to do so altogether, which could have enriched the content and the scope of the documentary record that is being placed before you, this, despite the fact that we appealed many times in the press and through special circulars – but the greatest blame can be placed on the scarcity of time, the harried state of mind, and the dispersion [of our townsfolk] – those who survived and remained alive have to work very hard in order to 'make a living,' and so that all our enemies should suffer, also to rebuild new homes, a new future for the Tomaszow communities in Israel and America, and this by itself is a revenge against those who would have wanted to erase the very memory of the Jewish people, so that, God Forbid, there remain no memory of the name of the Jewish people, and let that be an expiation for us and for you as well.

The Jewish settlement in Tomaszow-Lubelski existed for hundreds of years. With their blood, sweat and hard labor, our forbears built up the city for the benefit of the general populace, and especially developed institutions for the Jewish communities, and despite all the predations, decrees and pogroms, during the course of generations, carried on a decent Jewish life, loyal to the authorities and committed to one's neighbor.

The Jewish population of Tomaszow which consisted of poor laborers who did heavy work, small business people, and middle-class merchants, each in his own way, dedicated his assets and worth, his intelligence and energy to build institutions for the benefit of the general populace and to develop good generations of Jews, suffused with the love of Torah and love of the Jewish people, with love and commitment to the Land of Israel, possessed of good deeds, and a gentleness with good Jewish enlightenment and a sense of responsibility for the general welfare, to construct the society with a full-blooded and healthy and vibrant Jewish life.

Jewish Tomaszow in all of its cohorts and groups, could be proud of the fact that among their ranks could be found decent people, idealists and activists, who put the interests of the community ahead of their own. The believed in their work for the community, which they put first, and approached with the full commitment of their soul.

Tomaszow had the privilege of providing great sons to the rest of Jewry, great Torah authorities, world renown personalities whose influence reached far, far away, well beyond its borders, well beyond the borders of Poland, and Europe.

Tomaszow possessed a golden, idealistic youth, full of seething life, and a genuine Jewish pride. With their hard-earned impoverished groschen, the Tomaszow Jews built a beautiful synagogue, houses of study, and other wondrous institutions of education, charity and good will, and everything – the institutions and their builders, the leaders and the employees, the old and the young, all of this, regrettably, was so brutally and murderously brought down, laid waste, and exterminated by the German cannibals with the assistance of our neighbors of so many centuries.

Our streets are wrecked, our home laid waste, our spiritual well springs dried out, and our home tow destroyed and brought to shame.

Our martyrs have no grave markers, their ashes and earthly remains are sown and dispersed over tens of death camps, hundreds of ghettoes and forests, and a danger threatens that the emotional memory of their lives and the deep and restless lonesomeness and pain will, little-by-little ebb from our hearts, and their presence will become erased from our memory.

If there are no graves on which stone markers can be placed, then let the Yizkor Book serve as such a marker, and let it eternalize memories about their lives and activities, their striving and their aspirations, their suffering and their joy, let it bring out moments that reflect their Jewish heart and feeling, their good deeds and charity, let it bring out all of the details of their suffering and tragic denouement in Sanctification of the Name.

And from us, the simple Jews who have contributed and entire year to this book – wether those who lent their intellectual energies, the members of the Yizkor Book committee, or those who provided financial support – have the feeling that with the publication of this book, we fulfill a part of a sacred duty that lays upon the survivors of Tomaszow – the last of those from the generation that come from the period that has been locked away that had so richly referred to itself as Polish Jewry – to describe in writing, and to underscore, through our modest capabilities, everything that we know and remember about existence and struggle, blossoming and destruction of our home city of Tomaszow in the Lublin Province.

A special emphasis has been placed on the last period between the two World Wars, the stormy years of the development of the common Jewish people, and with special consideration for even more details about the tragic years of the Holocaust, of the bitter end.

We provided each and every *landsman* the opportunity to write as he felt, and however he could, in whatever language and form in which it was easier for him to reveal his hidden deeply-rooted memories, to portray types of people and personalities, institutions, societies and individuals, rabbis and community activists, various type of common people, all of whom placed their mark and helped to give form to the Jewish community of Tomaszow, to bring out episodes of commitment and idealism, in order that future generations

have the opportunity to warm themselves at the beautiful 'pillar of fire' which shines down through the generations of the substantive history of Tomaszow-Lubelski.

This *Yizkor Book* is a collective endeavor written by *landsleit* who are not skilled in the literary arts, scattered throughout Israel, America Poland and Argentina. Each, in his own place, and in accordance with his own outlook, produced descriptions and portraits which are close to their respective hearts, indeed, not written in a professional manner, but because of this, are full of heart and longing. Therefore, you must forgive us, if here or there, you find some repetition of the same facts or names. This book does not have the purpose of revealing new material, which was not already known to our *landsleit* – our goal and striving was to emphasize and memorialize that which we know, so that it does not become forgotten and should be secured for the future, and through which a clear and honest picture should be brought out of Tomaszow, along with its institutions and organizations, initiatives and activities, conflicts and struggles, and that, what we know of the frightful suffering and annihilation of the Tomaszow Jews, shall be permanently preserved.

We have not pretended to produce a book prepared along the lines of a rigorous scientifically prepared study, about the history and destruction of the Tomaszow Jews. We are, therefore, satisfied that, with our limited ability, we have been able to gather up simple memories as well as [related] valuable materials, where the personalities, way of life, spiritual physiognomy and economic structure of Tomaszow is portrayed, which the serve the future historian as a basis and source for his research.

We must roll out the scroll of sorrow regarding the great misfortune of the bitter and terrifying Holocaust, and to read it in front of our children from its beginning to its end, with the fullest power of emphasis, and the clearest possible interpretation.

Great difficulties and pitfalls lay in our way towards the implementation of our plan and it demanded great persistence and will, love and faith in the importance of the endeavor, and let here be the place where we express our heartfelt gratitude and recognition to the secretary and backbone of the committee, Mr. Joseph Moskop for his commitment to the Yizkor Book, for the colossal work that he put into it, and very specially for his ceaseless encouragement and invigoration, which, in the end, led to the fact that this book could be published. And also to Mr. Yaakov Schwartz, from *Kiryat Motzkin* in Israel, for his literary assistance. He put in much energy to memorialize the frightening troubles and extermination by getting into personal contact with those living eye witnesses and recorded what they lived through. Also, R' Moshe Gordon, being among the older citizens in America, he was one of the first he was one of the first to direct the editorial work, until he made *aliyah* to Israel – demonstrating much understanding and affection for the book.

For us, brothers and sisters, dear *landsleit*, may this book serve as a memento of our beautiful ideal past, and provide us with an opportunity to unite ourselves with the memory of our dearest and nearest. May it remain a monument to eternalize Jewish Tomaszow.

May this book remain as a spiritual candle for those who were killed and a pillar of fire for those who survived.

May the way of life of our martyrs serve as a tower candle and a pointer that shows the way to our future, [let] their spirit be re-planted and rooted into the young hearts and minds of our future generations to continue forging the golden chain of *Yiddishkeit* forward.

With gratitude, we offer our thanks to The Creator, who, in the final analysis, permitted us to produce this Yizkor Book.

Still and broken, with our heads hung low, we recall, with sacred respect, the souls of our eternally unforgettable dear martyrs – Honor their Memory!

The Jewish Tomaszow of this world, regrettably no longer exists; however, thank God, Jewish Tomaszow children do live, and exist in our holy homeland Israel, under its own independence, and in other free corners of the larger world despite the ire and enmity of all who hate the Jewish people, and of the accursèd German beasts, and we are able, once again, to say in a joyous manner to present the great legacy of our ancestors and we hope that no enemy will ever again have control over us. We are deeply persuaded that the light and spiritual words that the Nation of Prophets has given to the world, will drive off the forces of darkness, wickedness and defilement with which the German Amalek had wreaked havoc, indeed, with the prime objective of eradicating the spirit of Jewry together with its body – **and may all wickedness be consumed in a column of smoke,** and may the ideals of the End of Day come to fruition, when the Jewish people will regain its grandeur and become a light unto the nations, the spiritual standard-bearer and shower of the way for the highest ideals of humanity – **The Eternity of Israel is no Lie!**

We wish to record a special thanks to YIVO in New York for their assistance in providing materials and photographs for this book.

And, above all, to the Tomashover Relief Committee in New York for its positive, warm attitude and financial help which helped make possible the publication of this book.



The Yizkor Book Committee in New York

Page 18: *Top (L to R):* *Eli' Lehrer, Moshe Gordon, Asher Reis, Joseph Moskop*

Bottom (L to R): *Rae Fust-Lehrer, Shimshon Holtz, Chaim Yehoshua Biederman*

Page 19: *Top (L to R):* *Shlomo Weissleder, Vova Neu, Fishl Hammer*

Bottom (L to R): *Shammai Drilman, Jonah Feldsehn, David Geyer*

Members of Va'ad Sefer HaYizkor in Israel

Page 20: *Top (L to R):* *Yaakov Schwartz, Joseph HaLevi Lakhar*

Center: *Zusha Kawenczuk*

Bottom (L to R): *Yaakov Herbstman* *Yaakov Minkowsky*

A Few Words to the Reader

By J. Moskop

With the release of the book that lays in front of you, I deem it necessary to acquaint the readers with short excerpts connected with the preparation of this creation.

Initially, we began to do things about a Yizkor Book, for our city that was cut down, in the Land of Israel. I am unaware of any date for this. It reached here, in New York, about 1950 or 1951.

At that time, the newly arrived people from Tomaszow, were called to a gathering, which was attended by large numbers. Mr. Shmuel Shiflinger chaired the meeting. Sitting on the dais, were the real leaders of '*Hevra B'nai Tomaszow.*' At that time, a proposal was placed before us that we should write up articles for a Tomaszow Yizkor Book which a committee in Israel is preparing to publish. The letter was written by Mr. Yaakov Herbstman in the name of the committee. Directly, at that very meeting, a committee was created for this purpose, but nothing was ever heard from that committee.

A few years later, seeing that nothing was emerging from the prior action, I attempted to take the initiative to start the activity anew. At that time, I conferred with Rabbi Rubin, and several other official people, and they all assured me of their cooperation.

The first minutes read as follows:

> 'Saturday Night the portion of *Tissa*, March 3, 1956 the following people came together at the house of Mr. Eli' Lehrer in Brooklyn: Rabbi Yekhezkiel Rubin, Mr. Moshe Gordon, Mr. Shmuel Shiflinger, Mr. Fishl Hammer, Mr. Eli' Lehrer, Mr; Shimshon Holtz, Mr. Shammai Drilman, Mr. Joseph Moskop, Mr. Meir Neuhaus, Mr. Zvi Reis, Mr. Shlomo Weissleder, Mr. David Geyer, and Mr. Jonah Feldsehn, with the objective of creating a Yizkor Book in memory of the community of Tomaszow-Lubelski that had been exterminated, its martyrs, killed by the German murderers and their Polish accompanists.
>
> After all the opinions that were voiced, it was agreed to publish such a book.
>
> A Yizkor Book committee is being created consisting of the following volunteering individuals: Sholom Licht, Mr. Gordon, Mr. Shiflinger, Mr. Moskop, Mr. Neuhaus, Mr. Hammer, and Mr. Holtz.
>
> Allowance has been provided for others to join the committee.'

At a later meeting, I was elected Secretary, and Mr. Shiflinger – President (the latter resigned a short while later). At the time I assumed the position, I attempted to resist, since I gave an accounting that included the amount of technical work involved, and my minimal capacity to undertake this, but nobody else wanted to assume the position, and in order to assure that it wouldn't fall apart immediately at the outset, I was compelled to commit myself.

The difficulties that we encountered from the outset up to the end exceeded all of our expectations. From one side, we encountered landsleit who showed no understanding of the matter, and even offered resistance. A book is not needed, was their argument, who will read it? From the other side, from those who indeed did feel a need for this, there was an absence of faith in the realization of the plan, and this was the greatest of

all the troubles. Our first call for an assembly of our landsleit to take part in this endeavor brought such a minimal response, which could have cast a pall of resignation on the strongest optimism.

Even from Israel, where there already existed a bit of collected material from prior efforts, initially, they did not want to send this to us. and they had a skeptical attitude as well. It was only after I had first assured them that we already possesses a lot of material, and that the publication of the book was beyond question, they sent us a small package of articles. And, at this point, I can reveal a secret, that the receipt of this small package indeed was an invigorating experience in the development of this creation. It was necessary to work out and distribute invitations, one after another, to awaken the belief in the people, and that they should send articles, and also the names of those who were killed. The fact that the entire burden for the undertaking lay only on a few numbered individuals, that you could count of the smaller half of the fingers of one hand, makes it possible to add many negatives about the book, first and foremost being its delay in publication. Because, in addition to the technical work that they needed to execute, such as: printing and distributing meeting notices, maintaining a correspondence with the committee in Haifa, Argentina, and various individuals, reading, proofing after printing, and even keeping track of reminders in their heads, and fund raising, as well as writing something of their own, they also had their own responsibilities to their families and livelihoods, which leave very little spare time and even less unhurried contemplative time demanded by this type of work.

And now, dear readers, should you encounter something in this book that does not meet with your approval, please understand that it is not possible to satisfy everyone's taste. If you encounter deficiencies, please take into consideration the overwhelming difficulties faced by those who did the work, who under the given circumstances could not overcome these deficiencies. This book will suffer from repetition of the same subject, meaning that the same matter will be touched upon in a variety of memoirs. In order to rationalize this, would have required a great deal of time, of which we were seriously short. In principle, we did not want to massage another person's writing, to the furthest extent possible. We also wanted to afford everyone the opportunity to write in his own way, or, if it is possible to say it this way, to pour out one's heart. However, we stood guard in the ranks of the possibilities, to assure that the facts presented were consistent with the truth. And if, here or there, inconsistencies have crept in, let us attribute that responsibility to the author of the article in question.

Do not criticize the compilers of the book for specific things that were a living part of city life, whether those were institutions or people, which were omitted or insufficiently documented. This is a lamentable fact, but in no way can you demand of anyone to create a written description of something with which he is insufficiently acquainted. If you cannot find one, or more, of your relatives in the list of the martyrs, have the decency to take responsibility yourselves, as to why you did not send in those names.

Like any other such undertaking, this book was edited by a committee with the difference being, that in other such efforts, it is placed in the hands of a professional, an expert in this area, with the requisite skills and qualifications and broad capacities. By contrast, with this book, from the outset, people undertook this work without any pretensions to expertise in this area, and with their limited capabilities. The editorial committee gave itself a thorough accounting of what a book of this nature can suffer from, that it entails many defects. However, in hearing out that the purpose of the book was not its literary luster, but only content as a memorial, we all applied our energies to assure that the book would express its sacred mission as far as it was possible.

And should you choose to measure and weigh the merits versus the shortcomings of this book, do not forget

to add the fact of the existence of such a book in the scales, and you will have the totality of it before you.

Apart from those enumerated in the first minutes, the following people took part in the Yizkor Book Committee: Mr. Eli' Lehrer – Treasurer, Chaim Yehoshua Biederman, Asher Reis, Mrs. Rekhil Fust-Lehrer, David Geyer, Shlomo Weissleder, Vova Neu, Jonah Feldsehn, Leib'l Fleischer and Avigdor Greenwald.

In the Editorial Committee were: Sholom Licht, Mr. Moshe Gordon, Fishl Hammer (Nat), Shammai Drilman and the writer of these lines.

A committee in Israel, headed by R' Zusha Kawenczuk worked hand in hand with us.

Our *landsleit* in Argentina displayed a deep interest in the book. Their correspondence came to us through Shmuel Eliezer Branner, Yisroel'keh Eisen and Joseph Meldung.

To all those enumerated above, and all those who provided their part to this sacred duty with their pen, with contributions, or in other ways, permit me, here, to express my personal deepest '*Yasher Koach*,' for their loyal cooperation without which we would have never been able to achieve our goal.

And if the remaining will forgive me, I wish to especially acknowledge with respect the following: Sholom Lavi, for his strenuous efforts and most especially for his research work which gave the book a special historical value, Yaakov Itcheh Schwartz, in Israel, who put in so much time, heart and talent, in portraying the suffering of those martyred by Hitler who survived, and in that process created a permanent record of the dark Hitler era in our vicinity. Mrs. Fust, who apart from providing a talented artistic contribution, also helped to re-write the Necrology. Fishl Hammer for his supporting work in editing the Hebrew articles. Shammai Drilman and Asher Reis, who apart from other things, gave away a whole set of free Sundays for fund raising from *landsleit*, in their own homes.

Let us all, whether those who took a part in the creation of this memorial, or those, who for whatever reasons did not participate, feel that this Yizkor Book comprises a joint plea of forgiveness tendered to our nearest, who were tortured and martyred, and as a way of covering our collective responsibility with respect to future generations.

In passing, I would like to remark here, that we approached the Society of the scions of Tomaszow many times, about cooperation in the creation of this book, but regrettably, they never evinced any cognizance of this effort. As an illustration, let us record the final letter of July 8, 1963, addressed to their secretary, Mr. Shiflinger with the following contents:

> Most Significant Committee of '*Hevra B'nai Tomaszow.*'
> Mr. President.
>
> In preserving the memory of our annihilated community in the Tomaszow Yizkor Book, we did not want to lose the opportunity to record your survival. We have therefore decided to open a section in this book about the life and activities of Tomaszow Jews all over the world.
>
> As a body of people from Tomaszow, with a reputation for good community work over the course of many years, it would be only right for you to occupy an important place in this section. We would therefore like to ask of you, to compose a piece of work about your organization, your activities in a variety of areas, about matters of general interest, and also about the people who were, or currently are, connected with you in the performance of these activities.

Taking into consideration that the book is close to being published, we would ask that you attempt to expedite such writing.

At this opportunity, you will permit me to also say that other articles that have a bearing on the subject of this book can still be submitted.

With friendly regards,

J. M. Moskop, Secretary

Regrettably, this letter was ignored by them.... for the many who throw in our face the fact that we are preparing this book without them.

Page 25: *The Founding Meeting, and the Leadership of the Tomaszow Landsmanschaft in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1947.*

[Ed Note: The numbering given below is as provided in the caption. The numbers themselves were hand-written on the photograph, and are not completely distinct. It would appear that there is a young boy who is not identified, and the women on the right side are also not identified.]

1) Yoss'l Eisen, 2) Shmuel Eliezer Branner (Secretary), 3) Itzik Ziegelbaum, 4) Mordechai Weissberg (Chairman), 5) Moshe Wertman (Treasurer), 6) Moshe Chaim Tsan, 7) Yitzhak Sherman, 8) Zalman Leichter, 9) Leib'l Tsan, 10) David Mittelpunkt, 11) Noah Weisser, 12) Yitzhak Bricks, 13) Shammai Millstein, 14) Yoss'l Sznycer, 15) Sholom Sherman.

Page 27: The Memorial Stone for Tomaszow-Lubelski in the Holocaust Cellar of Mt. Zion

Page 29: At the Memorial Stone for Tomaszow-Lubelski in the Holocaust Cellar of Mt. Zion

Sitting (From the Right): Sarah Kuppersztuk (Barenstein), Gershon Katz, Moshe Gordon, Ary' Weitz, Chaim Joseph Lehrer, Yaakov Shlonbaum

Standing: Zusha Kawenczuk, Moshe Blonder

A Headstone for Our City

By Rae Fust

Neither the stonecutter
Nor the gravestone carver
Places a memorial for the deceased.
Not the grinder, the dyer, or polisher,
Not the community head, or leaders,
Not the book writer, and not the grandee or the philanthropist,
Also not the great inventor.
Only the children place a gravestone.

Our city has been destroyed,
Along with many other cities,
Destroyed, the gravestones
Of fathers and mothers.
There is no longer a Jewish life there:
The city where our cradle stood,
Is no longer there:
Murder spread itself
Even more quickly than a plague
And din not leave behind
A memorial marker on that sacred place.

Children of the destroyed city!
Let us erect a memorial
[To] Father and Mother.
Let us eternalize the memory of our city,
Which is no longer here.
In a Yizkor Book, in a Book of Remembrances.
Let a monument to our city be erected!
To remind, and not to forget and not to permit
Any such murders to take place in the world.

The History of Jews in Tomaszow-Lubelski

By Mordechai W. Bernstein

(Data and Facts from Archival Sources)

Introduction

Jewish regional literature, meaning the history of various settlements, already has quite an extensive history [in its own]. More than a hundred years ago, Jewish researchers, *Maskilim*, and Rabbis, began, each in their own capacity, to create permanent records about their communities. Mostly, this pertained to the larger communities, real cities that were 'Mother Cities' in Jewry. Here is a list of ten communities (in alphabetical order) about which historical monographs have been published:[1]

1.	Ostro	–	'A Memorial to the Great Men of Ostro'
2.	Brisk-D'Lita	–	'The City of Glory'
3.	Grodno	–	'The City of Heroes'
4.	Dubno	–	'Greater Dubno' and 'The City of Dubno and its Sages'
5.	Vilna	–	'The Loyal City'
6.	Zolkiew	–	'The Grand City' (A History of the Zolkiew Greats)
7.	Lemberg	--	'People of Note' and 'The Sacred Monument'
8.	Minsk	–	'The Rabbis of Minsk and its Sages'
9.	Cracow	–	'The Righteous City' (A History of the Sages of Cracow), 'The Tablet of Remembrance' and 'A Thing of Beauty.'
10.	Ruzhany	–	'The Lore of the Holy Ones'

Most of these monographs, as attested to by their titles, especially focused on telling about the *great pedigree* of the community and first, before all else, about the *spiritual leaders* of the settlement.

Here and there, details about general Jewish life also got woven in, about a variety of societies, institutions, but this was not the main theme.

In thinking about these books, one can see that the sources, the well springs from which the compilers took their ideas were of such a nature, that indeed did present the facts, which had to do with the *prominent people of the community*, and mostly these were the gravestones from the cemeteries. It is clear that the people with high social standing were documents, [namely] the historically significant gravestones. It happens that they were better cared for. [Information was] taken from those folios that were conserved (first and foremost from the *Hevra Kadisha*); [information] was harvested from the '*Haskamot*'[2] found in books, published by the local Rabbis.

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1 The order presented here is that order, in Yiddish, that was originally published.

2 Literally, 'concurrences' which were brief endorsements written, by fellow Rabbis, and reputable scholars, to enhance the reputation, and therefore the sales, of a book. Today, such endorsements are more likely to appear on an external dust jacket.

It is necessary to add here, that the objective here was not to create a permanent record about the way of life of the community – *the community was in existence*, and it was inappropriate to create a memorial for an entity that was still alive...

For the same reason, those compilers, with very few exceptions, did not attempt to utilize no-Jewish sources. It was rare that they even knew of such sources, that the first records of Jews in a given settlement could be found in the archives of nobility, municipality, or government; [information] about privileges for Jews from these communities; about legal actions, which can be accessed, along with like materials.

Histories of *annihilated communities*, that are being written today, are of a completely different kind. They are of the type of a collective, symbolic *Holy Memorial*, and *Tablets of Remembrance*, not for individuals, not for specially elected groups, but for *entire cities and towns*. Consequently, the goal is a much larger one, a broader one, and therefore more difficult without bounds.

The former compilers had at their disposal a 'living' cemetery; they could still thumb through the yellowed pages of all manner of folios; they were still able to listen to the tales related by *elders*, who in turn had been told tales by their grandparents. Today, the entire community, along with its documents, have fallen under the sword of the executioner.

Today, it is also difficult to access the non-Jewish sources. Part of them no longer exist because of the whirlwind of war – and destruction – and that which is available, is incarcerated under seven locks 'on the other side' where it is difficult to access.

However, it has been possible for me to assemble a series of documents, materials and facts, regarding the history of the Jews in Tomaszow-Lubelski. Various opportunities led to investigations, which linked to salvaged archives and from there, further news was harvested about Jews in Tomaszow-Lubelski. Indeed, it is from these *first times*, since Tomaszow became a city, and Jews began to settle there, that we will proceed in an orderly fashion, with its history:

Beginning of the Settlement

Up to the year 1462, the entire vicinity was a Duchy. Later, during the time of the Old Polish Kingdom, the voievodeship of *Belz* was created, containing five vicinities (*Powiat*): Belz, Grabowiec, Horodlo, Lubaczow and Busk[3]

Tomaszow, came along later, about the year 1590. This was on the territory of the village of Rogozno, by the Hetman and Polish royal chancellor Jan Zamoyski, the new settlement being created and given the name Jelitowo. Four years later, exactly on April 10, 1594, when a son was bon to Jan Zamoyski by his fourth wife Barbara Tarnowska, and when the son was given the name Tomasz, in honor of this event, the *shtetl* of

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[3] Author's footnote: P. Dablowski – Podzial Administracyjny Wojewodztwa Ruskiego i Bielskiego XV Wieku Lwo 1939.

Jelitowo was changed to Tomaszow, And here is the history of Tomaszow.[45]

It is necessary to note here, that the name of the village of Rogozno was already recorded here in the year 1422.

In the year 1772, this entire area went over into the hands of the Habsburgs, in the First Partition of Poland, and found itself under the rule of the Austrians. After the Congress of Vienna that took place in 1811, involving the three Great Powers, who divided up Poland amongst themselves (Russia, Germany and Austria), a part of the Belz Voievodship, and the Tomaszow Ordinazia went over to the Russians. They belonged to the *Lublin* Guberniya.

In the Belz Voievodship, at that time, when the Tomaszow Jewish settlement began to take form, the various cities belonged to the nobility – to the Crown (the so-called crown-cities), or to a variety of individual people of high standing: nobles. Of the 31 cities, that were in the Belz voievodeship in the year 1629, 15 belonged to the King, and 16 to a variety of individuals. Tomaszow was in the property of the Zamoyskis. Within the Belz voievodeship, the Zamoyskis hold only Tomaszow in their circle.

In the year 1621 (May 25), the ruler of the day, *Tomasz Zamoyski*, set down the privilege, which was later made into law by the Polish King Zygmunt III. It is appropriate, in connection with this privilege, where the genesis of the city and its administration is outlined, to present a couple of excerpts. It says there:

> '...: When I (Jan Zamoyski) took measure to establish the city of Tomaszow, and seeing in a short period of time that it is growing well, I decided, on the good and utility of generally promulgating this very privilege, that should remain the same for coming generations. With the establishment of the city in the more distant boundaries.... all residents are freed from paying all manner of duties for 15 years. After this period of time, it will be required to pay into my treasury 5 groschen for every house on the marketplace houses on the other streets are required to pay 4 groschen....(a variety of taxes and levies are then enumerated).
>
> ... We permit the construction of a rotunda with wooden stores around, for the sale of butter, kasha, oil and other food products... we commit to obtain from the King permission to hold annual fairs on the days of: St. Stanislaw, St. Bartholomew, *Trzech Kroli*[6], and weekly market days every Monday...
>
> Citizens will be regulated by the Magdeburg Code, and the magistracy shall be composed of Catholics and Uniates[7]. I obligate the citizens to construct a Catholic Church in the course of 3 years at their own expense. Should this not come to pass, they will be punished by the

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4 Author's footnote: Slownik Geograficzny Krolewstwa Polskiego. Tom 12 Str. 374-377 Warsawa, 1938.

5 There is a town, Jelitowo today, near the Polish city of Poznan. It is not evident if there is any connection.

6 The feast of 'The Three Kings,' referring to the Three Wise Men, or the Three Magi.

7 The author explains that the Uniate Church was a blend of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox rites, unique to Eastern Poland and the Western Ukraine and Belorussia.

loss of the rights and freedom or a financial penalty for the benefit of my treasury....[8]

As we see, in this vert first privilege at the founding of the city, Jews are not mentioned.

In later chapters, we will pause and deal if this question.

The First Jews in Tomaszow

It is known from Jewish sources, that there were Jews in Tomaszow from the middle of the 17th century. Here, I will recall only three details, which will be elaborated on further in coming sections of this memoir.

1. During the *ta"kh* decrees, there was already a sizeable Jewish populace in Tomaszow, *(Yevayn Metzullah, in Tza'ar Bat Rabim, and Tzuk Ha'Ittim*)[9]

2. At a sitting of the *Va'ad Arba Aratzot*[10] in *Lublin* in the year 5427 (1667), among the other signatories to an amendment, is *Yaakov HaLevi Safra of Tomaszow.*[11]

3. Around the year 1676 there was a false accusation brought against a certain *R' Pinchas son of R' Meir*, who was murdered as a martyr. Threnodies were even composed to his memory.[12]

But when was the *genesis* of the Tomaszow Jewish community?

From Polish archival materials we have credible data that it was the year 1621. In this data, [we find that] the Jews of Tomaszow received a privilege from the master of the city, *Tomasz Zamoyski* (after whom the city had been named 27 years earlier). This means, therefore, that Jews were already living there, and a significant number of them were there before that date.

Before we approach this privilege, which is the most important and unquestionably the first document about the Tomaszow Jews, we must add that until the Tomaszow Jews received this privilege in 1621, there were

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8 Author's footnote: Dr. Janusz Peter – Szkice z przeslosci miasta kresowego. Zamość 1947.

9 These are the standard references in the Jewish literature of the events of *G'zerot ta"kh v'ta"t*, which is the Hebrew designation for the Chmielnicki pogroms of 1648-9.

10 The Council of the Four Lands that had administrative control of the affairs of Eastern European Jewry, during the period of time when they were permitted autonomy in their internal affairs.

11 Author's Footnote: Israel Heilperin – Pinkas of the Va'ad Arba Aratzot, Jerusalem, 5705, Symbol רמ"א (241) of the Yearbook for 5427, pp. 105-6.

12 Author's Footnote: Dr. Max Weinreich – *Sturemveis*, Vilna 1927, pp. 176-180.

already communities in this vicinity, in the Belz Voievodeship, in which privileges for Jews had already been granted previously. Here is a list of those cities, given in the chronological order in which they were granted the privileges:

1. Belz – In the year 1517
2. Dembno (Also called Dubno, and for this reason, the Dubno in Wolhynia was called Dubno-Rabati, or Great-Dubno) – In the years 1538-1593.
3. Mosty' Wielkie (Also called Augustow) – In the years 1549-1576
4. Sokol – In the years 1565-1578
5. Tyszowce – In the years 1566-1576
6. Oleszyce – In the Year 1576
7. Nemerow – (Not to be confused with the Ukrainian Nemyriv) – In the year 1599
8. Korytnica – In the year 1617
9. Tomaszow – In the year 1621

As we see, Jews were in this area already for more than 100 years, if one takes the dates of the privileges as the beginning. However, we also know that before a specific location was granted a privilege, Jews already had to be there.

In speaking of the privileges for Jews in the Belz Voievodeship, it is necessary to add that of the 9 cities referenced, only three: Oleszyce, Niemirow, and Tomaszow were under control of nobility, and they obtained these privileges from their masters – Oleszyce from the Starosta Szienkowski, Niemirow from the Nobleman Stadnicki, and Tomaszow from Graf Zamoyski. The others were Crown Cities, and their privileges were granted by the King. There were, however, also three cities in which the granted privileges explicitly stated that *Jews were prohibited from living there.* These were:

Magierow, which belonged to the Belz area, received a privilege from its owner, *Jan Magyar*, on January 20, where among other things, the following is stated:

> '... Jews as an accursèd peoples, who are cunning, and because their beliefs are not friendly to Christendom... I exclude from being tolerant of their presence in the city; no houses shall be rented or sold [to them], and also my heirs shall, under no circumstances permit them entry into the city.'[13]

In the year 1629, which we will discuss later, when a census of Jewish houses was taken in the Belz voievodeship, the residents of Magierow had to take an oath, that excepting the estate manager of the *Jakub* castle, there was not a single Jew [living] among them.

Plozy. This was a Crown City, and here, Zygmunt III issued a privilege in the year 1614, which, among other things, said:

> '... Jews are forbidden to live in the city, to build houses or engage in commerce. Jews may be permitted to travel through the city, in connection with their commerce, only with the permission of the Magistrate,'[14]

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13 Author's Footnote: Slownik *Geograficzny*.... Volume 5, p. 896

14 Author's Footnote: Slownik *Geograficzny*.... Volume 8, p. 282

Warenz – This city had previously been the property of the Niedzwiecki family, who sold it to the convent of the 'Holy Sisters of Lemberg,' who did not want any Jews there. Before this, in the year 1578, there were 4 Jewish *balebatim*, and 2 assistants.

In summary, around Tomaszow, there were settlements of Jews. It is clear, that the settlement was established there in the year 1594, and Jews began to be drawn to it from the surrounding area. We will indeed see this later in the family names and the characteristics of the Tomaszow Jews.

The Privilege of the Tomaszow Jews

The Zamoyskis had already established a substantive relationship with Jews. They had already issued a privilege in Zamość in the year 1588 for the Jews that were living there. Jews were already living in a whole collection of other cities in their *Ordynacja*. Because of this, one should understand that the privilege granted to the Tomaszow Jews [by the Zamoyskis] was analogous to those they granted to others issued by the Zamoyskis. Because of the historical importance of this document, we provide it here in Yiddish translation. The privilege was written in Latin. It was translated into Polish, and was published for the first time at the 300th Jubilee of Jewish residence (*which was not celebrated!*) In the year 1921.[15]

The privilege states:

> '...In the name of God, Amen. For eternal remembrance. Tomasz of Zamość, the Voievode of the Kiev Lands. Starosta of Knyszyn, Goniadz , etc., is giving notice with this writing, to everyone in general, and to each individual in particular, to whom this pertains. When several years ago, I took the decision to establish this city, which is called *Tomaszow*, and when I saw that this settlement was growing and from day-to-day assumes a broader context, I have, in order to direct a broadened and successful commerce, taken up the Jews as an example from the other cities of my realm, as residents and citizens of those cities, and given them permission to establish their houses and families therein. These Jews will have to assume the same obligations, financial duties and taxes that have been placed on the Christian residents of the city. I permit them to enjoy all the rights and freedoms that all other citizens enjoy in the cities over which I reign, in carrying out their commercial dealings, in the creation of products, as in general, in the conduct of all other honest business endeavors in order to make a living. I am also in agreement that they are to have the same rights in the purchase and sale of all manner of goods. [This shall apply] At all times – both at weekly and annual market events, In connection with this privilege, the Jews referred to, whether they live in the city, or desire to do so, are obligated, after a period of 15 years, to pay me and my heirs, a duty, from each Jew, who is a house owner of a two-story house with neighbors [sic: tenants], to a 1 floor [house,] independent of any other taxes that they are required to pay, which they are required to pay just like all the other Christian citizenry, to me and my heirs. Apart from this, the Jews will be able to engage in the healing arts, along with Christian healing professionals, and exactly like the Christian healing professionals, they will be obligated to pay me and my heirs up to 15 Florins a year, and at the anniversary of St. Martin pure fat or rendered in12 molten ingots.
>
> Should conflict and disputes arise between Christians and Jews, they first must be adjudicated by the Jewish [community] Elder; if the Christian feels wronged by the outcome, he has the right to approach my delegate and later, myself, for my judgement. Apart from this, Christians may be called to judgement on all matters by Jews, but only in the municipal civil court.

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15 Author's Footnote: *Teka Zamojska*, 1921 Zamość

Apart from this, I give the above mentioned Jews the right, at a distance from the Catholic Church, to purchase specific plots on a street, for the purpose of building a synagogue, a residence for a Rabbi, Cantor and Teacher, as well as a place for an transient's residence (*Hekdesh*) to take in the poor and unfortunate.

When these buildings are erected, they will be free of all taxes and assessments, which Jews [would normally be required to] pay for their own houses.

The Jews also have the right to purchase a parcel at the outskirts of the city, in order to create a cemetery, to bury their dead.

Notwithstanding this, I order that these Jews are not permitted to purchase from Christians, or build by themselves more than 12 houses on the market square. The houses that the Jews already have there are included in this reckoning. If it appears that someone has exceeded this number, without my permission, he will be punished by an appropriate fine to be paid into my treasury.

The Jews are free to buy or build as many houses, as pleases them, on all other streets.

Apart from this, I release the referenced Jews from bearing the burden to repair the battlements, which have been constructed at the outskirts of the subject city, which were constructed to secure the lakes, an obligation to which all the other Christian citizenry is obligated.

Jewish homeowners are responsible, in all instances, when it becomes apparent that it is necessary to pay a 3 groschen allocation for the needs of the administration of the city, and the convenience of the city.

In order to implement this, I have ordered this document which I have authentically signed, to be affixed with a seal.

Given this day the 6th of May 1621 in Zamość in the presence of the distinguished dignitaries:

Wawrzyniec Staryngel – Deacon of the Collegiata in Zamość
Mateusz Leszniewski – Podkomorny of Belz
Jan Komorowski – Starosta of Raciborz and
Stanislaw Wieleski, Alexander Dameracki, Franciszek Krzyzanowski, Mateusz Malkowski, Jan Dzik, Pawel Slotowksi, Wojciech Napierkowski, Stanislaw Morkowski, my employees and people whom I rely upon, to assure that this is preserved in the annals of rights of my realm, as well as those of my heirs, Zamoyski Jan Iwoszkowicz,

I authorize the above declaration brought before me – [The Festival of St.] Martin in Zamość. Zamoyski.'

When one compares this privilege to those of other cities, not in the Zamoyski *Ordynacja*, it is seen that here, the Jews obtained much broader rights that in other cities. Not only did the Jews have right equal to those of the Christians of Tomaszow, they were even released from specific obligations. There is a point to be made with regard to a certain limitation (to build more than 12 houses on the marketplace square), but practically, this was never enforced. Jews, in fact, did not build, but they did live, as tenants in Christian property, on the marketplace square.

It was, indeed, because of this, that a specific complaint was brought before the Jews by the city. As it was usual, Christians paid their taxes on the houses and property. However, as soon as the Jews rented the space as tenants, the Christians stopped paying the tax for the Catholic Church. An agreement was reached between the Tomaszow community and the Catholic parish (which, incidentally was formally designated in Rome by the Pope on the August 27, 1761), that the Jews are required to pay the tax, that Christians had heretofore paid to the Catholic Church. The Christians would pay 2 ingots of fat but the Jews already were paying double, 4 ingots, or 20 Gulden.

Several decades later, with the further growth of the Jewish population, this tax was increased. On January 3, 1824, a new agreement was concluded between the Tomaszow municipality and local priest, that the annual levy will be not 20 Gulden, but 40 Gulden.

We will pause here, for a few moments, regarding the Privilege. In it, the number of Jewish houses on the marketplace square are discussed (only 12) and in general, the right to build houses. Here we actually have a statistic about the Jewish houses in the entire Belz area. By chance, this statistic was conserved in an archive, that is located 'on the other side [sic: behind the Iron Curtain].'

Up to the year 1628, Jews paid one general tax – *poglowna* – per capita. This head tax was paid through the Va'ad entities in the year, in concert with the Polish-Swedish War which in that year obligated the Jews to pay an added tax over and above the head tax, on their *houses and grounds*, just as the Christians paid, and this tax applied whether on *their own houses, as well as rented dwellings from Christians.*

In connection with this, a very accurate statistic was developed in order to prepare the tax rolls for the Jewish houses. As a result, these lists were guarded carefully. A count was taken every few years, and here we have a comparison of 19 cities in the Belz area, where there were houses where Jews lived in the year 1629 and 1643 [16]:

City	Number of Houses		
	1629	1643	Increase
1. Belz	34	40	6
2. Busk	17	56	39
3. Cieszanow	3	11	8
4. Dembno	15	64	49
5. Florianów	40	60	20
6. Horodlo	11	15	4
7. Korytnica	36	47	11
8. Lipsko	30	37	7
9. Laszczowka		13	13
10. Mosty'	7	10	3

16 Author's Footnote: See Reference 6. Note that the variance in row 1 for Belz, in the original text, is incorrectly given as 16. This may be a typographical error.

11. Nemerow	16	21	5
12. Topilec	12	15	3
13. Rawa-Ruska	24	25	1
14. Sokol	16	18	2
15. Szczemyliec	10	12	2
16. Starawiec	10	15	5
17. Tomaszow-Lubelski	30	60	30
18. Tyszowce	18	18	
19. Uhniv	30	30	

We see here a general picture of the increase of the Jewish population in the area, and how this came about in the various cities. We find Tomaszow among the few cities thus counted, where the growth was strong, in the matter of *houses*. We will discuss the growth of numbers later on.[17]

Since we are speaking of taxes, it is suitable to incorporate here a *list of Jewish taxpayers from Tomaszow-Lubelski in the year 1702.*

In the tax rolls of the city of the year 1702, there are a total of 212 taxpayers listed. For each taxpayer, the individual's faith or nationality is recorded. Among these 212 are 119 Poles, 68 Russians, and 17 Jews. Were it not for this designation at a portion of these Jews, we would not be able to know that they were Jewish by depending only on their names. In many instances, these are names of the settlements from which they came. Beside a number of them, there is the mark *zyd*.... from ..... We produce this list as it appeared in the general register. the number in the columns mean the register number of the tax register of the year 1702. [18]

Column No.	First Name	Last Name	Comment	Tax	Denom
4		Florianowicz	Meaning from Florianów		15 Groschen
5	Berko	Israelewicz			2 Gulden
6	Icka	Laszczowiecki			1 Gulden
8		Litmanowicz			3 Gulden
10		Narolski			3 Gulden
13	Chaim				3 Gulden
17		Pukoszewski			2 Gulden
18	Aharon	Cirulnik	A Barber-Surgeon		3 Gulden
19	Zendl	Szapaz			2 Gulden
34	Noah		From Leyben	1 Gulden	20 Groschen
35	Baruch				16 Groschen
51	Motya	Becker	Probably a Baker		15 Groschen
60		Litszmanka			1 Gulden

17 Florianów is the ancient name for the city of Narol.

18 Author's Footnote: See Reference 3

69, 78		Khodivaniecki		1 Gulden	15 Groschen
165		Jaworowski	Son-in-Law	20 Groschen	
102	Lubka			1 Gulden	6 Groschen
205		Benkszpulek		1 Gulden	6 Groschen

These were mainly property taxes, houses, in accordance with previously described Privileges and amendments.

It is worth pausing at a number of these names, It is clear, that at this year, Jews did not yet have their family names, and because of this, we encounter names such as *Chaim, Baruch, Lubka* (Possibly Leib'keh?) Names such as Florianowicz, Laszczowiecki, Narolski, Pukoszewski, Khodivaniecki, Jaworowski are places of origin of the Jews, which are all village locations in the area.

We will come to talk about *Aharon Cirulnik* in a later chapter.

Here, we will especially deal with Zendl Szapaz, number 9 in the list, Column 19. This name came onto the table to us from another document, We have before us, a listing of all the *municipal leadership* in Tomaszow Lubelski from the year 1684 to the year 1810. In line with the General Privilege of the city, which we have previously cited, it is stated that *in the City Council, only Catholics and Uniates may serve.* However, in the compiled listing of the City Council membership of the year 1688, we find the *'Pomocnik zydowski Szmukla Kromoz'* among the municipal leadership. This same storekeeper, Shmuel was also in the municipal leadership a year later, in 1689. Thirteen years pass, where there are no Jews in the municipal leadership, and in the year 1702, we encounter '*Zapas zydowski Zendl Davidowicz.*' He is also in the municipal leadership in the year 1704. Afterwards, no Jews are to be found.

This is the same *Zendl* that appears on our tax rolls for the year 1702.

If we are discussing lists of Jews in Tomaszow from hundreds of years ago, it is necessary to introduce a very interesting list. It is interesting thereby, that if on the 1702 list it will generally not be possible for contemporary scions of Tomaszow to find any familiar names, they might possibly be able to decipher something from the following list, which is a bit more contemporary, from the year 1835. It is not more than 130 years ago, and as it happens, here we already have family names, and we encounter many of them in later documents and materials, and part of today's Tomaszow scions will most certainly find their great-great grandparents. This list contains the following:

Jewish Stores in Tomaszow-Lubelski in the Year 1835

(According to the Municipal Hypothecation Book of the Year 1835)

The following Jewish stores are enumerated in the Municipal Hypothecation Book of the referenced year, which existed at that time in Tomaszow; (The numbers are those designated in the Hypothecation List.[19]

	Name	Number
1.	Yudka Rosenfeld	41
2.	Shimon Bergerson	44

[19] Author's Footnote: See Reference 3.

3.	Chana Rothenstein, widow of Moshe	2
4.	Pinchas Lindenwald	195
5.	Jonah Luden	152
6.	Aharon Bindler	245
7.	Itta – born Berger, previously Wertman, now the wife of Wolf Schnei	197
8.	Menashe Zinger	22
9.	Lejzor-Ber Lederkremmer	472
10.	Chaim Farshtendiker	40
11.	Aharon Kossfisher	8
12.	Lima Langer	157
13.	Bluma Rothenberg, widow of Moshe	33
14.	Peretz Reichenberg	4
15.	Abraham Konsfisher[20]	8
16.	David Cohan	14
17.	Nathan Kinder	245
18.	Moshe Dytel	35

In the year 1834, it appeared that the number of stores was too small, and the city issued permits to build a square of stores [called *Rad-krommen*] (in the source *Kramnieca*) from brick. The concession to build these stores was obtained by: *Hirsch'keh Beilin; Mikhl Korngold* and *Moshka* (Moshe) *Cohan*. The stores were built on the marketplace square.

Jewish Barber-Surgeons (Physicians) in Tomaszow

A very characteristic point of the Tomaszow Privilege is the statute that Jewish barber-surgeons will be able to carry out their work in an unimpeded fashion. It is very rare to find such a point in the various other hundreds of Privileges that were distributed to Jews in Old Poland. A further exception is, indeed, a second Privilege from the Zamoyskis, for Zamość from the year 1588 – also there, Jewish barber-surgeons are mentioned.[21]

It appears that Tomaszow was blessed with a rather large number of Jewish *barber-surgeons,* whom we will call *physicians* from this point forward. In a series of archive documents, and before everything else, in court acts, we find continuous reference to the physicians. Their names; their complaints during judicial proceedings, that their Christian clients do not pay them the agreed to fee sums, and things of this sort.

Here is a chronological order of a list (certainly not full) of the Jewish physicians of Tomaszow:

We find in a court proceeding in the year 1684 a case of the physician *Aharon Jakubowicz* who filed a complaint that the Christian, *Ewa Midlonka* stating that she engages in unfair competition and takes away his clients.

In the year 1684, the physicians *Aharon* and *Abraham Itzkowitz* are figured into the list of physicians in Tomaszow.

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[20] It is not clear if a typographical error exists here, since Number 11 is given as Kossfisher.

[21] Author's Footnote: *Pinkas Zamość*, Buenos-Aires 1952, pp. 88-9.

From the year 1685-1694 we find the physician *Aharon Szapszowicz.* From the year 1687 -1700 the physician *Aharon Itzkowitz* is here. In the year 1699 a case is recorded on the judicial proceedings between the barber-surgeon *Aharon Jakubowicz* and the citizen, Prokop Szczesniak, whose eye he cured. He had set a fee of 5 Gulden and he was only paid 3 Gulden.

A certain physician *Moshe Itzkowitz* had a rather substantial practice. In the year 1689 he lived in his own house, a legacy from his father, *Yitzhak the Old Barber-Surgeon.* In the court documents, he appears as *Moshka Ickowicz Chirurg Tomaszowski* and also as *Moshka Medikum.* He was still active in 1718.

At the same time, *Hirsch* was a physician.

From the 17th to the beginning of the 18th century, the physician *Baruch Aronowicz* was very active, and in the proceedings he appears as *Baruch Medik.* In the year 1705, the city concluded an agreement with him to heal the sick.

Let us recall that in the previously recorded tax rolls of 1702, there is an *Aharon Cirulik* and a certain *Baruch,* and that could quite possibly be the very same *Baruch Medik.*

In the year 1689 we encounter a *woman* physician. We learn this from a terrible story of a certain Christian man, who attacked a Jewish woman, and she was healed by the '*Yiddisheh Tzirulnichkeh*' – no name is given.

In 1738, the barber-surgeon *Icka Markowicz* obtained a permit to build a house on the street that leads to the Szczebrzeszyn Gate.

Of even greater interest is a story concerning a *Christian Feldscher* who fled Tomaszow and abandoned his wife and children to fend for themselves. In that year, the commandant of the Zamoyski holdings, the Colonel, Tomasz-Antony send out a letter of the following sort:

> '...I am notifying those that need to know, especially the important appointed leaders of the city of Tomaszow, and the Jews of the local synagogue, in connection with the plea brought before me by *Ana Krzezanowska*, the wife of a barber-surgeon, whose husband, for vicarious reasons, left the city of Tomaszow, and abandoned his wife and children in a most foul manner. In order that this lady have a means of sustenance, I am permitting her *Chelodnik*, a Catholic, to engage in the craft of barber-surgeon. [I request] that this assumption of role will not encounter subversion by the barber-surgeons, and the Jews....' [22]

The physicians, Abraham Israelovich and the brothers Levik and Hirsch'keh were active in the year 1753. Hirsch'keh previously practiced in Warenz and had the added name of Warenski. He already called himself 'Doctor,'

In 1788, there is a decree from Zamość to the citizens of Tomaszow, that Icka Goldstein (the son of the previously mentioned Hirsch'keh Warenski) received a Medical Science diploma in 1785. He died in the year 1800.

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[22] Author's Footnote: *Maurycy Horn-Rzemieslnicy Zydowscy na rusi caevwonej na Przelomie* XVI i XVIII *wieku. Biuleetyn Zydowskiego Institutu Historycznego Warsawa* 1960 Nr. 34.

The doctor, *Leon Funkenstein* was active in Tomaszow in the year 1823.

Among the physicians of Tomaszow, *Israel Binder* is familiar, the patriarch of a whole family of *Feldschers* in Laszczow until 1939.

During the *'powstanie'* { the 1831 rebellion) the physicians, *Zalman Groder* and his son *Mordechai Groder* were active, as also *Leib'eh Feiner* and *Yankl Asseo.*

In the year 1851, we find documents of a wedding of the Feldscher *Mordechai Goldus* with Reizl Kormandel.

Later on (as the documents reveal), there was a *Feldscher, Yitzhak Asseo* and his son, *Yankl Asseo* The latter died in the year 1935. It would appear that these are descendants of Yankl Asseo, the *Feldscher* from the era of the *'powstanie.'* Incidentally, the name *Asseo,* is taken from the Aramaic, [and] in the Talmud, 'Asseo' indeed means a *Feldscher.*

As we see, the profession of *Feldscher* was quite prominent among the Jews of Tomaszow, and therefore, in the very first privilege for the city, in 1621, there already was a stipulation about the right of the Jews to engage in this profession.

In ending this chapter, it is necessary to remark that these facts about the Jewish physicians in Tomaszow were not known to researchers, who engaged in these matters. Thus, in the work of Dr. Emanuel Ringelbloom (ד"ר), *'Jewish Feldschers in One-Time Poland,'* (Published in *Social Medicine,* 1932), where he counts up to 320 *Feldschers,* there is no mention at all about those from Tomaszow.

Jewish Tradespeople in Tomaszow

Previously, we paused at the profession of *Feldscher* in Tomaszow, but what was the outlook with regard to other occupations?

We have a series of documents before us, with privileges, that the Zamoyskis, in the course of time, issued to the various guilds of manual laborers in Tomaszow.

Here are the privileges for the guild of carpenters, coopers, wheelwright, wheel makers, and lathe operators. Issued in 1618. this Privilege has 21 points, and it begins with point 1, in which it says the following:

> '... In accordance with the decision of the municipal authorities, manual laborers from this guild may be drawn only from those of the Roman Catholic faith...'

A later Privilege is from January 18, 1641, issued for the weaver's guild in Tomaszow. The Privilege contains 31 points. There, it begins with point number 1 which says:

> 'Whoever wishes to join the weaver's guild, must be of the Catholic faith...'

On January 27, 1642, the locksmiths, blacksmiths, metalworkers and sword makers in Tomaszow receive their Privilege. Among the points there is also a clause that requires members of the guild to participate in Catholic religious processes. What this implies, is that there was no place there for Jews.

We find the same in the Privilege granted to the Tomaszow oven makers, and also here, the only ones who can belong are Roman Catholic workers.

Indeed, the Jews could not belong to these guilds, and they were not given permission to establish their own guilds, but they would, nevertheless, carry out certain of this work, primarily those who were either directly, or indirectly, involved with the Jewish life. In a series of acts, we discover that Jews in Tomaszow, apart from trade and intermediation, were engaged on a variety of work, such as *butchers, carvers, carpenters, pharmacists, shoemakers, hat makers, tailors.*[23]

In 1705, complaints were brought to court by the Christian shoemakers guild against the Jews, *Shlomo Kalmanowicz* and *Haskell Hirschowicz*, that they illegally tore off the label of the guild.

Such a complaint was brought by the hat makers guild against the Jew, *Abraham Rudy*, that he was conducting illegal business.

Contentious Relations between the Jews and Poles in Tomaszow

As a general rule, the attitude towards the Jews in the Belz voievodeship was neutral-tolerant. On the part of the rulers of the city (the royalty and the nobility) was positive so far as the Jews were those who brought in very hefty sums through the taxes that they paid, into the municipal and royal treasuries. The Jews, as was able to be seen from a whole row of pronouncements in the Privileges, were making a very substantial contribution to the growth and development of the economic evolution of the cities.

From another side, the Jews withstood ceaseless assault from the citizens of the city. Storekeepers and tradespeople who saw the Jews as a very serious form of competition and *more importantly, a more skilled* competition. As we will shortly see from a very much characteristic document.

The Catholic Church came to the assistance of these Christian storekeepers and guilds, which poured oil on the fire – amalgamating a bit of 'heavenly fear' with this earthly uncleanliness...

We have an unending series of statutes arising from court procedures, that arose from complaints against Jews. From provoked physical beating through real and perceived drunkenness. In their complaints, they put forward that they were suffering from the 'impenetrable unity of the Jewish community,' which – what a pity – exploits the suffering and impoverished Christian people.

But here is what a document from 1689 tells us, that the Jewish community was compelled to borrow money at an exorbitant rate of interest from the church leaders, and a Christian cleric. This document is so characteristic, that it is worth reproducing specific excerpts here:

> '... The following persons came to present themselves at the forum of the Tomaszow municipal elected officials: *Icka Szykowicz, Aharon Meirowicz, Haskell Leibowitz, Shlomo Markowicz, Marko Gershonowicz, Litman Lewkowicz, Lewko Rodzhensky, Mikhl Getzownicz, Icka Moszkowicz, Moshko Jozepowicz, Szabtai Lewkowicz*, the elders and leaders of the Jewish community (in Tomaszow) and declared and requested that it be documented in the

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[23] Author's Footnote: See Reference 12.

municipal record the following: we confirm by our signatures, and without hands, we took a loan which is guaranteed by us and the entire community, from the Appointed of God....[the] Priest Casimir Leszczynski, Doctor of the Holy Theology and leader of the Sacred Dominican Convent in Krasnobrod, [in the amount of] 2000 Polish Gulden, which is fungible in the entire kingdom....for which we will pay interest each year, in two instalments up to 80 Gulden a year.'[24]

Loans of this type at rather high interest rates were taken by the Tomaszow [Jewish] community not only from Christian clerics.

In 1699, the Tomaszow community borrows 1,100 Gulden from the noblewoman Anna Czykewicz.

In the year 1701, the same community took a loan from the nobleman Stanislaw Liniewski; in the same year, also from the treasury of the Zamość Ordynacja in the amount of 300 Tympfen (a sort of coin of the realm) [25]

Repaying these loans, along with their high rates of interest took place with the greatest of difficulty – the Jews were severely impoverished.

This situation was exploited by the Catholic spiritual leadership, who incited the public at large. An episcopal letter is published by the Bishop of Chelm, Szembel Oystobi full of false accusations against the Jews; in the Zamość press a special anti-Semitic pamphlet is produced against the Talmud, which becomes the most important document in the disputes between Jews and Franciscans in the year 1759 in Lemberg. [26]

Decrees begin to fall on the Jews. A row of limitations, orders and threats. It came to the point that, in a number of places, Jews were threatened with expulsion. Of very significant historical significance, is a memorandum sent by the Starosta of Tomaszow to the Provincial government, dated October 31, 1783. Among other things, we read the following there:

' ... the ignorance of the first inhabitants of Tomaszow of their permission to allow everyone of origin as a citizen, to make a living. More correctly said, simply their own laziness has brought these {Christian} citizens to this state, which because of an alleged living, gave up the best locations in the city, along with their property improvements, to the Jews, who were more skilled that they, and began to extract resources from the general public. They, the Christians, remained at the margins of the city... Therein lies the reason why Tomaszow, instead of growing into a city with a vibrant citizenry, has been transformed into a mean Jewish settlement. It is because of this that there is no *Rathaus*, that the citizenry were required to construct.' [27]

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24 Author's Footnote: Municipal Ledger of Minutes of Tomaszow-Lubelski, Number 1262 from the year 1689.

25 In Polish, Tympf was a Polish Gulden for a lower normal value. The name of the coin is derived from the fact that the coin was first minted in the first half of the 17th century and was named after the head of the mint, Andrzasz Tympf.

26 Author's Footnote: Z. L. Sulima – *Historiya Franka i Frankistow*, Krakow 1893.

27 Author's Footnote: Royal Archive, Lemberg, from the Year 1701, Note 3.

Enumerating yet another set of shortcomings of which he finds the Jews guilty, he comes to the conclusion:

> '...all of this has led to the fact that Tomaszow, which according to the agreement of its builders, should have been a model city, has been transformed into a Jewish nest, encircled by peasants....'

That there was no great wealth in Tomaszow is demonstrated to us by a description of the residences of the Jews and Christians in Tomaszow. A detailed description of this sort is available from the year 1787. The Jewish house is portrayed as having windows that were knocked out; without a floor; poor, broken furniture; doors without means to close, barely hanging on to existence; the ovens are full of limestone, old, broken and smeared in clay. Also the dress of the Jews – men and women – are rags, worn out garments...

Incidentally, the Christian home was not described as being any better.

The chroniclers know to tell that this poverty came about because the city suffered continuously from fires; from assaults; from the war that made a pile of trash out of the assets. Those who wanted to pick on the Jews always added that it was the Jews who were entirely responsible for this....

And this very Starosta has a recommendation:

> '.. It is necessary to take into consideration if we should not need to expel the Jews forcibly from this area...'

It did not come to this, but the plight of the Jews, or mor appropriately, the relationship to them was clearly hostile. This became even more pronounced, when the area came under the control of Russia, and there began to appear Czarist decrees exceptionally directed at Jews.

Comparative Data about the Jews in Different Time Periods

In the '*Polski Slownik Geograficzny*' Volume 12 (1893) we find the following facts about Jews:

> In the city, there is a Russian Orthodox Church (built in 1889), a Roman Catholic Cloister, a Synagogue... in the city are the streets [named]: Rynek {*Der Mark* in Yiddish}; Swietojurska – with the Russian Orthodox Church; Sokolska; Koscielna; Lwowska; Wrobla Cielna; Hotelova; Solna; Swietej Tekli; Praga[28]; Piekarska; Mydlarska; Jakowa; Krasnobrodska; Pariniasko; Walowa[29]; Bednarzsko; Wodna; Furmanska; Rymarska; Zamojska; Rachanska; Blotna. And there are three neighborhoods on the outskirts: Ronzhuno, Leszniecko. Kozie, and Sokolskie.
>
> There are two public streams in the city, and 29 private ones. The streets are not paved, with wooden sidewalks along the side. The majority of houses are made of wood; in the marketplace there are drains; at the round of the city, the houses are ringed with gardens.

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28 In Warsaw, the Praga is the east side of the Vistula, and the Wola is to the West. It is possible that this nomenclature was adopted by other cities and towns in Poland, in emulation of the capitol.

29 Possible a variant of *Wola*

The larger structures here are: the barracks of the border guard troops (for 400 men) and the Cossack stables (For 300 horses).

Only ruins remain from the former cloister. The general total of the population in 1882 was 7,277 beings. Among the: 2,053 Catholics; 986 Russian Orthodox; and 4,238 Jews. The entirety of commerce, (more than 60 stores) was in Jewish hands. There were no manufacturing facilities. One bakery was in Christian hands, a sweet shop and a restaurant.

...in the year 1819 Tomaszow has 2,568 residents,

In the year 1827 – 2824 residents; in the year 1860 – 3587 residents, of which 915 were Catholics, 503 were Russian Orthodox, and 2,117 were Jews.

In the Russian '*Yevreyitska Entsiklopediya*' (Volume 14, Petersburg) among other things, we have the following figures about the number of Jews in Tomaszow-Lubelski:

In the year 1856, there were 3,223 residents, among which were 1,863 Jews; in the census of 1897, there were 100,000 people living in the province, of which 11,000 were Jews. Of these, 6,000 of the residents were in Tomaszow, and among them, 3,646 Jews. In the cities of the province, in which there were no less than 500 Jews, the Jews comprised the largest percentage of the population, as shown in the following data:

Komarow	2,610	residents, among them	1,568 Jews
Laszczow	1,806	residents among them	1,626 Jews
Telatyn	743	residents among them	35 Jews
Tyszowce	2,201	residents among them	1,898 Jews
Jarczow	487	residents among them	348 Jews

When the figures from both encyclopedias are combined, the growth of the Tomaszow Jewish population relative to the general population comes out as follows:

Year	**General Population**	**Jews**
1819	2,568	?
1827	2,824	?
1856	3,223	1,863
1860	3,578	2,117
1882	7,277	4,238
1897	6,000	3,646

The Martyr, R' Pinchas of Tomaszow, הי"ד

(Murdered 19 Adar 5436 [February 23, 1676])

This tale is taken from the book '*Shturmvint*' by M. Weinreich, Vilna, 1929, pp. 176-180, who took it from an anonymous pamphlet without attribution regarding time or place of publication (see Badileina Catalog No. 4030-1692) In memory of the unique Sanctification of the Name of R' Mattathias and R' Pinchas that took place in the country of Poland.

For further details about sources, and a biography of the martyr, Rabbi Pinchas ז"ל, examine the treatment of Sh. Lavi in the monograph of the Tomaszow Rabbis.

R' Pinchas the Righteous resided in Tomaszow. He was so extreme, that he didn't hold by drinking and eating; rather, he only engaged in fasting, mortification and studied Torah. He was never seen in the street, he sat only in sequestered rooms, and, literally, for his entire life was never seen at liberty. There simply was not a good character trait that he did not possess.

A blood libel was raised against R' Pinchas. He was taken to jail, and began to torture him even before the executioner took to him. One day, he was given water an a small piece of coarse bread. He was sitting in darkness, without any light, in a manner that he was unable to see anything. No Jew was allowed to come to him, and neither pleading nor bribery was of any help. Roaches and vermin were crawling all over the room, which caused him great anxiety and fear, so many times the roaches interrupted his sleep, causing him to throw off the blanket, and hat from his head, such that he would leap up half out of his mind. Before he died, he said that the jail was worse than all the other tortures that were inflicted on him. It must be that this was some sort of 'Lower Jail' for those that R' Abraham feared.

Those who worked on his behalf tried many means of getting this pious man free. However, he did not knuckle under, because the matter had gone to a higher level: an order came from the tribunal that the entire matter was to be transferred to their jurisdiction; a maid had been found who had informed against him.

It happened this way: she was persuaded that she should stand by her accusation, in return for which she will be released and made wealthy; recognizably, this was an adopted tactic in the assault on Jews. Therefore, she held by the everything that she was instructed to do, even under duress: that R' Pinchas was guilty of stealing the sacred host, and that she was also involved, and all of this was recorded by the Municipal Recorder. In addition, it was ruled that while she herself had confessed to her crime, that she should be but to death. This was written down and sent to the tribunal, which certified the sentence against the servant girl she was indeed turned over to the executioner and appropriated the matter regarding the Jew to itself. He was immediately put in irons, and sent off to Lublin.

When R' Pinchas said at the first hearing, that he knew of nothing to say, the judges thought: when you are subject to torture, you will speak otherwise. His limbs were stretched out, and applied an iron rod used to make wheel rods, one of the implements of torture in the torture chamber, broke his ankles and wrists, and with a heated, blowing iron rod, burned his flesh; this was the most extreme torture. After this torture, they tossed him naked into manure, and he remained lying there without an ounce of strength left in him.

When he came to a bit, he was brought before the court anew. He continued to hold his position; that the accusation was a lie. So they asked, how is it that you have such a metallic head to say that this is a lie, at the time that the servant had personally admitted to it, that the tow of you committed the crime together, and

everything is documented? He answered: if the maid had known that, because of her words, she would be taken from this world, she would have spoken differently, but she was misled into a lie, and she stood by that lie; she had been promised a lot of money, and in the end, she lost this world, and the world to come.

When they saw that the Jew does not depart from his path, they took him back to torture. A new judgement came out; he should again be burned with an iron rod; all his hair is to be cut off, and he is to be given it to drink, and he must swallow it all, afterwards, he is to be turned over to the executioner.

The executioner took him, bound him to a block, with all of his four extremities tied off, meaning that he was wrapped around the block like a bow, 'so that his pure bones began to crack.' After this, he began to burn him with candles under his hands, and on his feet, literally burning holes into him. At the same time, the executioner shouted at him in a frightening manner – so it was related, in order to heighten his fear – and showed him glowing hot irons at a distance, in order to instill further fear in him. When the martyr, nevertheless, kept silent, he was additionally burned with those irons, such that pieces of flesh fell from his bones.

After this, they thought up something new: they brought iron boots with screws and heated them up, and they took the martyr's bare foot and stuck it into the boot, and began to screw the screws into the foot. they did this with the other foot as well. The martyr cried out an alarm; his feet became as if they had been baked, and the bones knocked against the screws.

On the following morning, a wagon was obtained, loaded with barrels of pitch, sat R' Pinchas on it, and took him off to be executed. A large heap of wood was assembled, and the boards were covered in [gun] powder, in order that they burn better, and in the middle of the bonfire, they drove in a stout stake. The Righteous One was bound to the stake, and the fire was ignited, and the martyr thrashed about like a fish water, to the extent that the stake shook; afterwards, he became still, and he expired. But for the malefactors, this was insufficient; they gathered up the ash, and threw it into the river.

At the time that the martyr was being taken to judgement, the *Selikhot* prayers were being recited in all of the synagogues. And a great miracle took place at that time, according to the writer: Jews, who observed the execution clandestinely, and also gentiles saw, that at the time that the martyr was being carried to the bonfire, two snow white doves flew over him. The entire time that the martyr was being burned, they were in the fire with him, and despite this, not a single feather of theirs was even slightly singed. There certainly must have been angels from the Heavenly Host, who were making an effort on behalf of the martyr. The gentiles who saw this were drenched in tears when telling of this, and they said: we, ourselves, understand, that a great wrong was committed here....

The Girl Martyr

By Sh. Lemar

One of the legendary locations in Tomaszow, was a gravestone of a girl at the edge of the cemetery (when the cemetery was enlarged, the grave came out in the middle). The people called her '*Di Kedeysheh,*' but properly said, '*Di Kedoysheh,*' because on her gravestone, she was titled with the name '*HaKedosha*' a mode of expression which is used only for those martyrs who died in Sanctification of the Name. The gravestone was already about 200 years old.

As it was related from generation to generation, here lay a Jewish girl who was a world-class beauty, and a Russian officer wanted to rape her, and when she resisted him, he shot her, and she was buried on the same place where she fell. The grave was treated as a sacred site, and many women, at those times that they visited the cemetery, would come to pray at her grave. '*Di Kedoysheh,*' was one of the historic places in or city.

The Synagogue

By Sh. Licht

Page 59: *The Synagogue, taken from the southwest side; the lower building which rings the synagogue is the* Ezrat Nashim *[Women's Section]. At the left, over the steps, one can see the Annex.*

Page 62: *Leaning on the Prayer Stand – Chaim Strasberg*
(The Lime Maker)

Page 64: *The Prayer Stand and Holy Ark in the big Bet HaMedrash*

Every which city and town had its greatness and pride in its hyper-patriotism from the standpoint of the beneficence that God shone down on its residents, just like children, who think that only their parents are the best and most beautiful. However, with regard to its synagogue, Tomaszow really had something it could be proud of, and was, indeed, the crown jewel of the city, and to this day, when someone wants to refresh their memory about our city that has been reduced to ruins, with its great and rich past, the first thing that swims on one's memory and sets itself before one's eyes, is indeed the synagogue.

The synagogue was one of the oldest synagogues in Poland, its style being wondrous in structure and style, majestic and peasant in appearance, one of the most important Jewish historical buildings in Poland. (For a variety of reasons, for which this is not the place to analyze, the synagogue of Tomaszow was generally denied publicity, and interestingly how false information [appeared] in the Jewish world about the Tomaszow synagogue, in the well-known work, '*The Synagogues of Poland and their Destruction,*' by David Davidowicz, Jerusalem 5720, in which the Tomaszow synagogue is not even mentioned, except for the fifth chapter on page 15, where he provides a general list of the synagogues that were built out of wood, Tomaszow-Lubelski is also mentioned, [saying] that the city also had a synagogue constructed of wood. And, [yet] we scions of Tomaszow all know and remember that Tomaszow had a synagogue built of stone, and we did not have two synagogues.)

It is very interesting to hear the legends that are tied up with the synagogue. On a summer's evening, by the portico, where little groups of people stood around, an elder would once again repeat that which he had heard in his youth, or on *Tisha B'Av* in the afternoon, when the young men from the *shtibl* came to pray the afternoon service in the synagogue, and the elderly Jews would refresh their memories about Tomaszow, and needless to say, if an important guest would arrive from an unfamiliar place, then the elders would make an extra effort to convey their tales with the most precise detail, f stories about Tomaszow in general, and about the synagogue in particular.

And we, the youngsters, became stuck, like bees to honey, and ingested every word and story – and it is for this reason it is so deeply etched into my heart.

In order to be correct, I must state firmly that a great deal of their stories were not more than legends, created by the imagination over the course of generations, embellished with feelings of local pride, as for example, a tale passed among the Jews of the synagogue that the RA"SH attended the synagogue.

Many old people related, that which they heard in their youth, that on the western wall of the synagogue, was written ,שנת קשמט סל"ה that the rubric סל"ה which has a numerical value of 95, means that the synagogue was built in the 95th year of the sixth millennium [sic: 5095, which is 1336 B.C.E., however this is hard to believe. At that time there was most certainly no settlement at all, much less a Jewish one. And possibly, the emphasis should have been on the rubric, קש"ט, whose numerical value equates to the year ת"מ [sic":1649], even though the synagogue was built before this, but because of the pogroms of ת"ח [1648] the synagogue was vandalized and destroyed, and it was restored and rebuilt in ת"מ, and for this reason, the rubric קש"ט was written. However, this is simply impossible, because the slaughtering and devastation stretched from 1648 to 1649 and 1650, as Chmielnicki's hordes simply annihilated the Jewish city. and it is difficult to accept that in the very height of the ferocity of destruction, that the Jews rebuilt their synagogue.

In any event, it is impossible to establish with certainty when the synagogue was built, but the rubric סלה קש"ט have yet another meaning, namely, as it was accepted in Tomaszow, as well as in Szczebrzeszyn (a neighboring *shtetl*) as an accurate transmission of a tradition, that 3 synagogues were built in Poland by one master [architect] in the same architectural style: a structure without pillars, in the following cities: Cracow, Szczebrzeszyn, Tomaszow, and it is possible that with this in mind, he placed the rubric קשמט סל"ה whose first part is an acronym for these referenced three cities, Cracow, Szczebrzeszyn and Tomaszow. In any event, the synagogue was one of the oldest synagogues in Poland, and one of the numbered few with its construction and architecture, very large, a high synagogue whose ceiling was supported without pillars. After the fire of the year 5678 [1919] when the synagogue was entirely burned down, and stood for an extended period of time bare and without a roof, so that the rain and snow soaked through the ceiling for an entire year, and when it was restored, the Magistrate feared that perhaps the structure was too weak, and that it should not bring on a catastrophe, they sent up workers with heavy iron rods, and hammered on the structure, to test if the structure was vulnerable, and it held. Only then, did they then permit the new roof to be put on.

As related by Eli' Lehrer, during the war years of [19]42-43, the Germans took away the synagogue, and each part needed to be destroyed separately using dynamite, which is how strongly the synagogue was built.—

The synagogue was built of stone, in the form of a quadrilateral, approximately 26 meters square, with a height of 7 stories. with three large windows on each side, excepting the eastern side, which had 2 windows. Inside the synagogue, the synagogue was below street level by 1.5 meters. The entrance was on the north side, towards the west, that is to dat northwest. In front of the entrance, there was a small roofed portico, that had a roof with two pillars, then one descended six steps deep, and there, was an antechamber which was called the '*Polish.*'

A door opened from the *Polish* into the synagogue on two sides, west and south, but on the lower level, without stories, there were wide, low windows, that connected the Women's synagogue with the Men's synagogue. The windows were bordered with iron rods, and hung with small white curtains. The depth of the windows was about 2 meters. To the northwest, a small tall structure had been built on, where the stairs to the attic of the synagogue could be found, and nearby, could be found the so-called '*Second House,*' which was built over the *Polish*, where there was a regularly scheduled *minyan* for only the Sabbath and Festivals. Mostly, it was the simple Jewish folk who prayed there, and during the week, R' Meir Zlata's ע"ה would

conduct his lessons there. One entered the '*Second House,*' or as it was sometimes called, '*The Khevra Tehillim,*' using external stairs.

The exterior of the synagogue was brushed white with lime. Over the synagogue, there was a mansard, or better described as a staggered roof, which looked like there was one roof on top of the other. The children nicknamed it '*Hor-HaHar.*'[30]

The synagogue was painted both inside and out. On the eastern walls, the '*HaMelech*' prayers were written out, which were recited on the High Holy Days. As I heard from responsible, important people, and elders such as R' Yisroel'i the Rabbi's ע"ה, R' Abraham Heschel'eh's ע"ה, and R' Shmuel Kessel ע"ה, at one time, the names of all the martyrs who gave their lives in Sanctification of the Name, during the years 1648-9, were inscribed on this wall, ה"ד. The synagogue was beautifully decorated with pictures showing themes taken from the *Tanakh*, such as the Binding of Isaac, the Flood, the Burning of Sodom, the Western Wall, By the Rivers of Babylon, etc. All of this was about 5-6 meters in height, and on the pictures that characterized the *Mishna* sayings, 'Be powerful as a leopard, light as an eagle, fast as the deer and strong as a lion,' you saw a leopard, with an eagle, a der and a lion. Only the Binding of Isaac had few figures in it. In the 34th year, when the Rabbi of Cieszanow ז"ל, married off his daughter, many Rabbis came from faraway places, and prayed in the synagogue on the Sabbath. On Sunday, before dawn, his brother-in-law, the Cieszanow Rabbi, R' Yekhezkiel'i ה"ד took a ladder, and personally ascended to scratch out the face of Abraham. He said that it was forbidden for there to be the face of a human being in a synagogue, and that is the way it remained, unrepaired.

On the south and north walls, there were also pictures of the musical instruments enumerated in Psalms 103.

In the middle of the synagogue, on the higher half, stood the *Bima* with stairs to ascend to it. It was bounded by iron railings, which were woven about the *Bima* like a crown.

A bit higher, closer to the east, 2 'Altars' stood to the north and south, whose interior was covered in sand, and covered with a wooden cover. It was here that the Mohels would put in the circumcised foreskins, after bringing the young male infants into the Covenant of Abraham. Many jokes circulated about the city, and an entire folklore was created about these bits [of flesh] that lay in the synagogue. The synagogue was lit by hanging candelabras, which were used for special occasions and at the time of the outbreak of the First World War, were requisitioned by the Russian authorities. The candelabras were bordered by a box, which the children called the 'happy box.' the candelabras were drawn up by rope, until they formed 13 rows of candles, one higher than the next. The candelabras were diligently taken care of, to assure that they would retain their brassy shine, which sparkled like gold, especially when the candles provided their fire and luminescence. In the twenties, when electricity was installed in the synagogue, many worshipers wanted to prevent this, and they even did not want a clock to be hung in the synagogue. They did not want to permit any manner of innovation .
However, both of these very 'reforms' were implemented, but all other custom were rigorously observed to the last day of its existence.

Prayer was conducted in the Ashkenazic tradition, which was rigorously observed, despite the fact that 95%

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30 A biblical reference they undoubtedly took from their studies, this being the mountain where Moses' brother Aaron, the first High Priest, was laid to rest. See Numbers 20: 22-29.

of the Jews in the city were Hasidim, who followed *Nusakh Sephard.* In the synagogue, the common people prayed, along with the small number of professionals and white collar people. The synagogue already had its foresworn supporters who would come to pray even in the most intense cold, coming to pray, morning and night, (the synagogue was not heated). Also known, was the group who called itself '*The Decile,*' such as Moshe Fishl'eh's Yaak'li Rofeh, etc. The synagogue had a Cantor and two *Shamashim,* R' Moshe Lehrer's and Abraham Shamash.

Important Rabbis and Rebbes visited Tomaszow and if they wanted to pray in the synagogue, they had to conform to the *Nusakh* of the synagogue. For inserting '*V'Yatzmakh Purkonay*' [sic: into the *Kaddish*] you could be on the receiving end of a sharp slap in the face....



The '*Hevra Kadisha*' had a franchise in the synagogue of directing the *Hakafot* on the eve of *Simchat Torah.* They came together at the [house of the] head of the *Hevra,* and took a bit of drink. From there, they proceeded in a lust and lively manner to the Rabbi of the city. and took him to the synagogue with song. In times that were long past, he was escorted under a wedding canopy, and then directed the *Hakafot* there. In 5691 [1932] the *balebatim* of the synagogue revolted against the *Hevra Kadisha* to the point that it came to fisticuffs. After the holidays, the Rabbi of Bilgoraj was brought in. Rabbi, the Righteous, R' Mordechai Rokeach, זצ"ל, where the Hevra Kadisha conducted a Rabbinical Court [*Din Torah*] with the *balebatim* of the synagogue. The ruling was that they will continue to hold onto their franchise... All official government celebrations were marked by prayers offered by the Rabbis in the main Synagogue. God forbid, in times of tribulation, when it was necessary to arouse compassion, the city gathered in the synagogue to recite Psalms.

To the left of the synagogue stood the large municipal *Bet HaMedrash,* or as a part of the people called it, the 'Ordinary' *Bet HaMedrash,* to differentiate it and not to confuse it with the Hasidic *Bet HaMedrash.* The Synagogue and the Bet HaMedrash shared a common yard, which was bordered by a wooden fence. Around the synagogue and the Bet HaMedrash, could be found the graves of martyrs from the years 1648-9, which were tended every year by the Hevra Kadisha, and on the days of the Three Days of Hagbalah.[31]

The street on which the synagogue stood, was called '*Die Schul Gasse,*' and in Polish, was called *Boznica,* as well.

Wedding ceremonies used to take place on the Schulhof. the synagogue was the tallest and most visible building in the city, for sure, taller than any other Jewish-owned buildings. It could be seen from all corners of the city. Even at a considerable distance from the city, the top of the synagogue could be seen, and shone forth, and in this way, the sacred synagogue held sway, with its historical age, and majestic, dignified appearance, with its glorious two white roofs, enduring sorrows as well as good times, the suffering and happiness of the Jews. Up to that historic and bloody Thursday, 23 Elul 5639 [September 7, 1939] when the German robbers from the air, attacked our tranquil city, with their steel machinery of destruction. They

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31 The three days before Shavuot are called *sheloshet yemai hagbalah,* in reference to "and you shall set bounds *["vehigbalta"]* unto the people round about" [Exodus 19:12], referring to the three days of preparation enjoined on the children of Israel before they received the Torah at Mount Sinai. As an appropriate preparation for the festival of Shavuot, a custom also originated of studying the Talmudic tractate called *Pirkei Avot,* Ethics of the Fathers, every Sabbath afternoon beginning with Passover. This tractate is replete with moral and ethical maxims.

bombed Tomaszow, and with special intent, only the innocent Jewish quarters. Among the first victims, indeed was the sacred and beloved synagogue. The tongues of fire reached to the heart of the heavens, consuming the entire synagogue, inside and out. However, the walls, with its royal, indomitable ceiling remained whole and did not succumb to the German forces. [It was not] until the Germans killed out all of the Jews, and Tomaszow remained *Judenrein*, that they blew up the synagogue with dynamite. For weeks afterwards, Jews from other places, under the terror of German guns, worked until they smoothed out the earth, so that the destruction of the synagogue should come about at the same time as the ruin of its Jewish worshipers, burnt parchment and flying letters, and waiting for their restitution to exact revenge from the nations, until we will live to se the fulfilment of the prophecy: 'And the saved will ascend Mount Zion to judge the Mountain of Esau, and the Kingdom will be the Lord's, and with the return of sons to their borders, we also hope to see the fulfilment of the promise of our Ancient Sages, that in the future, the Houses of Worship and Houses of Study, that are outside the Land, will be established in the Land of Israel, where our historic synagogue will once again occupy its honored place.

The Pinkas of the Synagogue

By Shmuel Eliezer Branner
Argentina

Page 65: *A Portrait of the Author*

The old *Pinkas* was burned in the first fire of 1918, and the new one was written in the year 1919 by R' Yehoshua Hirsch Sofer ע"ה. He was well-acquainted with the contents of the old *Pinkas*, and wrote much into the new one from his memory.

There, the oldest gravestone was recorded that was on the cemetery, as 5365 [1606].

In the *Pinkas*, an exact accounting was given of all the places where people were martyred in the Sanctification of the Name, by Chmielnicki's *pogromshchiki*, and that a custom was instituted, to dig around these sacred resting places during the three days of *Hagbalah*.

Many amendments were recorded in the *Pinkas*, which spoke to the *Nusakh* of how prayers were to be conducted, and customs of the house of worship. which incidentally, were strictly observed. There were also to be found there, the signatures and added notes of guest Rabbis and *Rebbes*, who, at various opportunities had visited Tomaszow. Part of them demanded that all customs be observed in the strictest manner possible, and that prayer was to be conducted in *Nusakh Ashkenaz*, and also gave a blessing to the 10 people, that is the 'ten' who assumed the burden of rebuilding the synagogue after the fire, and these are their names:

1. Meir Bergerbaum
2. Shlomo Lichtenfeld
3. Yaakov Asseo (Physician)
4. Meir Eilbaum
5. Ary' Leib Kirschenholtz
6. Bunim Branner
7. Hirsch Meir Cyment
8. Yaakov Zvi Winder
9. Meir Haber
10. Shimon Reis

That which is written above, I am writing from memory, of what I had once seen in the Pinkas, which lay at the home of my uncle R' Leib'leh Kirschenholtz ע"ה, or as he was called, Leib'leh Zalufeh's.

How old is Tomaszow?

Naturally, I am not a historical researcher, nor am I any sort of historian. I want only to bring out, that this question was always posed to the elderly Jews of Tomaszow. Nobody knew how to give a clear answer, but certain specific facts were available. In the previously mentioned synagogue *Pinkas*, the following could be read: an inscription had been found in the synagogue attic, with the large letters, 'שנת ת"ן' [the year 1690]. It was interpreted to mean, that this inscription came from the artist who for certain, in the year 1690, had completed the artistic decoration of the synagogue, and it is possible that this was the time when the synagogue was restored after the great ruination of the years 1648-9, in which our city suffered a great deal. Also, as previously recalled, there was a gravestone on the cemetery grounds from the year 5365 [1606].

It was accepted among the elderly, that they knew from their parents and great-grandparents, that years ago, the city was in Laszczowka (today a village), except that the Jewish settlement was destroyed there, and on its ruins, our Tomaszow was constructed. As a fact, the following may serve, that in that village, there was a square, which was called '*Rynek*,' which is usually to be found in a city. In Laszczowka there was also a location that was called the *Cmentarsz Zydowski* (this means the Jewish cemetery). This was confirmed once, when at one time, digging took place there, and a human skeleton was uncovered. all were laid out with the foot from the city of Tomaszow, so that the Christians were certain that the cemetery belonged to the city, and according to the graves, this was supposed to have been the Jewish cemetery. I also once heard a conversation between the elderly noblemen Kiwerski and Balan[32], who established that the founders of the city of Tomaszow were Jews, who established the city with the construction of the synagogue.

Regrettably, no recollection of any of this remains today; hundreds of years of labor and effort, blood and sweat of our ancestors, built up the city and developed it. [They] carried on an idealistic and holy life, and all of this was so murderously and killingly eradicated by the Polish-German partners, the Eternal Amalekites.

I have framed the image of the synagogue, and made my writing as a basis to memorialize the destruction, and as a memorial to the greatness and holiness of our unforgettable home city: Tomaszow-Lubelski.

Honor to Your Memory!

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32 Intermittently, throughout the following text, reference is made to either 'Balan's River,' or 'Balan's Pond.' This suggests that the nobleman Balan had ownership of a body of water that was of significant utility to the community.

My Grandfather R' Pinchas, and the Seat of Elijah in the Tomaszow Synagogue

By Rae Fust-Lehrer

R' Pinia taught a group who was studying the *Mishna*. He was the Head of the *Mishna* Study Group. He did not want any money for his teaching. One time, the Jews, for whom he taught, had decided to give him a sum of money as a gift. When he was presented with the money, he went pale. R' Pinia did not want that kind of money. But the warmth with which the Jews had presented him this gift so touched him, that he took it and said:

– I thank you.

That evening, R' Pinia had no appetite for his evening meal.

– What happened? Are you not well? His frightened Rekhil asked.

R' Pinia was silent.

– So that my soul not fly out from me, tell me what is the matter – Rekhil pleaded.

He let out a deep sigh, and said:

– The *Mishna* Study Group gave me money as a gift for learning with them, how am I supposed to make use of such money?

For a minute, Rekhil sat overwhelmed, because she too did not want such money. But suddenly, her face broke out in a shine. A smile appeared on her full lips. She said:

– It is He who in heaven that gave them the sense to do this. The Seat of Elijah[33] in the synagogue is already so old, that it is ready to fall apart. We will use the money for a new Seat of Elijah.

Rekhil's words had the same impact on her husband as the rising of the sun on a dreary day. His face lit up, and he said:

– Oh, it is the Almighty's will that we should have a stake in the synagogue. We will make a new Seat of Elijah for the synagogue. We will add to this money, and retain the greatest master artisan from Lublin.

R' Pinia absorbed the expense, and brought a prominent artistic carver [to town], to work out the lions and other decorations for the stool. The Seat of Elijah was constructed in R' Pinia's home. When the stool was completed, there was a festive day held in Tomaszow. The Seat of Elijah was escorted from R' Pinia's home into the synagogue by a parade with music.

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[33] The Seat of Elijah is a ritual seat on which the infant boy is placed during the rite of circumcision. As the icon of protection of the Jewish people, the Prophet Elijah is invoked to protect the life of the infant during this potentially risky procedure.

Rekhil and Pinia were delighted to see their little children, Tema'leh and Getz'leh fighting with one another to carry the small stool for the *Sandak*[34], which had been prepared together with the Seat of Elijah.

The two wine-colored pillows radiated from the stool, which was carried by R' Pinia and three other Jewish men from the *Mishna* Study Group.

During the course of the parade, the carriers switch positions, in order to extend the honor to all the members of the *Mishna* Study Group.

This parade was talked about in Tomaszow for a long time. The entire city went to see the new Seat of Elijah.

R' Pinia's children took great pride in their fathers undertaking.

Rekhil became even more regarded in her husband's eyes. It was in her clever mind that the thought was conceived to make the new Seat of Elijah.

Therefore, I, as the granddaughter that carries the name of my grandmother Rekhil am also proud to be able to record this event. This, and many other stories, were told to me by my beloved father, Yaakov Eliakim Getzel Lehrer who bears the name of his uncle, the righteous teacher, the director of traditional studies of barely one hundred years ago.

May this be a memorial to the child of my sister, Pinia, from Tomaszow, whom the Nazis murdered. He bore the name of his grandfather Pinia. May this be a memorial to my entire family that fell during the time of the Hitlerist atrocities.



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34 The person honored to hold the child during circumcision.

The Synagogue and the Bet HaMedrash

By Israel Zilberman
Haifa

Page 70: *The Great* Bet HaMedrash, *photographed from the Northeast side. Beside the first window on the north side, a large stone stands [sic: in memory of] the 1648 martyrs (according to the legend of Bride and Groom). The synagogue can be seen behind the building.*

Page 71: *A window of the Great Bet HaMedrash. Below is a memorial that marks the grave of a bride and groom – martyrs of the year 1648.*

The Great Municipal Synagogue has certainly assumed its place in this Yizkor Book. And no wonder, everyone born in the city, every resident of Tomaszow, carried an inner pride with them about the synagogue, which was a phenomenal architectural work, with its unique construction, and its beautiful artistic pictures in the interior on the ceiling and the walls. The Women's Sanctuary, which was not located above the Men's Sanctuary on the inside, as in other synagogues, was short-changed. Rather, it was an attached building, which surrounded the large synagogue on two sides. This Women's Sanctuary made a pitiful impression beside its neighbor, with its low height, and neglected appearance, and therefore gave the appearance of being hundreds of years older that the Great Synagogue. It was told that the Master that constructed the building only did three such architecturally designed synagogues, and indeed, even in the largest cities of Poland, I did not encounter such a unique and comparable large house of worship.

Despite the fact that the synagogue was large and beloved, it was still not the gathering place for the Jewish populace, which additionally was privileged with having a large municipal *Bet HaMedrash*, which was in the vicinity of the synagogue. The purpose fulfilled by the Bet HaMedrash in the city, is difficult to find in today's modern institutions of clubs. There is no such institution today, which is exactly aligned with the *Bet HaMedrash* of times gone by. [It was] a place for young and old, poor and rich, *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim*, who would all come together to meet, especially for afternoon and evening prayer, where it hummed like a beehive. Acquaintances would come to have a conversation. Business deals would be consummated, politics would be discussed, and a bit of gossip would be picked up from the rumor mill. [There would be] cigarette merchants, and young boys would even sell one at a time, and even on credit. After prayers, various tables would be created [sic: for study], such as: *Ein Yaakov, Mishna, Gemara, Midrash*, which were patronized until late into the night.

Just as was the case in other small towns, we had many Hasidic *Shtiblakh*, whose worshipers were committed local adherents [sic: to their sect] with their own special styles of prayer, tunes and ambitions, which periodically would fight in opposition with regards to community issues such as the matter of hiring a Rabbi. a ritual slaughterer, etc. However, in the *Bet HaMedrash*, all were united, and it would be possible to run into a minyan put together that included the plain folks from a *shtibl*

In order to maintain decorum in such a *Bet HaMedrash*, it was necessary to have a very skilled administration, first of all, to control the children, and Tomaszow had this in the person of the *Shammes*, R' Nahum Zucker ז"ל. We, the wags, would refer to him with the extra name, 'Nahum the Skunk' because he would frighten us like a skunk frightens chickens. In reality, he was a very good-hearted and decent Jewish man. The Bet HaMedrash was his entire life, and he always kept it in his mind to offer assistance to the poor

and needy out of his own money, apart from which his wife would constantly gather money for poor people.

Nahum the Shammes, ה"יד

By Sh. Licht

Page 72: Nahum Shammes *in the* Bet HaMedrash *near the bookcase for study books.*

He was a wonderful figure that was beloved by people in all walks of life. Of all the *Shamashim* of the city, it is his name that is recalled with special affection, to the extent, that when he fulfilled his role as a messenger on behalf of a *Bet Din*, he became thought of as a sort of policeman from the *Bet Din*. And if he was sent to invite someone to come to such a Torah Court, it was difficult for the defendant to get out of his hands, but when he was not at work, he was a very folksy person, and full-hearted, he and his righteous wife, Sarah'li ה"יד, who, regrettably had no children, engaged in charity and good will to help and support the poor, both evident and hidden, visiting the sick, and to do good deeds, and they became transformed into legendary figures in their own lifetime. He did not leave his post until the last minute, when most of the Jews had fled to the Russian sector, he stayed with the few that were in Tomaszow, and chose to cast his lot with the those of our brethren that were threatened. The Nazis confiscated and destroyed all the houses of worship, and prohibited assembly, and he fashioned a minyan in his house that continued to function until the city was cleansed of all its Jews, and he was killed, and died a martyrs death. May the Almighty Avenge His Blood. May His Memory Be for a Blessing.

The Mishna Study Group in the Great Bet HaMedrash

By Aharon Pitluck

Page 73: *R' Eli' Pitluck studies the* Mishna.

My father, R' Eliyahu Menachem Pitluck ע"ה (the *Kishke* Maker) with R' Benjamin Tepler ע"ה, and R' Nahum Zucker (*Shammes*) were the founders of the *Mishna* Study Group in the *Bet HaMedrash* many long years ago, the time which I myself do not remember. Every evening after the afternoon and evening prayer services, the above mentioned people would sit down, and study *Mishna* with great zeal. At a later time, a large audience was attracted to them, which included simple people, meaning butchers, and ordinary tradespeople. It is with their great commitment that *Shaleh-shudes*[35] took place. It is worth mentioning with what sort of joy and commitment Shmuel Lustig would carry the Challahs to the *Shaleh-shudes*, and every time, when I would see him running and beaming I was reminded of the story that my father v"g used to tell me how the Great Rabbis would send their adherents to learn the observance of certain commandments, certain behaviors, from specific tradespeople, and among hem, they considered that Shmuel Lustig was perhaps also one of them – "If not even greater" (I. L. Peretz) – and today, when the pain of the murderous cruelty, that befell our Jews of Tomaszow, becomes more intense, even more affection rises up in my memory for those very holy and pure souls.

Today, Tomaszow lies totally in ruins. There are no Jews to be found all around.

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Now, it is as still as a cemetery. The wrecked Bet HaMedrash, where Jews absorbed so much spiritual nourishment, the leaders of prayer will no longer stand by the lectern , no more will they chant the Friday evening service to welcome the Sabbath [Queen], with the prayer *'Lekhu Neranenah.'* The German murderers carried out their criminal work exactly and precisely.

It is difficult for me to describe in writing how I was informed about what my family went through in the ghettoes; in the camps; in the various Vales of Tears that they suffered through, forded, and absorbed all manner of torture in their souls, having to endure the most hellish of torture, and in the end, being murdered.

My brother's son, David Jonah, who sang with the *Hazzan* Yitzhak Leder with two other young brothers, were stood next to their father Abraham Pitluck ז"ל in Zaworow (near Tarnopol) by the murderers and shot, and afterwards were ordered dig a grave for himself and for the children, and with frightful torture murder him. My second brother saved himself in the camps, and from a variety of *aktionen* and slaughtering. For a longer time, he was in hiding, and two weeks before the liberation, he was exterminated along with his entire family. My two sisters and their families were wiped out in a tragic manner. Also, my brother-in-law, Joseph Lancer who was taken off to Belzec with frightening tortures. Also, my sister, Chaya Yuta along with her children, were tortured in Belzec. Her husband was killed in a very, very frightening manner, in Tyszowce, which for reasons, I will not describe the details. It was with such sadistic and murderous torture, that the Jewish populace of Tomaszow was exterminated, and among them my substantially well-branched family which I will forever remember and never forget until the last beat of my heart, so wracked with pain.

Magnified and Sanctified be the Name of the Lord.....

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35 The Yiddish elision of the Hebrew, *Shalosh seudot*, meaning the festive third meal of the Sabbath afternoon.

Jews of the Bet HaMedrash

By Shmuel Elazar Branner
Buenos Aires

Page 75: *Yekhezkiel Moshe Khaskel'eh's at the Table in the Bet HaMedrash, with Children*

They were a coterie of Jews who, on the basis of their appearance, one could not conclude that all of them were of a studious disposition, but anyone who found themselves at the beginning of dawn in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, such a person could see how it was that these very Jews were sitting and learning. Outside it was dark, and the snow and wind slap against the face. And, here, the great door of the Bet HaMedrash opens, and the first of the Jews straggle in, shaking the wet snow off of themselves, kissing the *Mezuzah*.

The first one was always R' Yankl Hodes, or as he was called, Yankl Cherniak. He must – he says – arrive before everyone else because he is the one in charge of the candles. It is he who must prepare and distribute a small candle for each one of the learners. After him [came] a Jewish man, R' Sholom, the bookbinder from Krasnobrod. More and more arrive, R' Shmuel Hammer, or as he was called, Shmuel Hirsch Henya's, a butcher, Abraham'cheh the stone cutter, R' Eli' the *kishke* maker, and similar Jewish folks, tailors, shoemakers, carpenters. They occupy their 'first place' table, indeed, right by the oven, where they sit down in front of their Mishna texts, and their teacher arrives, the renown great scholar R' Benjamin Tepler ז"ל and the teacher immediately begins to chant with his gentle voice, interpreting each word slowly, for his students, and when they have learned in this manner for over an hour, and Jews begin to arrive for morning prayer, the lesson is concluded.

But these Jews do not engage purely in study, it is also necessary to provision the poor in the city. One needs to be given a donation discreetly, a second bread. A portion of the Jews who first had sat to study the Mishna, begin their work after the morning prayer. One sees how one of them demands a donation from the worshipers , and here we see two Jews, one is R' Shmuel Hammer, and the second Mendl Geist or as he was called Mendl Tzanif, taking sacks with them, and to help them an additional person approaches, and all three go out every Friday in the morning to gather bread together, Challah, meat, and whatever it is possible to ask for in the various stores, homes. They take everything [that is offered], until midday Friday. Jews donate, and the ladies of the house already know that they must set aside special Challahs for the three Jews. At 12 o'clock one can see how three Jews make their way with sacks full of a variety of products. At the Jewish butcher, R' Shmuel Hirsch Henya's products are divided up into portions. By word of mouth, they exchange information and indicate what has to be given and to whom. Apart from them, no one else knows to whom this goes, and to whom this needs to be given, it is a gift given in secret, by genuine supporters of the poor.

It was these kind of Jews that our city had, and it was precisely these kind of Jews that were exterminated in the Nazi gas chambers and crematoria.

The Belz Shtibl and its Influence in Tomaszow

By Asher Reis

Page 77: *The Belz Shtibl from the Southeast side. The synagogue and the Bet HaMedrash can be seen in the rear.*

Page 83: *Yekhezkiel Reisenfeld, Ahareh'cheh Meldung, Fykevich, Moshe Fishl'eh's and Nahum Shammes.*

The influence of the Hasidic movement of Belz was not confined only to the tight circle of its own ambit in Tomaszow. The first reason was the geographic proximity of Tomaszow to Belz, where famous Hasidic *Rebbes*, of the Rokeach dynasty, held court for over 125 years, as well as its down-to-earth character, which attracted not only the scholarly to it, Hasidic Jews, and balebatim, but also the common people, who traveled to Belz, and especially the world of the women was entirely Belz in its character, and a word from the Belz Tzaddik was the deciding opinion in many community situations, and even in political questions. One encounters the Hasidim of Belz even in other houses of worship, such as the *shtibl* of R' Yehoshua'leh, the Hasidic *Bet HaMedrash*, the Szczucin *Bet HaMedrash*, and others. Foremost, Belz was not restricted only to its own Hasidim. The Hasidim who were adherents of other *Rebbes* would travel to Belz, one for advice, another for salvation, or healing, and like matters, but mostly young people, and lads who had to present themselves for conscription took the trip (about 40 kilometers) to Belz to obtain a blessing from the *Rebbe*.

The name, Belz, was deeply rooted in all the Jews, to the extent that the amendments of the *Hevra Kadisha* (which was the principal community factor in the city for hundreds of years) was guided by the amendments of the medieval Belz Rebbe the Holy Rabbi Yehoshua'leh Rokeach זצ"ל.

A large portion of the community appointees were also Belz *Hasidim*, such as the *Rebbe* of Krylow, Rabbi Yerakhmiel Mordechai Weinberger זצ"ל, the Halakhic Teacher Rabbi Meir Abraham Frischerman זצ"ל, as well as the ritual slaughterers R' Sholom Tarim, and R' Baruch Horowitz הי"ד. In a like manner, the Belz Hasidim always had a *Dozor*[36] to represent them in the Jewish community, and they were strongly represented in the *Hevra Kadisha*. In general, they were a large community force in the city, with which one always had to reckon with in each and every matter.

The nerve center of Belz Hasidism, naturally, was the Belz *shtibl*, in which the largest quorum and population of Belz Hasidim were concentrated, especially its activities.

Belz Hasidism reaches back in Tomaszow to its establishment, to the first of the Belz *Rebbes*, and the Tomaszow Rabbis, the Righteous Rabbi R' Leibusz'l Neuhaus זצ"ל, and the Righteous Rabbi R' Yehoshua'leh traveled to the first Belz *Rebbe*, the Holy Rabbi Gaon R' Sholom Rokeach, and since its founding, Hasidim streamed to Belz from Tomaszow, but they did not come to possess their own structure until after the First World War, approximately in the early twenties, at which time the Belz *shtibl* was built,

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[36] *Dozor Bozniczy* is Polish, for Communal Leadership, or a *Va'ad Bet HaKnesset*. It consisted of three people, who, jointly with Rabbi, must work out a budget that meets the needs of the community.

and found itself in the densely populated Jewish quarter in the neighborhood to the south side of the synagogue.

The *shtibl* was built of wood, with the men in the front, and the women's sanctuary in the rear. The shtibl was built high, and the women's sanctuary was divided into an upstairs and a downstairs. The vestibule in front also served as a sukkah, to recite a blessing over the *Etrog*, and for *Simchat Bet HaShoeva*[37]. Behind the shtibl there was a small corridor where the hand-barrel was located. To the east, on both sides of the Holy Ark, there were two long tables to be found, and also individual tables were located to the south and north, and a small table to the west close up against the oven and a table in the center of the *Bet HaMedrash*.

The *shtibl* was a place of Torah and prayer, where prayers were recited and study was conducted daily. During the initial years, young men studies there every day. Specifically, when the Yeshiva of Novardok was established, and they studied in the Belz shtibl, but later on, young men who were studying could not be found there, because the Torah-studying youth was drawn to the Cieszanow *shtibl*, which was the living nerve and center of all Torah activities of all the orthodox young men, to the extent that during the weekdays, one would find only a set number of balebatim who would sit in the shtibl all day and learn, such as R' Sholom Reis (after he gave up his shoe business), Yisroel'keh Ratzeh's (Lakher), who because of his small stature, seemed like his eyes were literally buried inside the Gemara, and whose monotonous *Gemara* intonation could be heard for the entire day, Shlomo Tziffel, the son-in-law of Sholom Shokhet, a young man who was a wondrous Torah scholar, these were Jews for whom the Torah was their entire faith. Others, when they had time, would leave off to come into the shtibl, some to learn a bit of *Gemara,* some a chapter of the *Mishna*, or to take a peek into a Hasidic volume, or just to converse and tell stories about good Jews.

The activities consisted of communal prayer, evening, morning and a general study class between afternoon and evening prayers, helping or supporting those who were afflicted, traveling to the *Rebbe*, observing the Yahrzeits of the various *Rebbes* of the Belz dynasty, arranging festive repasts, with meat and fish fit for royalty, especially on behalf of the prior Belz *Rebbe* the Holy Rabbi R' Issachar Dov Rokeach זי"ע, whose Yahrzeit falls on 22 Heshvan. All of the boys who studied in *Heder,* and whose parents worshiped in the Belz *shtibl,* were released from attendance at *Heder*, where they studied, after the noon hour, and they would traverse the city, gathering candles, which indeed were lit at the time of the evening prayer in honor of the Yahrzeit. On *Simchat Torah,* towards evening, before the *Hakafot*, a small barrel of beer was procured, with herring, and merriment was made, with song and praise, until it was time to begin the evening prayers.

It would be a really special occasion, when a *Rebbe* of the Belz dynasty would come to visit our city. In order to be correct, I must emphasize that the chief Rabbis of the Belz dynasty would generally travel only rarely to other cities, and especially our city, which never had this privilege, with the exception of the middle *Rebbe* the Holy Rabbi R' Yehoshua'leh זצ"ל, who was in Tomaszow in the year 5640 [1871] at the occasion of a gathering for a wedding in which his sister, the *Rebbetzin* Eidel'eh ע"ה from Brod married someone from Zamość. And the wedding took place in Tomaszow. At that time, the Belz Rebbe was in Tomaszow for 2 weeks, and thousands of Jews came to him from near and far, even from deep inside Russia. But these were children and grandchildren of Belz [Hasidim] who were local Rebbes, such as the elderly *Rebbe* of Magierow

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37 When sacrifices were offered in the Holy Temple, there was also a special pouring of wine and oil at the altar. On *Sukkot* there was also a special ceremony entailing the pouring of water. The contemporary ritual of *Simchat Bet Hashoeva* is a commemoration of that one, and a fulfillment of the Mitzvah to rejoice on the holiday of *Sukkot*.

Rebbe R' Leibusz Rokeach of Rawa Ruska, his son R' Nahum Aharon the Magierower *Rebbe* from Lemberg הי"ד, Rabbi R' Yehoshua'leh Rokeach from Jaroslaw, Rabbi R' Velvel'eh Twersky Zlotopoler, the Rabbi of Cracow, Rabbi R' Pinchas Twersky Ustiler the Rabbi of Przemysl. The Belz world would come to them, with requests, some with a note, and others for a request for amnesty, as well as to the tables that were set out in the Belz *shtibl.* There, they would participate in song, and in the study of Torah.

Understandably, during the course of the year, almost the entire body of people would be in Belz, some only once, others multiple times, each according to their status and devotion to the movement.

Twice a year, special emissaries would come from Belz to gather funds, such as R' Yaakov Ber' ish Rawer, or R' Shlomo Sokoler, etc., and everyone gave even more than they could. There also existed a fund for the repair of books, where each worshiper paid either weekly or monthly in the amount of 5 groschen or higher. The *Heder* children were the collectors, and each Friday, after 12 o'clock, they were let go from *Heder*, and they went collecting for book repair.

A fund also existed for the reception of guests, for important people who were in need, such as respected visitors, or Torah scholars and descendants of venerated families who came from the outside world and did not personally solicit charity for their sustenance, and for this, there was a larger, more substantive levy. The collector was the *Shames* of the *shtibl*, for who took a specific percentage [for himself] and turned it over to my father, of good character, R' Mikhl Reis ע"ה, who was the treasurer and the Gabbai.

The administration of the *shtibl* consisted of a *Shames* and a Gabbai. No formal elections were ever held, rather, on a specific Saturday, between the *Shakharit* and *Musaf* prayers, the Gabbai was appointed after a long discussion. To the extent that I can recall, (with few objections), the Gabbai always was R' Yaakov Stahl ע"ה, who was a very appropriate choice for this position, and he really liked it, because he had something of a communal soul, which in the old parlance used to be called a '*kokher leffel.*'[38] By contrast, the position of *Shames* was normally accorded to the most needy and least successful, in order that he have some minimal amount of income. His salary consisted of a monthly stipend which each worshiper paid to him, and also the privilege of setting out a collection plate on Yom Kippur Eve. In my memory, I recall 2 men who were Shames, first Yaakov Kupfer, and afterwards Moshe'leh Zilberberg (Moshe'leh Garb).

The income of the *shtibl* consisted of monthly dues that each worshiper was obligated to pay according to his means, but often they were left short, and there was no source that could be used to cover the expenses. Under those circumstance, the prayer shawls would be withheld on the Sabbath, without exception, and the prayer shawls were not returned until such time that the financial debt was banked. Outlays consisted of: [the salary of] the Shames, heating, lighting, decoration and refurbishing. A Cantor was not required, and a Rabbi was paid by the community. It is interesting that the *shtibl* was not registered to the Hasidim, but rather in the name of the *Rebbe* of Belz. Sitting places were a permanent franchise, and seats were not sold on an annual basis.

The composition of the worshipers consisted of a variety of local people, a mix of Torah scholars, and common folk, religiously scrupulous people, and less observant type of Jews, people who were conniving, and people who were self-effacing. earnest types and cynics. poor and rich. The one thing that united them all and bound them together was Hasidism. Hasidism, by itself, meant a great deal and it bound together disparate opinions and classes, and it imposed a sort of common responsibility and obligation of one for

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38 Yiddish for a cooking spoon, implying an individual who liked to 'stir the pot.'

another. Whether at times of joy, or, God forbid, times of sorrow, one *shtibl* Jew would go into the fire for another. It was more than a family bond. Also, in general matters, the populace, by and large, followed the line of *shtibl* politics.

In enumerating the names of the worshipers (to the extent that I can remember their names), I will provide a short description of part of them.

At the East Table, to the left of the Holy Ark: R' Mendl Reichenberg, or as he was called, Mendl Lejzor's, an Elder and rigorously observant long time *Dozor* of the community, a Gabbai of the *Hevra Kadisha* (it was at his home that the traditional feasts of the *Hevra* were held), the best informed individual in the *shtibl*. R' Mordechai Joseph Szparer, an Elder with insight, whose expressions were always quoted about town, also one of the leaders of the Hevra Kadisha, R' Yisroel'keh Lehrman, the magnate of the city, a philanthropist of the most modest kind, who loved to make a joke, even with children, Chaim Fishelsohn, an erudite Jew but without a capacity for explanation. He never led prayers from the lectern, even on the occasions when he had a Yahrzeit. Leibusz Greenbaum, Mikhl Fanzer, Leibusz Strasberg (Leibusz Eli's), an erudite Jew who was an ardent Hasid, who later went off to Lodz, Sholom Fleshler, Mikhl Reis, a person who fled from recognition, the organizer and treasurer of the Bet Yaakov [school] in the city. Sholom Reis, a scholar who fulfilled the commandment, 'and thou shalt study it day and night,' the leader of *Shakharit* services at the shtibl, R' Yehoshua Heschel Greenwald, an enlightened yet quite, religious man, but loved to lead prayer, Herschel Glanzer, and set apart for continued life, R' Moshe Shapiro from the Rabbinical stock, who led the Musaf prayers, Ozer Stahl, an important young man from the activists of the *Agudah*.

The East, right side: R' Yitzhak Arbesfeld (Itz' leh der Manya's) an ardent and rigorous Hasid, observing the Belz way of life to the last of its minutiae, especially assuring that the afternoon prayers not be recited any sooner than the designated 'Belz time,' Judah Arbesfeld of whom it can be said he was molded from the will of his fathers, Baruch, the ritual slaughterer, a God-fearing man, Baruch Szparer, an aristocratic community *Dozor*, and one of the important *balebatim* who was an activist, a member of the municipal council, elected by the Agudah, a good-hearted man, always ready to do a favor, with a donation or an act of kindness, a host to grandchildren of the Belz [Hasidim], Shlomo Tziffel the son-in-law of Sholom Shokhet, a gentle young man, with a substantial capacity to communicate well. Leib Joseph Herbstman, book-learned, an accomplished leader of prayer, Sinai Putter, the Torah Reader and loved to gather socially, Wolf Stahl (Rachaner) an Elder who recalled many tales from bygone days, and to be set apart for life, Neta Finkelstein, a Jew well capable of learning, Ben Zion Szpritzer, Avraham'eleh Hochman a gentle and intelligent man, Mikhl Bandenstein, who was killed tragically in the act of fulfilling a mitzvah to build a *sukkah*. Itcheh Szper (Angry Itcheh'leh) who never smiled, Chaim Kugel, Moshe Mendl Brand, Zalman Brand, a scholar and fiery Belz Hasid, who later went off to Warsaw where he founded the first Belz shtibl there, Yitzhak Brand, Yud'l Wagner (A teacher) with a thick, long beard, called Yud'l Brody.

West side, near the oven: Naphtali Fuchs, Yaakov Cooper, Getzel Brand, Moshe Nachman Shlomo'leh's the Talmud Torah teacher and if one of us (not on any of us) should be bereaved, he would sit for a whole year at the table by the oven.

Sabbaths at the *shtibl* were spiritual nourishment for the entire week, and we draw our life from there to this day.

Honor their memory!

Sanz-Cieszanow Shtibl

By Y. Nierengang

Page 85: *Rabbi Saul Yekhezkiel Rubin שליט"א with a group of students from the Cieszanow* shtibl.

It is correct to call it the Cieszanow *shtibl*, because while there were many Sanz Hasidim in Tomaszow, with the Rabbi *Tzaddik* R' Yehoshua'leh ז"ל at their head, they never had a shtibl [of their own], but rather, were concentrated in R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*. It was only in the twenties, that the Rabbi of Cieszanow R' Leibusz Rubin ז"ל, organized a separate *shtibl*, in which the principal foundation of this shtibl indeed was a split-off from R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*.[39]

However, this was not a *shtibl* in the ordinary sense of the word, meaning that it was [only] a gathering place for certain Hasidim who periodically gather for prayer and study. The Cieszanow *shtibl* immediately became transformed into a center for Torah and Hasidism in the city, as the most animated nerve center of the orthodox community in the city, as the wellspring of charity and good deeds both near and far, thanks to the dynamic personalities of its spiritual leader, the Rabbi of Cieszanow, ז"ל, who, like a magnet, attracted the best and finest from among Hasidic youth , in particular the young men, and together with them lived and revitalized Hasidic life in our city.

The Study of Torah

The custom of having a Yeshiva [as an institution of learning] was not well-accepted in general in Poland, and more specifically not by the Sanz Hasidim. The young men, and youngsters in general would sit and learn in the same city in a *Bet HaMedrash*, or in the *shtibl*. Up to the First World War, the young people would study in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*, the Turzysk *shtibl*, the *Hasidic Bet HaMedrash*, and others. Immediately after the First [World] War – for a short time in the Belz *shtibl*, through the Yeshiva of Novardok. However, with the establishment of the Cieszanow *shtibl*, the study of Torah, and the young men became exclusively concentrated in the Cieszanow *shtibl* (with small exceptions, a little at R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*, and the Husyatin *shtibl*). The sound of Torah study rang there from the early morning hours to late into the night hours, and very often until midnight. And every Thursday night – a late watch of the regulars.

When a young lad finished *Heder* training, his first steps were into the Cieszanow *shtibl*. His father knew, that apart from Torah, his son would also have Hasidic warmth and an ambience that will make him aware and proud that he is not swept along with the currents of the street.

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[39] The description of Rabbi Leibusz Rubin ז"ל, as the 'Cieszanow Rabbi' requires some explanation. The Cieszanow Memorial Book clearly identifies him as the Rabbi of Tomaszow-Lubelski, who died on a forced march out of the city at the time of the Nazi invasion of Poland. This reference seems to stem from the fact that this 'Rubin Family' was a dynastic family of Rabbis with ancient roots in Cieszanow. It appears that this is not the same individual as R' Aryeh Leibusz Rubin, who was a signatory to some official documents in the year 5677 [1917], who appears to have served in a rabbinical capacity in Cieszanow only.

The Curriculum

Naturally, the older boys and young people had oversight of the younger lads, and they gave lessons. When a starting student arrived at the start of the schooling period in the *shtibl*, he received one or two lessons in the *Gemara* with *Tosafot*. In addition to this, he was required to study the *Gemara* text, by itself, independently. And in those places where he did not comprehend the plain text, he asked one of the older boys, or Rebbe Hirsch Yisroel'keleh's (Ganzer) who sat in the shtibl and studied day and night, as well as the following young people: R' Eliezer Gershon Teicher, R' Yekhezkiel Hochman. R' Wolf Ber Lutshanowsky, R' Aharon Kalter, R' Yekhezkiel Putter, R' Avraham'eleh Goldschmid, R' Yaakov Herman, R' Yaakov Mordechai Guthartz, R' David Gartler, as well as other scholastically outstanding young men, who turned over every term because of marriages, and were replaced by younger lads. It is worth recalling Yitzhak and Yeshaya Heller, Leib'l Mermelstein, Baruch Akst, Elimelekh Heller, Abraham Singer, Chaim Yehoshua Biederman, Gershon Brand, Yehoshua Goldstein, and above them all, the sons of the Rabbi זי"ל, himself: The Rabbis Meir זי"ל, and separated for long life, Rabbi Sholom Yekhezkiel Schraga שליט"א.

All of them, in concert, applied their best energies and gave lessons to the younger lads, and directed them in Yiddishkeit, everything under the direction of the Rabbi of Cieszanow זצ"ל.

The oldest young men generally studied in groups of 2-3 together.

Casuistry was not known among us. The essential thing was to study the fundamental on the spot, with the commentary of the *Maharsha, Maharam, P'nei Yehoshua, Shita Mekubetzet* and other of the Early Sages. A portion of the young men, especially those who were influenced by the *Galitzianier* style of study, would also study the *Sugyot*. A great deal of importance was also attached to studying the volume *Orakh Chaim*, of the *Shulkhan Arukh*.

The Sabbaths & Festivals

These were the days in which they would imbibe the joy of fulfilling *mitzvot*, spiritual loftiness, with refreshment and awareness. On those days, the young folk would come to the Table Festivities of the Rabbi of Cieszanow, which were a wellspring of Torah and fear of Heaven, joy and inspiration. It is difficult to convey the feeling after the dances and singing and the Rebbe's words of teaching, and the discussions that imbued everyone with something of life, a feeling of renewal and spiritual refreshment.

Charity & Good Deeds

A great burden lay on the young men, and the young people in general, of the Cieszanow *shtibl*. As was the custom then in Poland, respectable people, such as a merchant who went bankrupt, or someone whose home had burned down, God forbid, of someone downtrodden that needed help, would travel through the various towns to beg for money. Such people would not approach the homes alone, but rather would come to the Rabbi or to the young men studying in the *Bet HaMedrash*. Seeing that we were all together, the *shtibl* students that studied in the *Rebbe's shtibl*, as well as the *Rebbe*, and that Tomaszow had the additional attribute of being near the border, we had respectable paupers from Congress Poland and from Galicia, and all of this was attended to in the Cieszanow *shtibl*. The Rabbi, or his sons, would always send along two other young men or other young people from the city, to gather money for the needy person they had encountered.

Guests

There was a lower class of paupers who did go from house to house. They would circle about the country throughout its length and breadth. They were called 'flower guests.' Gathering money for them was not a problem, because they personally went from door to door. For them, it was necessary to procure food and lodging.

Years ago there existed a '*Hekdesh,*' where unfamiliar paupers would lodge for the night. After the First [World] War, it ceased to function, because after the fire, the town paupers took possession of the residences, so that those paupers who called on the houses had no place to sleep. Part of them would sleep in R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl,* while a part would be taken in by R' Tevel Nat'eh (Madior) into his own home as an act of charity, and part would be provided for by the young men in private homes, or pay for a night's lodging to people who rented out rooms for this purpose.

On the Sabbath, most of the worshipers would take a guest home with them for the Sabbath day.

The young men of the *shtibl* also assumed the burden of providing kosher food, for the observant Jewish soldiers, that were doing their military service in Tomaszow.

Books

If in each house of worship there was an inventory of books, the goal of the inventory of books in the Cieszanow shtibl was a weighty one, because this place of Torah study and principal center of scholarly young students had a need for a very large number of scholarly and Halakhic texts, which were not available to be had from private individuals. It is because of this, that much energy was devoted to the acquisition of books. It is worth recalling the *Gabbaim:* Leib'l Mermelstein, Meir Rubin, Melech Heller and Yekhezkiel Rubin. Each week, a different young boy would go out to collect funds. Also, the Gabbaim would approach the authors in the four corners of the earth, in writing, to have them donate their books. Consequently, it was the Cieszanow *shtibl* that had the largest scholarly, religious library.

Agudah Activities

Despite the fact that the *Agudah* was a separate organization with its own local, all of the *Agudah* youth, and because the entire *Agudah* youth studied at the Cieszanow *shtibl*, all of *Agudah* politics and plans were decided upon and were hatched in the *shtibl.*

True, there were two categories of young men, those for whom the essential thing was study, and a second group who enjoyed to carry on political activity and to gather together, but when it came time to act, such as protests on behalf of the community or municipal elections, or for the Sejm and Senate, or for the gathering of a variety of monies for *Agudah* activities, such as *Keren HaYishuv*, *Yeshiva Khakhmei Lublin*, etc., all the young men took part actively.

The Dress

The dress of the young men and young people in general was strictly traditional: a Jewish cap (cloth during the week, and velvet for the Sabbath) a short jacket or a black long caftan, and white shirts; a hat, a colored shirt or a short overcoat was considered unacceptable, and one would be ostracized from the *shtibl*. It is interesting that Yud'eleh Szur one time saved up his money for an entire year to be able to buy himself a colored shirt for Passover, and he was compelled to take it off when if he didn't, he ran the risk of being ostracized from the *shtibl*.

The Cieszanow shtibl was the principal opinion maker in all religious matters in the city, and in general, had great influence on the appearance of the observant youth in the city.

The Worshipers of the Sanz Shtibl

Aryeh Heller, Yekhezkiel Heller, Yeshaya Heller, Aharon Kalter, Hirsch Ganzer (Yisroel'keh's), Moshe Knobloch, Joseph Ziegler, Mendl Sykevich, Yehoshua Sykevich, Yoss'li Sykevich, Hirsch Ader, Mikhl Weinblatt, Yoss'li Fitter, Yaakov Fitter, Hirsch Weissleder, Pinchas Weissleder, Yitzhak Shlomo Graff, Moshe Weintraub, Abraham Eli' Jahr, Yaakov Jahr, Yehoshua Jahr, Israel Pfeiffer, Moshe Pfeiffer, Yaakov Freund, David Gortler, Yitzhak Gortler, Yaakov Mordechai Guthartz, Joseph Guthartz, Mordechai Samit, Yaakov Herman, Yitzhak Koch, Sholom Singer, Shlomo Akst, Joseph Akst, Moshe Akst, Joseph Shapiro, Chaim Yehoshua Lichter, Baruch Youngman, Fyvel, son of the *Bet Din* Head Knochen, Moshe Weiss, Yekhezkiel Putter, Yekhezkiel Harman, Joseph Friedlander, Meir Klarman, Pinchas Horowitz, Yaakov Prager, Hirsch Leib Putter, Yitzhak Zucker, Baruch Adir, Lipa Maltz, David Zilberzweig, Itcheh Szparer, Isaac Morgenstern, Lejzor Weintraub, Henoch Adlerfliegel, Baruch Heller, Isaac Kraz, Sinai Greenbaum, Wolf Hebenstreit, Yaakov Prager and Shlomo Epstein.

The Chelm Shtibl

By Zusha Kawenczuk
Haifa

By contrast to other Hasidic *shtiblakh* that were associated with *Rebbes* from outside places, the Chelm shtibl was a Tomaszow shtibl, because the founder of the dynasty was the *Rebbe* R' Leibusz'l Neuhaus, a son of the Rebbe, R' Joseph Kezis, the Rabbi of Janów, and a son-in-law of the Rabbi of Opatów known by the name of R' Meir'l Stopnitzer[40], the author of the Hasidic book '*Or LaShamayim*,' who was the Rabbi and Rebbe of Tomaszow and oversaw a substantial Rabbinical Chair. Great miracles are attributed to him. Following him, the Rabbinical Seat was taken over by his son, R' Yisroel'ish, who died young, and the Rabbinate was taken over by his son, R' Meir'l, but he left the Rabbinical Seat over a dispute and became the Rabbi in Chelm, so that his adherents became known as the Hasidim of Chelm, and his *shtibl* – the Chelm *shtibl*.

The *Rebbe* of Chelm would visit Tomaszow every two years, but in a constrained and low key manner, not worshiping, or holding forth a *Tisch* in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, in the center of the city. Rather, [he did this] on a local basis, in his *shtibl*, meaning the Chelm *shtibl* which was at a distance from the Jewish center.

No hot-heads worshiped at the Chelm *shtibl*. Only important, taciturn solid *balebatim*, whose continuity in connection to their *Rebbe* came from their parents to the parents of the Chelm *Rebbe*. Among them were: R' Yaak'l Mincer, R' Shmuel Mincer, his son, Joseph is today in Israel, and his son Yuda [sic: Yehuda] in South Africa, and was a Burgomaster in Johannesburg[41]; Leibusz Borg, his son Yoss'ki, set apart among the living, is in Israel; R' Aharon Lakher, his son Yoss'l Lakher is in Israel; David'l Borg – his children are in Israel; Yehoshua Fishelsohn, who was a Burgomaster at the beginning of the First World War, and was martyred by the Nazis ימ"ש, may God avenge his spilled blood; R' Ber'ish Levenfus, his daughter Chaya'leh is in Israel; R' Shimshon Levenfus among the activists in Mizrahi, and others.

Approximately 60-70 worshipers attended the *shtibl*, and all of them occupied respected places in the community, assuming the obligations for the general needs of the city. Sadly, all of this has today vanished in so tragic a fashion, may God avenge their spilled blood, and may their memory be for a blessing.

It is worth making a permanent record of what has been conveyed to us by Mr. David Yoss'l Levenfus, that

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40 Indicating an origin from the Polish town of Stopnica, about 100 miles to the west of Tomaszow-Lubelski. This is apparently R' Meir Rotenberg (d. 1827).

41 The following corroboration was supplied by Dr. Saul Issroff, today of London in the U.K. and a South African by birth:

Jack Mincer became Mayor of Johannesburg (better word than burgomaster!), was a motor vehicle dealer and big in property.. extract for SA Jewry 1965 p. 341:b. Poland 20 Aug 1896, son of Samuel and Brucha, came to SA in 1919. Chairman and MD of Saker Motors group. Mayor 1949-1959. On executive of SA Jewish Board of Deputies. M Fanny Fleishman 1923, 1 son 1 daughter.

Interesting, as very few Polish Jews came onto SA.

there was a Torah Scroll in the Chelm *shtibl* which was referred to as the *Eighteenth Sefer Torah.* The explanation for this, is that this scroll was donated by eighteen young lads who especially ordered the scroll to be prepared.

Among them was his father Shimshon Levenfus, Yitzhak Levenfus, Aryeh Levenfus, Yitzhak Schaffel with his brother, Joseph Lakher, Joseph Mincer, Yuda Mincer, Hirsch Crook, etc. When the scroll was finished, the ordered two staffs for the parchment from Bezalel in Jerusalem, and they donated it to the Chelm *shtibl* with a great parade, and they established a custom, that on the Sabbath of *Bereshit* [i.e. the first Sabbath of the beginning of e annual Torah reading cycle], all eighteen of them would be called up to the Torah, and the donations they committed to were allocated for development in the Holy Land. During the '30's, Shimshon Levenfus and his friends began to have a second Torah Scroll written. Regrettably, the work was halted in the middle because of The Second World War, but Shimshon'li guarded it like the apple of his own eye. The first thing that he took out of Tomaszow with him was the completed panels of parchment, taking them to Russia, and when he was sent off to the Taigas in Siberia he had them with him, and when he came out of Russia, he hauled it on his tired back, and when they came to Poland and Austria he took all of this with him. Today, this is found in our Holy Land of Israel, and awaits a finishing hand to become a complete Torah, which we hope will become a joy to all the Tomaszow survivors, and a permanent memorial to all the Tomaszow martyrs.[42]

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[42] Quite independently, *The New York Times* carried the following obituary:

Jacob Mincer, 84, Pioneer on Labor Economics, Dies

By Louis Uchitelle
Published: August 23, 2006

Jacob Mincer, a pioneer in labor economics who was the first to quantify the payoff from education and training, died Sunday at his home in Manhattan. He was 84.

The cause was complications of Parkinson"s disease, his wife, Dr. Flora Kaplan Mincer, said.

Mr. Mincer had spent most of his career as a professor of economics at Columbia University, retiring from active teaching in 1991....

Jacob Mincer was born on July 15, 1922, in Tomaszow, Poland, the only son of Isaac Mincer and Deborah Eisen Mincer. When war came, Mr. Mincer was a 16-year-old college freshman in Brno, Czechoslovakia. He spent the war years in and out of prison camps in that country and Germany. His parents and two sisters fled east, but were killed by the advancing German army.

Soon after the war ended, Mr. Mincer won a scholarship financed by the Hillel Foundation to study at Emory University in Atlanta. He earned a bachelor"s degree there in 1950 and moved on to the University of Chicago and then Columbia, earning his Ph.D. in 1957. He taught at City University of New York before joining the Columbia faculty in 1960.

The Hevra Kadisha

By Joseph Moskop

Page 93: *The Entrance to the Cemetery, at the right is the watchman's house, on the left is the cottage used for purification rituals.*

(Our *landsman*, Prof. Louis Gerzon, who visited Tomaszow in the summer of 1944, relates that the place of the cemetery is cordoned off and he was not permitted to visit it, because the government has secret activities there).

Page 95: *The common grave of the Jewish soldiers who fell in the First World War, in a special place in the middle of the cemetery, bordered by a fence.*

As was the case in all other Jewish communities, there was a *Hevra Kadisha* in Tomaszow: however, as distinct from everywhere else, it called itself '*Hevra Kedosha.*'

How old was it in the city?

Probably as old as the settlement of Jews there. Because its first *Pinkas* was lost (we will later see under what circumstances) very important facts were also lost with it, about a variety of developments in the Jewish settlement and perhaps also the data concerning its establishment.

The *Hevra Kadisha*, from the time that I remember, and I remember it actually from the time of my earliest childhood, because my father was involved with it all the days of his life, had great status in the city. It was a great honor to be a 'Man of the Hevra,' because they were very particular about whom they would take into the *Hevra*. Naturally, they wanted Jews who were learned, but even more than that the candidate had to be seen as God-fearing. Also he conduct among people had a lot to say at the time of being admitted as a member. As a result, the *Hevra* consisted of select individuals.

Its activity was, because of its character, limited to the 'field' (that was the way they liked to refer to the cemetery) and to everything connected to it, but in practice, its activity extended beyond these previously mentioned boundaries. And this – is attested to by the underscored contents in its *Pinkas*. In the area of the 'field' is included: buying the parcel for the cemetery, directing the handling of the deceased, immediately as [death] occurred. Under these circumstances, at first, two members of the Hevra would come to pick up the deceased, and afterwards to do right by the deceased in accordance with the laws and customs of the *Shulkhan Arukh*. After the ritual purification, they would have a small '*L'Chaim*' toast to drive off the unpleasant odors that accompany such an activity. However, before everything else, even before beginning to accord the deceased his due, the *Gabbaim* would come together with the relatives, and other members of the *Hevra*, to discuss how much money shall be demanded of the heirs. From a poor person, they literally demanded nothing, and in special instances, they would even pay for the shrouds. However, from a person of means, a sum was demanded, in keeping with that the deceased's assets and the financial circumstances of the heirs. For example, if the deceased left behind unmarried children, or children without means, they were given a concession, however, great weight was given to whether the deceased had, during his lifetime, been a giver of charity or philanthropic, and if not, a larger sum of money was demanded. There were known

instances when the heirs did not want to comply with the demands of the *Hevra*, and the deceased was not interred until two or three days later.

For what purposes were these monies expended? Expenses connected to the 'field,' a permanent watchman had his residence there. To erect and repair the fence. Paying the *Shames*, who was at their disposal at every moment. And lastly, also to pay the grave diggers (formerly, this had been the work of the *Hevra* members themselves) and like costs, also for marriage ceremonies and repasts, as we will see later on.

And with the remaining money? Here is where their activities beyond the 'field' begin. With the remaining money, they supported other eleemosynary institutions and also individual needy people. In specific instances, they were also looked upon as the spiritual *balebatim* of the Jewish community. I recall, that a dispute went on for a period of time in the city synagogue, probably because of hubris, and prayers for several Sabbaths running was disrupted because of the arguments, and at that time, the *Hevra* took over the running of the synagogue. Each Sabbath, four different members of the Hevra would come to pray in the synagogue in order to maintain order, and simply out of respect for them, nobody dared to utter a word too loudly. After several month, the dispute quieted down.

What were their regulations and customs, and who were the leaders of this respected institution?

Regrettably, I cannot summon and establish specific memories about this, but I believe it is necessary for me to delineate that which is, indeed, known to me.

In the second half of the prior century {sic: the 19th century], a sharp dispute arose in the *Hevra* itself. R' Sinai Putter ע"ה, represented one of the sides. It was in the course of this dispute, that the Pinkas was lost, along with its by-laws. The *Rebbe* of Belz, R' Yehoshua'leh זצ"ל reconciled both sides [of the dispute] and published a *Pinkas* with new by-laws, according to which they conducted their affairs into contemporary times. In accordance with these by-laws, they would meet every year on a day during *Hol HaMoed* Passover, to select the leadership for the *Hevra*. They referred to these people as the '*Kalfei*.[43]' The names of each of the prominent members of the Hevra was written on a separate strip of paper, and five names were drawn at random, blindly. These were the five 'arbiters' who selected the leadership of the *Hevra* for an entire year. In the event of a difference of opinion, a decision was made by a majority vote. Then they selected a Head of the *Hevra*, a Trustee, four *Gabbaim*, and two Accountants, and others, whose titles I no longer remember. The first of the 'arbiters,' whose name was the first one pulled out. had the privilege of designating himself as a *Gabbai*, even against the will of the others. It is interesting that this privilege was rarely invoked. From the period that I recall, it was used once, by R' Aharon Kiezel ז"ל. All the appointed persons could not retain their positions for more than three consecutive years. After a break of at least one year, they could be appointed again. Naturally, the most prestigious position was Head of the *Hevra*. After him was the Trustee, who was custodian of the treasury, and almost all of the feasts and Festival celebrations took place at his home. The four *Gabbaim* carried out the technical work of the institution. They would select a burial plot for the deceased, and directed the procedures at every funeral. They also arranged for wedding ceremonies and feasts. Subject to the signature of two *Gabbaim*, the Trustee was obligated to pay out funds. The two accountants reviewed the treasury records each year, and submitted a report attesting to the integrity of the records. It is worth noting here, that at no time when this audit was conducted, was there ever an instance of any suspicion falling on the integrity of the Trustee, who managed the institutions financial assets.

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43 From the Hebrew, for a ballot box.

The by-laws of the *Pinkas* provided for the gradual absorption of a new member into the *Hevra*. It was the custom that for the first three years, a [new] member had neither passive or active voting rights, his name did not figure in the slips of paper for the '*Kalfei*,' such an individual being referred to as '*młodość*' (a youth, in Polish). He would participate in funerals, carried out technical tasks, and was called to all meetings just like all the others. After three years, he first became a *Hevra* Man, but only with an active vote, and first with six additional years could he then be appointed to the leadership.

Their meetings were: every Festival in the morning when Yizkor was recited, at a *Kiddush* after worship. On *Shemini Atzeret* and the Eighth Day of Passover during the day, with a variety of beverages, snacks and fruits. A full feast on 25 Nissan – on the occasion of the Yahrzeit of R' Yoss'leh ז"ל, on the night of Hanukkah, and *Tu B'Shvat* for fruit. On the eve of *Simchat Torah*, the entire *Hevra* went from the house of the Trustee, to the Rabbi where it sat for a bit, and heard a Torah discussion from him, afterwards, escorting him to the synagogue for *Hakafot*. After the *Hakafot*, they read excerpts from a variety of places in the Torah scroll, from all Five Books of the Pentateuch. This reading would stretch out until midnight. The *balebatim* of the synagogue would begin to go home a little at a time, not wanting to delay their families from partaking in their holiday meal to such a late hour; however, the members of the *Hevra* stayed until the very end. The Torah readers during my time were: R' Joseph Stahl (Yoss'l Ozer's) and afterwards his son, R' Yaakov. It is interesting, that with the passing of the former, the list of readings that were excerpted was lost. It became necessary to rely on memory, which caused a noticeable shortening to the reading.

Who were the members o the *Hevra* and their Heads?

Of the Heads before my time, only R' Sinai Putter is known to me, coincidentally my father's grandfather (my father, R' Shabtai was a son of his daughter Leah) and R' Nathan Neu. (His two grandchildren can be found here in New York, namely: R' Vova Neu and Baylah Kreuzer. Their father, R' Yehoshua was a son of R' Nathan). From those that I remember, there are R' Yisrael Putter (Yisrael Sinai's) R' Mott'l Greenwald (Mott'leh Fultcheh's) R' Mendl Reichenberg, and R' Mordechai Joseph Szparer. Trustees: R' Eli' Drimmler, R' Baruch Mabel, R' Hirsch Arbesfeld, R' Joseph Stahl, R' Yud'l Ader, and for a second time, the previously mentioned Heads. Gabbaim: R' Tuvi' Kornworcel, R' Shabtai Kawenczuk, R' Moshe Chaim Nickelsburg, R' Shabtai Friedlander, R' Elkanah Fruchthandler, R' Aharon David Eisen, R' Yehoshua Heschel Greenwald, R' Aharon Kiezel, R' Fyvel Putter, R' Aharon Lakher, R' Shmuel Mincer, R' Yitzhak Stern (Itcheh'leh Nitz). Of the members that I recall: R' Joseph ben Yerakhmiel Friedlander, R' Abraham'ehleh Nickelsburg, R' Nathan Greenwald, R' Yud'l Kiezel, R' Mendl Laneil, R' Mikhl Weinblatt, R' Chaim Knobloch, R' Asher Perlmutter and R' Joseph Putter.

In the Great Destruction, the German murderers also cut down this sacred institution. which had functioned for hundreds of years in our city. May this institution and its people remain in the memory of our children and children's children as a model of righteousness and respectful commitment to mitzvot and good deeds. Let a curse rest on those who accelerated the hand and the extermination of such a humanitarian institution consisting of such innocent and good-hearted people.

Memories of Tomaszow

By Mikhl Weinblatt
Petakh Tikva

Linat HaTzedek

This was one of the first and wonderful institutions for the common good that Tomaszow once had. It was especially active in the First [World] War, and immediately after the War, in which disease, God forbid, were rampant, and the poverty was great, and *Linat HaTzedek* saved many young Jewish lives.

Its activity consisted of dispensing medicaments at no charge, good food, such a bread rolls, for sustenance, milk and butter, and volunteer nights to sit with the ill. '*Linat HaTzedek*' was recognized by each and every Jew as an important activity, and a special tariff was imposed on ritual slaughter for its use. It was from this income that the institution sustained itself.

The activists were: Pinchas Szparer, Chaim Hymowitz, Yehoshua Fishl's Goldstein, and myself as a youngster. R' Eliezer Gershon Teicher was the bookkeeper.

The Ritual Slaughterer from Markuszow

I do not remember his name, only the story, which was as follows: The *Hasidim* of Radzyn felt very put out because not one of the servants of the community, such as Rabbis, ritual slaughterers, *Hevra Kadisha*, etc., was one of the *Hasidim* of Radzyn. Accordingly, they decided to retain their own ritual slaughterer at their own expense. However, the other Hasidim from all of the *shtiblakh* contested this, and did not permit them access to any of the butchers, nor to the slaughterhouse.

Having no alternative, the Radzyn *Hasidim* decided to do their own slaughtering, on their own account. The purchased cattle and Itta Hant'shels, as a *mitzvah*, sold it to them at no profit.

One time, on a Saturday night, they were leading a large ox to be slaughtered. A group of young folks from the Hasidic shtiblakh cut the rope, and the beast ran away. Since they were not experienced butchers, they were powerless in their attempt to capture the ox that had run free, and it disappeared. After this loss, the ritual slaughterer from Markuszow vanished. The boycott against the Hasidim of Radzyn persisted until the Holocaust.

The Collection Box of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess

By Sh. Leibowitz

This was a sacred ritual special to the *Hasidic* homes, where every Friday before sundown, prior to the lighting of the candles, a few groschen were dropped into the collection box. At every opportunity, be it a joyful occasion, or God forbid, a time of trouble, coins were dropped into the box. If one had a bad dream, or if God forbid, one's phylacteries fell off, the Rabbi would direct that twice *chai* was to be dropped into Rabbi Meir's little box. This box endured all the suffering as well as the joys of Jewish households, and it became an integral part of the Jewish family. There were no salaried collectors who gathered up the saved monies, only the most prominent of the *balebatim*, R' Aharon Lakher and R' Elkanah Fruchthandler had the franchise for this *mitzvah*. They emptied the boxes twice a year. R' Yisroel'i Garzytzensky was the President.



The Rabbis of Tomaszow

By Sh. Licht

Page 101: *The Rabbi, R' Yerakhmiel Mordechai Weinberg ז"ל the Rabbi of Krylow.*

Page 102: *The Rabbi, R' Aryeh Leibusz Rubin, ז"ל (The Rabbi of Cieszanow)*

A basic treatment of those who held Rabbinical positions, since its founding and up to the Holocaust, is given in the Hebrew section of the essay of Sholom Lavi, and this is not a complete and exclusive list, but only that which has been possible for me to research and uncover, with great effort.

1. Rabbi Noah, The Bet Din Senior was the City Rabbi in the years 5380-5404 [1620 - 1644].

2. The Rabbi, R' Yaakov ben Uri Fyvusz, *Bet Din* Senior and Headmaster of the Yeshiva, left Tomaszow and became Rabbi and Headmaster of the Yeshiva in Slutsk.

3. The Martyr, Rabbi Mordechai ben R' Joseph of Vilna. A brother of the *Baal Maginei Shlomo* of Cracow. Bet Din Senior and Headmaster of the Yeshiva. Was martyred in the year 1649.

4. Rabbi Yehuda ben R' Nissan, Bet Din Senior and Headmaster of the Yeshiva, was previously the Rabbi of Tarnow, and afterwards Kalisz, the compiler of the book, *Bet Yehuda*, left Tomaszow approximately in 5415 [1655].

5. Rabbi Reuven Zelig ben R' Yaakov, Bet Din Senior.

6. Rabbi Yitzhak ben R' Yekhiel Mikhl, Bet Din Senior approximately in the year 5433 [1663].

7. Rabbi Chaim ben R' Mordechai, *Bet Din* Senior and Headmaster of the Yeshiva, approximately in 5447 [1677].

8. Rabbi Eliezer Lejzor Heilperin, *Bet Din* Senior, left Tomaszow in the year 5455 [1685] and became the Chief Rabbi and Headmaster of the Yeshiva in Purda.

9. Rabbi Yehoshua, *Bet Din* Senior (his grandson, Rabbi Hirsch was the author of a book, *Avodat HaShir*, and lived in Tomaszow).

10. Rabbi Moshe ben R' Yehuda Leib Goldin, a grandson of the *Turei Zahav*[44], *Bet Din* Senior, left Tomaszow in the year 5500 [1730]

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[44] Rabbi David HaLevi Segal, also known as the Ta"Z, (1586-1667) was a Polish rabbi and Halakhist (authority in Jewish law). Rabbi Segal was born in 1586 in the thriving Jewish community of Cracow, Poland. He was the son-in-law and pupil of Rabbi Joel Sirkis, whom he frequently quotes in his works. He died in 1667 in Lvov, Poland.
The descendants of Rabbi Ha-Levi were the Russian rabbinical family Paltrowitch, which produced 33 rabbis over several generations; Bruce Paltrow and Gwyneth Paltrow are also their descendants.

11. Rabbi Nathan Neta Cohana-Shapiro, *Bet Din* Senior and Headmaster of the Yeshiva, left Tomaszow and became the Rabbi and Headmaster of the Yeshiva in Tyszowce.

12. Rabbi Eliezer Perils, *Bet Din* Senior and Headmaster of the yeshiva, passed away approximately in 5545 [1775]

13. Rabbi Moshe Boszko, the sone of Rabbi Herschel'i Zamoscher, the Rabbi of Hamburg, author of the book, *Responsa of Tiferet Zvi*, *Bet Din* Senior, and left Tomaszow and took up residence in Brody.

14. Rabbi Saul Hertzfeld, a grandson of the Zamość-Lemberg Rabbi, the author of *Mirkevet HaMishna*[45], *Bet Din* Senior, left the city and took up residence in Warsaw.

15. Rabbi Yitzhak Nathan HaLevi Neighbor, Rabbi in Tomaszow.

16. Rabbi Yoss'ki, *Dayan.*

17. Rabbi Dov Ber'ish Shwerdscharf, *Bet Din* Senior, left Tomaszow and became the Rabbi of Bilgoraj.

18. Rabbi Yaakov Aharon Janowski, a Just Teacher.

19. Rabbi Aryeh Leibusz Neuhaus, *Bed Din* Senior and Chief Rabbi. a son of Rabbi Joseph Kezis of Janów and a son-in-law of the *Or LaShamayim* of Opatów[46].

20. His son, Rabbi Yisrael Shmuel Neuhaus, *Bet Din* Senior and Chief Rabbi.

21. His son Rabbi Meir Neuhaus, was Rabbi for only a short time because of a dispute, and he went off to Chelm where he was the Chief Rabbi.

22. Rabbi Nathan Hebenstreit, Rabbi and *Bet Din* Senior, went off to Zamość and then to Przemysl.

23. Rabbi Yaakov Eliakim Getz'l, a Just Teacher and Rabbi and *Bet Din* Senior.

24. Rabbi Yitzhak Eliyahu, *Bet Din* Senior, left the city because of a dispute.

25. Rabbi Moshe Rogenfish, *Bet Din* Senior, previously was the Rabbi of Chmielnik.

26. Rabbi Anshel, *Bet Din* Senior, left Tomaszow and took up residence in Lemberg..

27. Rabbi Shmuel Singer (Temerel's) Rabbi and *Bet Din* Senior.

28. Rabbi Joseph Aryeh Leibusz Frischerman, Rabbi and *Bet Din* Senior.

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45 This is Rabbi Shlomo Halma, whose story is briefly summarized in the Zamość Memorial Book. An early ardent Zionist, he passed away late in life in Salonika while trying to fulfill a life-long dream of reaching the Holy Land.

46 See Page 50, 123, 251

29. Rabbi Shimshon Ze'ev Sztokhammer, Just Teacher (the blond teacher of the tradition) was killed in the Ukrainian pogroms.

30. Rabbi Chaim Aharon Shidkovsky, *Bet Din* Senior (The Litvak).

31. Rabbi Joseph Leibusz Frischerman, *Bet Din* Senior.

32. Rabbi Nachman Neuhaus, Just Teacher son of the Righteous Rabbi Yisrael Shmuel Neuhaus.

33. Rabbi Yerakhmiel Mordechai Weinberg, *Bet Din* Senior, the former Rabbi of Krylov.

34. Rabi Aryeh Leibusz Rubin, *Bet Din* Senior and Chief Rabbi, former Rabbi of Cieszanow.
35. Rabbi Meir Abraham Frischerman, Just Teacher.

36. Rabbi Pesach Sitzmakher, the Rabbi of Jarczow, lived in Tomaszow during the war, and was the Rabbi of the city up to the liquidation.

And to be set aside for long life:

37. Rabbi Moshe Frischerman שליט"א

38. Rabbi Sholom Yekhezkiel Schraga Rubin, שליט"א

The Rabbi of Cieszanow
Rabbi, R' Aryeh Leibusz Rubin, זצ"ל

By Y. Weintraub

He was called after the city where he was the Rabbi and the *Hasidic Rebbe,* before he took up residence with us in [our] city. However, in truth, he was one of the members of the Rabbinate by us in our city, and finally, the Chief Rabbi.

I do not undertake to describe his erudition and charity, pedigree and wisdom, because this is beyond my powers. I wish to convey what I, as an ordinary person, saw and was able to grasp.

His patriarchal and majestic appearance, with is enchanting friendly look, captivated every person who came in contact with him. His pure crystal personality, and ardent soul was like a beacon tower, especially for the observant proud orthodox youth.

If the city had, in him, a loyal shepherd, a wise and active Rabbi with exceptional skills, if the Hasidim had in him a true *Tzaddik* and a bosom friend – then we, the youth, had in him a true and loyal educator, and a spiritual father. Every young boy saw in him, a fatherly relationship. He infused content into our lives. He elevated our souls wit energy and pride, awareness and clarity.

It was a spiritual pleasure to enjoy participating in a *Tisch* of his, and heartfelt, sweet and committed prayers, with which everyone was swept along in the refrain of his captivating melodies. With his fiery ardent soul, and Sanz intensity, suffused with genuine joy and liveliness, he refreshed us all and elevated us. He awakened the sleepy and ossified, and transformed them into blossoming lives, full of energy and a lust for life, with deeds for Torah and *Hasidism.*

Of special interest was the Friday evening *Tisch,* with the dances and Hasidic discussions which, with each participation, enriched our spiritual storehouse with Hasidic lore, and stories of ancient *Tzaddikim.*

His *Shaleh-shudes* meals were very lofty. It is a couple of decades since I had the privilege to sit at such a *Shaleh-shudes,* yet the picture still stands before my eyes: It is dusk on the Sabbath. The night draws near with quick steps. It spreads its dark wing over the entire world, and like a black silk curtain, it covers the window of the Rabbi's big house. The Rabbi's visage becomes intermingled with the heaviness of the dark. Only the white streaks of his small beard twinkle, and the white flowers on his *Tisch* kaftan. However, one cannot see a figure, all one hears is a soft voice, from the heart. The *Rebbe* begins to sing '*Askinu Seudasa,*' with a fervent Sanz tune, and the gathering sings along after him. The Rabbi sings louder and louder. The ecstasy rises. The gathering is consumed by the fire. One feels as if one is a part of the '*...B'nai hilkha dikhsifin...*' Somehow, he transports us to such distant worlds that we yearn for, which do not permit one to descend to the everyday workweek world, about to begin after the *Havdalah ceremony,* so rapidly.

And when one concludes with '*...B'nai hilkha...*' and between one [Psalm of] *Mizmor L'David* and the second, it falls silent, and the Rebbe hums a tune to himself, '*...lis asar pinui mini...*' there is not a space empty, as it were, but at the same time, '*...lis makhshava tfisa bokh klal...,*' no mere mortal mind can grasp [the nature of] the Creator. And after a couple of minutes of such conviction, he begins with the [second Psalm of] *Mizmor L'David,* Psalm 23, 'The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want.'

At that time, somehow, he managed to imbue our hearts with such a strong sense of security, that we all felt that 'The Lord is My Shepherd,' and with it, 'I shall not want,' meant that we were missing nothing. This, despite the fact that the six days of the regular week awaited us, and with empty pockets, debts and notes, and boycotts.

And when he concluded with 'May His peace be placed upon us, blessing and peace,' with a cheerful Sanz march, everyone became suffused with happiness and confidence, and we approached the new week full of fath and confidence and full of the spirit of taking on our obligations.

We had special experiences and refreshment of spirit during the High Holy Days, when a great host of Hasidim would arrive from faraway. The prayers of the holy days lasted until dusk, and afterwards the march to *Tashlikh* accompanied by song and dance, left a deep impression on the young people. Or, the Sanz-style *Hakafot* of *Simchat Torah*, which in those days was the culmination point of joy and worship. It bubbled with joy and sanctity. First the songs of commitment, and the pouring out of the soul, and afterwards to be present at the dances at the *Hakafot*, and the populace clapped and sang until the late hours. Or, the blessing of Hanukkah candles, with his melodies that came from the heart. Indeed, it was this spiritual elevation that made our souls full.

His spiritually rich and substantive discourse with the young people set us on a spiritually rich base. He also would take an interest in private life, possible wedding matches, and helped as much as he could in connection with practical matters.

And now, about his discharge of Rabbinical duty: his precision and clarity in juridical affairs. His concern in looking after all the affairs of kashrut. His wisdom and knowledge. At the time of every difficult experience, one went in to see the Rabbi, solicited his advice, received a blessing, and felt that one's heart had been lightened.

All of us were proud of our great spiritual bastion. Even his political opponents respected him and gave him their consideration.

This very same Tzaddik came to be cast out into the Siberian Taigas, where the commandant harassed him and insulted him, where he suffered hunger and want, and saw how his beloved child, the gifted and talented Rabbi Meir had to die from hunger and suffering. On 26 Sivan 5702 [1942], his holy soul also left his body, and he lays together with Meir and his grandchild Nechama Zikhlinsky, and 25 other Jews in Gur'jevsk, in the Novosibirsk Oblast, may their souls be bound up in the bond of life.

It is worth noting that he anticipated the Holocaust and warned that one should fervently pray for continuation of peace, because no matter how bad the situation was for Jews, it would be that much worse in the event of war. That it would not compare to the troubles of the First World War, because the instruments of war today, were much greater, and Hitler means what he says, and the Poles here are in a position to give him considerable assistance.

The Tashlikh River

By Rae Lehrer Fust

At one time, the Kosciuszko Street was once called '*Die Ulica*[47],' just like all the other streets where there were gardens, trees and flowers. But this street was different from all the other '*Ulicas.*'

For example: the '*Ulicas*' not far from the *krynica*[48], or the 'Ulica' near the *'targowica,'*[49] indeed had orchards, gardens, trees and flowers, but the houses were low, the windows small, hung with shutters that covered the panes.

The gardens were planted with green stuffs. In the spring, when one went for a stroll there, the eye was entertained by the young sprouts: from new-month radishes, beet leaves, hay, shallots, cucumbers, beans, potatoes, corn, carrots, pumpkins, olive trees, and parsley. The budding sprouts emitted a delicious aroma, the trees blossomed, and the white pollen fell like an aromatic snow.

A gentle breeze caused the trees to rustle. And when the sun illuminated everything, one could see green in all manner of shades, only that there was no river there.

There was a 'pond' of sorts near the *krynica*, that was formed from the water runoff of the gardens that abutted it. This 'pond' was overgrown on all sides with sorrel grass. Only in the middle, was there a green foam. Often, when the water of the pond was illuminated by sunlight, one would see miniature colors, of lilac, blue, red, green, purple and yellow.

There were times when it was thought that the 'pool' contained oil, and it was the light of the sun that formed such colors.

The *Ulica* that later became the Kosciuszko Street was quite different, because this *Ulica* had a river.

This river was circular, and was in the very center of the street. And it was this very circular river that was called 'The *Tashlikh* River.'

On the sides of the street there were foot bridges. Near the foot bridges, little huts. The huts had porches, and some had windows, which were hung with tulle curtains. Flowers grew in the gardens. Trees lined the street and it extended from the Kiri'sch Highway, which bounded it at its beginning, to the Brigade '*Ulica.*'

This street was the promenade of the observant fathers and mothers, and their children. [The reason was] that the circular river made this '*Ulica*' into a 'Jewish street,' despite the fact that Christians lived there as well.

The circular river was called 'The *Tashlikh* River,' because on *Rosh Hashana*, Jews came there from the Kiri'sch Highway, and from the '*Ulica,*' and from quite far, for the *Tashlikh* ritual.

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47 A Slavic root, common to Polish and Russian, meaning a 'street.'

48 A body of well water. Perhaps a decorative pool of sorts, found in a botanical garden.

49 The central marketplace

And so, Jews stood by 'The Tashlikh River' (on Rosh Hashana) dressed in their holiday finery. With a *gartl* around the waist, and with red kerchiefs in their pockets. With their *Makhzors* in hand, they piously swayed front to back, and recited the *Tashlikh* prayers. Young boys emulated their fathers in swaying back and forth, and the tails of their long *kapotes* swayed along with them.

The women stood at a separate second side of the circular *Tashlikh* River. Decked out in their finery from the 'Dress Shop' with a *Makhzor* in hand. Out loud, they entreated The Most High for a good and healthy year, for nachas from children, for ease in raising them, and for sustenance.

The little girls looked like flowers in their variegated little dresses. Like flowers absorbing the dew, they drank in the image of Tashlikh, and carefully hid it away, deeply in their hearts and memories.

When a breeze blew, the reflection of the trees in the water also swayed rapidly, and the girlish curls and the curled side locks of the boys flew about. One thought that the prayers flew directly up to heaven.

The pockets were then emptied. the crumbs were thrown into the water. and one felt cleansed of sin, and went away with a lighter heart from the circular *Tashlikh* River.

A Few Facts about My Family from Tomaszow

By Isaac Bashevis[50]

I am a scion of Tomaszow on my father's side. My father, Rabbi Pinchas Menachem HaKohen Singer, is a son of Rabbi Shmuel Singer who, late in life became the Halakhic Director in Tomaszow. His father was R' Yeshayahu of Konskie, and his father – R' Moshe *Harif* of Warsaw (the author of *Iggeret HaKodesh*, which was printed in the book, *Da'at Moshe*), a son of R' Tuvia Sztekszyner Rav, as son of R' Moshe Rav of *Sadeh Khadash* (Neufeld), a son of R' Zvi Hirsch *Rav* in Zhork and so forth and so on. My father's pedigree is even more distinguished on his mother's side, my grandmother, Tema'leh, or Tema Bluma, as her name was. She was descended from the ShA"Kh[51], from *Megaleh Amukot*[52], and the ReM'A[53]. All of this is spelled out in a letter from our relative, Rabbi Zvi Yekhiel Mikhlson, the Rabbi of Plonsk.

I have never been in Tomaszow, however, from childhood on, I heard stories about my grandfather, R' Shmuel, my grandmother Tema'leh, my grandmother, Hinde Esther. This very Hinde Esther was a personality, *sui generis*. She wore a fringed garment[54] and would travel to visit Rabbi Sholom of Belz. I think her husband was called R' Itzik Hirsch and I am named for him: Yitzhak Zvi.

My grandfather, R' Shmuel, was and remained a dependent individual. Mostly, he spent years living from supported by his father-in-law, and mother-in-law, and committed himself to the study of the *Kabbalah*. He barely spoke, and prayed for long periods of time, and wrote things that he never had published. After his father-in-law's death, my grandmother Tema'leh became a jewelry merchant. She would travel around among the wealthy to sell precious stones. Later on, she opened a small clothing store. He was a sickly man, about whom my father writes as follows in the introduction to his book, *Maggidim Hadashim*:

> "And Is I remind myself of my sanctified father, let us tell of his virtue, which I saw with my own eyes. Each and every day, he committed hi entire being to his pure and pristine prayer,

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50 This is the Nobel Prize-winning Yiddish novelist, Isaac Bashevis Singer. This text overlaps heavily with, but is not identical to, three chapters in his memoirs, '*In My Father's Court.*' Those chapters are: 'The Family Tree,' 'After the Wedding,' and 'To Warsaw.' In what follows, some footnotes will be given to identify variances in content and translation to clarify the author's meaning.

51 The ShA"Kh was Rabbi Shabtai ben Meir Ha-Kohen, an eminent 16th Century interpreter of Jewish law.

52 Rabbis are often referred to, in an indirect manner, by the title of their most famous works. In this case, the reference seems to be to Rabbi Nathan Neta Spira (Shapira) (1585-1633), the author of a work titled, *Megaleh Amukot*.

53 Moses Isserles (or Moshe Isserlis) (1530 - 1572), was a Rabbi and Talmudist. Rabbi Isserles is also "the **ReMA**" (or "the RAMA"), the Hebrew acronym for Rabbi Moses Isserles.

54 The '*tallit katan*,' a garment to enable the wearer to discharge the obligation of wearing '*tzitzit*,' or fringes, was usually required only of men.

such that, after completing his worship, he needed to change his clothing because he had become so perspired from the effort, with his love of God and his commitment to Him. He would be engaged in Torah study for the entire day, revealed and esoteric, and all done in a subdued fashion. He wrote many esoteric things about Torah, with great trepidation and fear of God, and was very modest in his own self, praising God for the bad with the same joy as for the good. As for those who did him wrong, he embellished them with goodness, always justifying the decree as is he was always beset with tribulation. This is just a part of his holy ways" —

From time to time, my grandfather would take trips, and it was not known where he went. After he married, and at the time he was being supported, he did not want to eat any meat. He knew, however, that his father-in-law and mother-in-law would raise a ruckus, so he swore mt grandmother Tema'leh to keep this a secret. For seven years, he made do for the entire week only with dry food, and my grandmother had to find all sorts of excuses, so that my great-grandmother would not know about this.

There is a trait that runs through almost every member of our entire family: introversion. My grandfather, R' Shmuel was an introverted man. My maternal grandfather, the Rabbi of Bilgoraj, R' Yaakov Mordechai Zilberman, also was introverted. My father was like this also in a large measure, despite the fact that he was simultaneously undisciplined. When my father was a young boy, he did not socialize with the other young boys and had a reputation as an idler. As a young man, he had already begun to write innovative things, and authored a book that he called '*Ratzuf Ahava.*' It was, if I am not mistaken, a commentary on the *Siddur.* It could be said of my father, without any apology, that he didn't have any concept of a coin.

My father had an older brother, Yeshaya who married in Galicia. After his marriage, this Yeshaya became a merchant and a wealthy man. He lived in the city of Rohatyn. He also had a brother, Shimon, who died young, and two sisters that married in Hungary. There were several insane people in my father's family and my mother would leave him even when she had a minor spat with him.

In those years, families quickly fell apart. My grandfather R' Shmuel died. His children all moved away. Only my grandmother Tema'leh remained in Tomaszow. She passed away at the beginning of the First World War, over the age of eighty. My father was the apple of her eye, because my grandmother had an indescribable love of Torah, and *Yiddishkeit.* In addition to this, she was a woman who was well acquainted with life, and got along well with people. She was perhaps the only one of my family (to the extent that I know) who mingled with people and was close to them. I did not know her, but my friend R' Moshe Gordon (Garzytzensky) knew her quite well, and he told me a little about her. I received regards from her all over. Here, in New York, and elderly Yiddish actress who came from Tomaszow, told me about her. I no longer remember her name. She sat with me for an evening, and did not stop praising my grandmother Tema'leh.

Due to the fact that my father had, in his youth, begun to write innovative essays, and to comport himself in a rabbinical manner, the young men in the *Bet HaMedrash* harassed him in a manner not unlike the way the older brethren pursued the young Joseph. It is likely that they also jeered at his idleness. He was, and remained, a man divested of all worldly things. He did not know a word of Polish. For him, the only ones who existed were religiously observant Jews. The Torah and religiously observant Jews, for him, constituted the entire world. Apart from this, everything was alien, uncivilized, the [sic: useless] husk of the world.

My father would speak mournfully, about his brother Yeshaya ,who had become a merchant and wealthy man.

I repeat here, in brief, what I had described at length in my book, 'In My Father's Court,' but I believe that

I have added [here] several facts that are not found there.
A great fear for my father (as it was later for me) was the draft, for presenting one's self for military service. I cannot conceive of any worse punishment for a man like my father, than having to be among 'Ivan's' gentiles. Higher forces shielded him from this fate. He received a '*Ligota.*' I do not know exactly what this is, but I think this was a higher number. My father would tell us about this often, and add that he actually never needed to disrobe in front of the gentiles.

In his entire life, my father had but one wish: to study Torah in peace, but regrettably, he never had this peace. He wanted to learn the Torah and deal in *Yiddishkeit.* He had the sense somewhere, that he wanted to become a good Jew, but it was no longer the time for such things. My uncles, the sons of the Rabbi of Bilgoraj, looked upon my father as an idler. He didn't want to learn any Russian, didn't want to take any sort of examination, which in those days was necessary in order to become a Rabbi. What remained in our family was an expression of my Father's. One day, he said: 'There is no point to it, I will not speak to the Governor!' My mother, who had within her a spark of worldliness, and much wisdom, would repeat this 'solution' with sarcasm. But, I understood my father only too well. The Governor, for my father, was the symbol of '*goyishkeit,*' that which is alien, sin, lust for power. Talking to the Governor for my father was the same as going into a cage with a malevolent beast.

It was through my father that I obtained an understanding of the Jew, the ghetto-Jew, that very same Jew that burdened himself with non-denumerable mitzvot and compounding difficulties in order to segregate himself from the gentile. The prime mover of *Yiddishkeit* consisted of distancing one's self from the '*Goy*' as far as possible: as much as the body will permit. The *Haskalah,* for my father, was as unclean as the flesh of swine, because it sought to *approach* the gentile. I recall how a Zionist once said to my father, that Jews need to become a nation like all other nations, and how my father looked at him astonishment. With sadness. The phrase, 'like all other nations,' killed him.

When his own children began to stray, this was an indescribable sorrow for my father. He had one explanation: that they came from a way of life of *Mitnagdim.* While the Rabbi of Bilgoraj did pay homage for a brief time to the *Rebbe* of Turzysk, deep inside he was really a *Mitnaged.*

Yiddishkeit for my father was *Polish Yiddishkeit.* {It was] the Yiddishkeit of the disciples of the *Baal Shem [Tov].* [To] everything that belonged to the ancient times, to books of the sort that today's person has no access.

My father had dark hair, a tobacco-red beard, blue eyes, and a Slavic nose. He was handsome, but short in build. Apart from his faith in God, he had a boundless believe in Holy Men. He trusted people in general. He was easy to fool. He had a childlike soul. One time, he gave away the last sixty rubles he had, to a pauper.

The World War, the straying of his children, pained my father, but did not dissemble him. All of this had one name: the world of the husk, the world of darkness, wickedness, lust, evil, that God had created in order that you might have a choice, and therefore be able to elevate yourselves to a high level. My father was the Rabbi of the *shtetl* Leoncin by the Vistula for ten years, and then, he was for years the Director of Halakha in Warsaw on Krochmalna Street. Then – after the War – he became the Rabbi in Stary Dzikow, a tiny bit of a *shtetl* near Oleszyce. He had nachas from only one son, my brother Moshe, the youngest, who was an enduringly righteous man. I cannot, nor will I here, write about his righteousness. He was killed by the Bolsheviks. My father had one joy: He died before the Hitler Holocaust.

When I was in Israel, I met there with a Karper family, who were our distant relatives, and the elder Karper, an erudite Jew, talked to me about my grandfather and father.

The bit of *Yiddishkeit*, that bit of Yiddish fire that there is in my works, I inherited from them, my father, my mother, my grandfathers and grandmothers. The bit of light that there is in the Yiddish literature is a reflection of their light. If we do not all become gentiles, it is only because they hold us closely, and do not permit us to be torn away from our origins.

My Shtetl Rising

By Rae Fust

Dedicated to the eternal memory of my brother **Joseph** and my sisters **Chaya'leh** and **Chana'leh,** sister-in-law **Mindl** and their families, who were exterminated in the destruction of Poland. May God avenge their blood.

The sky is suffused with blue,
The grass covered with dew,
The shutters closed,
The moon hangs in the sky sunk in thought.
A *Gemara* refrain rises from the Belz shtibl
And mixes with the intonation
Of Jews reciting Psalms in the *Bet HaMedrash.*
Birds sing their song,
A mother goes to her child
In a crowded residence.
Gold colored small clouds decorate the sky,
The shepherd and his flute
Leads the cattle, already noisy.
Already awakened by the chirping of the birds,
Little girls go
In colored dresses.
With flower-decorated kerchiefs on their heads.
Their feet covered by ragged shoes.
With sleep still in their child's eyes
They go to the woods,
Each holding a small pot or jar.
Their young backs are bent,
They gather berries and mushrooms.
The sun turns a tinder red,
And in a low-slung house
Bread is baking.
Laundry is drying
On a neighbor's fence.
Smoke already curls up from a chimney,
The first *minyan* prays aloud,
Onion breadboards are redolent with poppy seed,
The rooster crows from the attic.
A message: night has gone away
The little *shtetl* has awakened.

Tomaszow – Before The First World War

By Moshe Garzytzensky

Page 115: *The grave of a martyr of the year* Ta"kh *[1648] in the middle of the street near the synagogue.*

At a small meeting of Tomaszow *landsleit*, which took place at [the residence of] the Tomaszow-Cieszanow Rabbi, the Righteous Rabbi R' Sholom Yekhezkiel Rubin-Halberstam שליט"א, it was planned to publish a Yizkor Book about Tomaszow, in order to preserve the memory of the martyrs who were brought down by the unclean Nazis, may their names be erased. Each of those attending were given a task to write about a certain 'theme,' memories about our birthplace Tomaszow-Lubelski.

I was given the task of writing [a piece] about the above indicated title, 'Tomaszow Before The First World War.'

However, 'before' The First World War has no limit. Tomaszow figures only minimally in the history of Poland. From the history '*Toledot HaYehudim*,' and other books, Tomaszow is mentioned only in connection with the Chmielnicki period, may his name be erased. His hordes laid waste to Tomaszow. Hundreds of Jews were slain. And as legend would have it, 300 children were interred in one single [mass] grave. I remember from my childhood onwards, in the three days of preparation prior to Shavuot, the Hevra Kadisha would go about with shovels, and maintain the graves that were in the following streets: in front of the synagogue, in front of the *Bet HaMedrash*, etc. In Hasidic texts, the name of Tomaszow is mentioned in connection with various *Tzaddikim* that lived there, and which I have used, for example: *'Shem HaGedolim HeKhadash,' 'Niflaot HaRebbe,' 'Ohel HaRebbe,' 'Ohel Yitzhak,' 'Or Niflaot,' 'Shearit Yisrael,' 'Dover Shalom,' 'HaBe'er,' 'HaRebbe MiKotzk,' 'Przysucha und Kotzk,'* etc. In most of these, Tomaszow is mentioned in connection with the *Hasidism* of Kotzk.

In the years 1945-46, when the tragedy that befell the Jewish people became apparent, the greatest destruction in Jewish history, in which a third of the Jewish people were exterminated, and the destruction in Poland became known, that all the little towns were emptied of their Jews by the Nazis, may their names be erased, with the assistance of anti-Semitic Poles, I wrote a few memoirs about Tomaszow for the *'Morgen Zhurnal*,' but which had only a personal family character. However now, I will attempt to write in a more general manner.

As is the usual case, towns, especially small towns, become known through a *Tzaddik* or a *Gaon* that lived in that town. As cited by the first Chief Rabbi in the Land of Israel, the *Gaon*, Rabbi Abraham Yitzhak HaKohen Kook זצ"ל. He has said: Hasidim say: It is not only the recollection of the name of a Tzaddik that privileges Jews, but also the mention of the city where the Tzaddik lived, it too invokes a privilege. And it is through the great *Tzaddikim* that lived in the small towns, that such a small town became world famous. He established this, and cited a reference from the Jerusalem Talmud (*Yoma*, 3): From the entire [Middle] East, he only mentions Hebron, and why only Hebron? – In order to recall the benefit derived from our holy ancestors, the Patriarchs that are interred there. And it was through the few *Tzaddikim* that lived in Tomaszow, that this little *shtetl* became world renown.

The Rebbe, R' Mendele ל"ז

A large part of what Tomaszow occupies in many *Hasidic* writings is thanks to the Kotzk *Rebbe*, R' Menachem Mendl Morgenstern, ל"ז. He is known throughout the Hasidic world as '*R' Mendele Tomashover*,' who began to direct his Hasidic way of life in Tomaszow, and afterwards re-situated in Kotzk. He was a son-in-law of R' Isaac Neu, a wealthy and learned man, from among the best of the *balebatim* in Tomaszow, who promised him permanent financial support, so that he could sit and learn without being disturbed.

In the book, '*Sefer HaGedolim HeKhadash*,' the author, R' Aharon Woldin ל"ז, who lived in the time of R' Mendele, writes as follows: '...The Rabbi, Our *Rebbe* and Teacher, Menachem Mendl of Tomaszow was an exceptionally gifted *Gaon*, holy and pure, etc, a disciple of the Lublin 'Seer,' and of '*Yid HaKadosh*' of Przysucha, and of *Rebbe* Simcha Bunim of Przysucha.' After he describes the greatness and sanctity of R' Mendele, he writes: Approximately at the age of twenty years, he secluded himself in his room, and did not leave his personal quarters. His greatest disciples were *Rebbe* Yitzhak Meir ל"ז, the first *Rebbe* of Ger, and *Rebbe* Hanoch Henoch HaKohen ל"ז, of Alexander.[55]

R' Mendele was an outstanding disciple of the *Tzaddik* of Przysucha, Rabbi Bunim, ל"ז, and he would often study with the Rebbe. He was the most significant of the Hasidim of Przysucha, and after the death of the Rebbe of Przysucha, he began to conduct the rabbinate of Tomaszow independently. And despite the fact that the Przysucha Rebbe left a son, Rabbi Abraham Moshe, ל"ז, the better of the young scholars traveled to Tomaszow to the *Rebbe*, R' Mendele.

Among the great analytical minds in the milieu of Hasidic youth was 'The Warsaw Genius,' R' Yitzhak Meir ל"ז, the later founder of the Ger dynasty, the world famous Rebbe of Ger, or better known by the name of his book, '*Khidushei HaRi"M*,' (All the great Rabbis were called after the name of the book that they authored). Also, other Rabbinic dynasties later grew out of the Hasidism of Tomaszow, as for example: Ger, Izbica, Lublin, etc. (Incidentally: The *Rebbe* of Izbica, R' Mordechai Joseph ל"ז, was born in Tomaszow) to which the majority of Polish *Hasidim* belonged.

R' Mendele had an exceptionally sharp mind, (the '*Khidushei HaRi"M*' said of him, that if he had lived in Tanaitic times, he would have been one of the Tana'im) and he did not want a large following, he only sought out selected individuals, a quorum of truly gifted minds, in order to elevate themselves to even higher spheres. the young Warsaw genius, R' Itcheh Meir'l, the later *Rebbe* of Ger, on whose word, many thousands of Hasidim in the Warsaw vicinity would hang, was one of his principal disciples.

Hasidim from Tomaszow would come to Przysucha, and they would convince the better young scholars to travel to Tomaszow. They looked for the exceptionally sharp minds who would be able to grasp the new way of the Hasidism of Tomaszow.

The older Hasidim of Przysucha, opposed this, and said that R' Mendele's way is forbidden. However, the 'agitators' said: we must have a Rabbi who can teach us how to go on the sharp edge of the sword, and R' Mendele will teach you in this way.

The eternal lamp in the Bet HaMedrash of the Rebbe of Przysucha, flickered by the prayer stand, which

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55 This was Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak of Przysucha.

threw large shadows on the walls; and the Hasidim tell the following: When R' Itcheh Meir, the 'Warsaw Genius' entered the *Bet HaMedrash*, and drew near to the table, nobody took note of him, the Hasidic discourse was carried on, and one Hasid said: – R' Mendele is too analytical, and we want a Rebbe to whom one can pour out one's heart, so that he will want to and be able to understand us. – If so, R' Mendele is not for you, because there in Tomaszow, the veins are surgically excised....[56] – R' Hirsch Tomashover responded, who had secretly come to Przysucha, in order to persuade young people to travel to Tomaszow.

Rebbe Yitzhak Worker ל"ז, who has sat for this entire time sunk in thought, hear R' Hirsch Tomashover's last words, and he responded: With this level of analytics, nothing is accomplished, it is only through the love of the Jewish people that the world can be saved. However, R' Mendele puts everything on the point of a knife.

In Tomaszow one learns – R' Hirsch Tomashover again said, that one rips out the entire lie, and permits only the bare truth to remain.

And I hold – Rebbe Yitzhak Worker gave a shout – that 'There is little good in intention' – every Jew even, and especially, the one with a sharp mind, if he just has the correct intention, it is already sufficient. And Rebbe Yitzhak Worker then began to tell the assembled Hasidim a story:

– I once studied the commentary on the sentence in Leviticus 25:14 *'If you sell land to one of your countrymen or buy any from him, do not take advantage of each other,*[57]' with a coterie of Jews regarding the great sin of fooling someone: an estate manager listened in on this discussion as well, and he went home to his wife, and instructed her that she should no longer adulterate the milk, that she sold in town, with water, because it is forbidden to fool people. This wife gave heed to her husband's words, and she began to bring pure milk into the city. In a couple of days, the Jews ceased coming to him to buy milk. The milk – they said – was no good. So this estate manager ran into me in a state of great agitation, demanding what it was that I wanted of him. So I responded to him: As we can see, the world cannot make do with the simple pure substance. Just put in a little bit of water into the milk, and the Jews of the town will again come back to buy milk from you.

And that is what happened....the milk became 'good' again,,,, and in this connection, I say the same to you: it is necessary to put in a little bit of water... otherwise, the world won't be able to get along.

In the book, *Shearit Yisrael*, my Father ל"ז, the author writes: ...that R' Nathan Neu told him, that when he was still very young, his father R' Yehoshua Neu took him along to the wedding of the son of the *Rebbe* of

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56 An allusion to the process of treiboring, performed by a slaughterer-specialist, called a *Menaker* in Hebrew. The removal of the vein from an animal hindquarter rendered that part of the carcass kosher and fit for observant Jewish consumption. It was, however, a very tedious and exacting process. Here, an analogy is drawn to the exacting logical reasoning employed in R' Mendele's Talmud study.

57 The author cites te Hebrew text inaccurately.

Kotzk[58], R' Benjamin ל"ז, which was held on a very cold winter's day. The wedding canopy was set up in the yard, in front of the window of the room of the *Rebbe* of Kotzk. All of the wedding kin and the bride, and the bride's father, himself the '*Khidushei HaRi"M*,' and Hasidim, escorting them in their silken garments, stood and waited for the *Rebbe* of Kotzk to come out, since he was to officiate at the wedding ceremony. However, the Rebbe did not appear, despite the fact that , through his window, he could see that the audience was waiting, and shivering from the cold.

After the wedding ceremony, the parents of the couple and the important guests, such as R' Hirschel'eh Dushkis, R' Yitzhak Meir, the '*Khidushei HaRi"M*' and R' Henoch of Alexander ל"ז, went to say *Mazel Tov* to the *Rebbe* of Kotzk. All of them spoke while standing. Afterwards, R' Mendele said: '*Nu*... this was a hint a wink, that everyone needed to exit. However, since the *Rebbe* of Kotzk had his hands around the *gartl* of the '*Khidushei HaRi"M*,' he stood standing, as did his son, R' David ל"ז. It was at that time that the *Rebbe* of Kotzk gave an excuse for why he had not immediately come out to the wedding canopy, and he said: I want now to tell you and I am revealing the reason, because I had with me at that time, 'my very dear friend,' a 'valued guest,' who came to visit me on the occasion of this wedding – this was Rabbi Yitzhak Worker ל"ז, and how could I have possibly taken my leave of him and go out? At that very time when my friend was in my presence?... It was R' David ל"ז the middle [son] of the Kotzk *Rebbe* who told this to R' Nathan Neu many years later, and it was R' Nathan Neu who told this to my father ל"ז.

In that time, when R' Mendele began to carry out his duties in the position as the Rabbi of Tomaszow, the flow of Hasidim was drawn to Tomaszow under the influence of the Warsaw Genius, R' Itcheh Meir ל"ז. Old and new, the silk-clad young people abandoned their wives and children, and came to Tomaszow, to imbibe spiritual pleasure. And in order to sustain themselves, they created a communal group with a shared treasury, to which both the poor and the wealthy belonged, or put better: there were no rich or poor, all were equal, and it was like one big family.

At that time, the town *Bet HaMedrash* was under construction in Tomaszow, and they became simple laborers, carrying loam and bricks, and the money that they earned from this was placed in a common treasury. They would study at night, all pushed together in a corner, to drink a toast of '*L'Chaim*,' and to immerse themselves in a word from the *Rebbe* towards midnight.

Among the very young Hasidim was also R' Leib'leh Eiger ל"ז, who would later become the Rabbi of Lublin.

Hasidim tell: Rabbi Shlomo Eiger ל"ז. the son of the great Rabbi Akiva Eiger ל"ז, who played a prominent role in Warsaw; his appearance was arresting, a handsome man with a long flecked black beard that was clean and neat, he would wear a cloth top hat, a three-quarter length *kapote*, with long striped trousers, and shined shoes, as was the custom in that time in Germany, and he came to Tomaszow to find his son, R' Leib'leh, who had fled from the home that was *Mitnaged* inclined, and remained residing in Tomaszow.

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58 Rendered *Kock* in Polish. We retain the 'Yiddish' spelling because it is likely to be more familiar to the reader.

Rabbi Shlomo Eiger made the rounds in the Hasidic *Bet HaMedrash*, from one table to the next, and asked: have you perhaps not seen my Leib'leh?

The Hasidim barely acknowledged him, but rather continued with their discussions of Hasidism, until he ran into R' Lejzor Ber *Hasid*, who was walking about sunken in thought with a pipe of onion in his mouth, and he asked him the same question: have you perhaps not seen my Leib'leh?

I don't know whom you are referring to – R' Ber *Hasid* replied to him, and continued to pace, sunken in thought about the *Bet HaMedrash*. However, when he had walked a few steps further, he ran back to R' Shlomo Eiger, and asked him: My fellow Jew, whom do you mean? Do you refer to Leib'l Shlomo's? – If it is him you mean, he will return shortly, he has been sent out to fetch some drink...

The Hasidim pushed themselves to the table where the 'Warsaw Genius' sat, and listened to his explanation of the *Rebbe's Dvar Torah*. Immediately, the Rebbe called R' Itcheh Meir into his private room, and when he subsequently emerged, he was totally soaked through with sweat.

When the Hasidim approached him asking that he tell them what it was that the *Rebbe* discussed with him, he did not want to give them any reply, all he said was to the elderly Hasid, R' Hirsch Tomashover: It is necessary to start going to school all over again... Oh, does he cut out the veins.... But it does not matter, now I have found my *Rebbe*, to whom I can attach myself, for surely, a fire burns here!....

And full of great joy, R' Itcheh Meir began to dance with the Hasidim, and once again, they began to sing the words,

'In Tomaszow a fire burns
A new light rises....'

Until suddenly a shout was heard: Give me back my son! – this shout had come from R' Shlomo Eiger who had come to take his son R' Leib'leh back. – What is this? A saloon? – He shouted once again in a loud voice.

The Hasidim stopped their dancing, and they wanted to let him have it, but R' Itcheh Meir gave a wink, indicating that he should not be touched. He approached him and inquired as to what he wanted. Rabbi Shlomo Eiger knew the 'Warsaw Genius' very well, and he asked him anew: And also you, R' Itcheh Meir, are to be found among them?

— Yes, I am also among them – R' Itcheh Meir replied: But you are making a big mistake if you think that this is God forbid, some sort of saloon. Do you know why the Evil Inclination [sic: in Man] is called a 'Dolt?' As it is written, [Ecclesiastes 4:13] *'Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to take warning*;' because in truth, the Evil Inclination os the most cunning among the wise, and a dolt, and he is called this because all he deals with are fools....

– Very good – R' Shlomo said, and before R' Shlomo had time to think about what to reply, he was taken into the circle, and they began to dance with him, but with even greater enthusiasm than before:

'In Tomaszow a fire burns
A new light rises....'

Yet another great *Hasid* who followed Rabbi Mendele Tomashover, was R' Mordechai Joseph ל"ז, who later became the *Rebbe* of Izbica, the patriarch of the Radzyn Rabbinic dynasty.

R' Mordechai Joseph was born in Tomaszow in the year 5561 [1801]; He was the leader of th 'residents' at R' Mendele's. There were two kinds of Hasidim, those who would come to the *Rebbe* only for the Sabbath, and remain there for a week or two. And there were others, who had left wife and child for months at a time, and resided for this whole while in Tomaszow.

R' Mordechai Joseph ל"ז, himself born and raised in Tomaszow, concerned with providing these 'residents' with a living, finding 'jobs' for them, and their entire earnings would go into the treasury. After a day's work, and after resting up with a page of the Gemara until late into the night, they took a '*L'Chaim*' drink, and with it they sang:

He who has hidden himself,
Under my balcony,
Gives a sign that he loves
The elderly father...

Having not yet prayed
And not yet studied
At least the Creator,
Was not provoked.

Let us not worry,
What will be tomorrow,
Rather let us repair,
That which we spoiled yesterday.

The ranks of the *Hasidim* of Tomaszow grew larger and larger. It was necessary to erect a large chamber. Many of the 'residents' slept there. They worked together and took their meals together in the chamber. This is how things proceeded for several years, until a conflict broke out with another Rebbe, who also lived in Tomaszow, and was an opponent of the Hasidism of the Kotzk-Przysucha variety. When *Rebbe* Mendele began to conduct his brand of Hasidism, it elicited opposition from the *Rebbe* R' Yoss'leh.

The Rebbe, R' Yoss'leh ל"ז

R' Yoss'leh Jarczower, he was called that because he had been the Rabbi in Jarczow, a small *shtetl* near Tomaszow, was an outstanding pupil of the Rabbi of Lublin, the *Chozeh*, ל"ז,.[59] Who indeed had instructed

[59] Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak of Lublin, also Jacob Isaac of Lublin, or Y. Y. Horowitz (Polish: Jakub Izaak Horowic), known as "The *Chozeh* of Lublin" (The Seer of Lublin), or simply as the "*Chozeh*", (1745-July 15, 1815) was a Hasidic Rabbi from Poland.

A beloved figure of the Hasidic movement, he became known as the *Chozeh*, which means "seer" or "visionary" in

him to take up residence in Tomaszow, and all of the Hasidic *balebatim* grouped themselves around him and his leadership.

During the first times, R' Yoss'leh worshiped together with R' Mendele in the Hasidic *Bet HaMedrash*. But later, R' Mendele was compelled to leave, and he, along with his Hasidim transferred to the *shtibl* on the promenade, which in my time was called the '*Hevra Tehillim*.' However, when the defections began to rise, the more R' Mendele's Hasidim arrived, the greater became the antagonism of R' Yoss'leh to them. This conflict grew more intense, and the city balebatim adhered to R' Yoss'leh and in order to avoid any future conflicts, R' Mendele left Tomaszow, and took up residence in Kotzk. And from that time on, he was called the '*Rebbe* of Kotzk.'

But before the *Rebbe* of Kotzk left Tomaszow, he said to those near to him smilingly: Our Sages say: Two Torah scholars live in the same city, and each does not yield to the other on matters of Halakha, one dies and one goes off into exile (Talmud *Sota* 49), and so, I desire to be exiled....

It was in this manner that R' Mendele left Tomaszow, and transferred himself to Kotzk, in the Lublin Province. A new period was initiated in Kotzk, a shining epoch, thousands of Hasidim began to travel to Kotzk, especially Torah scholars, young students, Rabbis and gifted intellects.

R' Yoss'leh Jarczower would travel about in a variety of cities and towns, and he once arrived at a city where he was in the habit of spending some time every year. The head of the house, at that time, married off his daughter to a young man who was a Kotzk Hasid. When R' Yoss'l heard this, he moved to a different inn. The young man, the Kotzk Hasid, found himself to be highly insulted, and went to R' Yoss'leh. After saying hello to him he said: Those *Tzaddikim* who take issue with the Kotzk way is due only to the fact that he worships at a later hour, therefore, I ask of you, Rabbi of Tomaszow: The commandment to pray comes only from our Rabbis, which our Sages set down, but you embarrassed me publicly, which is forbidden by the Torah itself, where it is written: Who insults a comrade in public, does not have a portion in the world to come?....

These words made a great impression on R' Yoss'leh, and he replied: I truly regret this, and I repent. So the young man asked him: Is it possible to repent in one minute? – Certainly! – R' Yoss'leh replied, it says so explicitly in the Gemara: Who marries a woman on condition that he is a totally righteous man – the woman is married to him, because perhaps in his heart he had repented. From this we see that even the felling of repentance is sufficient.

When he returned to Kotzk, the young man related the conversation he had with R' Yoss'leh Tomashover to R' Mendel. The Rebbe of Kotzk then said: If I had spoken to R' Yoss'leh, and he had said that to me, I would have replied that his citation from the Gemara is entirely inappropriate to the issue. Because, there, in 'marrying a woman,' he is after all a bridegroom, and a bridegroom is one of three who are forgiven their sins, as it is brought forward in the Jerusalem Talmud, *Bekhorim*. That is why, a feeling of repentance suffices for him, but for another man, who is not a bridegroom, a feeling of repentance is not sufficient, rather he must engage in substantive repentance...



Hebrew, due to his great intuitive powers. He was a disciple of the Maggid of Mezeritch. He continued his studies under Rabbi Shmelke of Nickelsburg and Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk. He lived for a while in Lancut before moving to Lublin, in what was then Czarist Russia.

R' Hirsch Tomashover ל"ז

One of the closest adherents of the *Rebbe*, R' Mendele, was R' Hirsch Tomashover. He was the right hand of the *Rebbe* of Kotzk. And also, when the Rebbe of Kotzk closeted himself in his own private room for about twenty years, and did not let anyone in, the door remained open to R' Hirsch his 'soul brother' who could come into his inner sanctum at any time, face-to-face. In Kotzk, very little was spoken; understanding was achieved by a wink, and when the Rebbe would say one word, or a short phrase, it was imputed with meaning, interpreted and explained... naturally with an emphasis, so that even a shortened beat of a melody, already contained an inference, a meaning. R' Hirsch Tomashover was a great expert in interpreting the *Rebbe's* brief words.

One time – the Hasidim tell – a residing Hasid got the desire to hear how R' Mendele reviews the portion of the week on a Friday. The Hasid stole into the *Rebbe's* room, and hid himself behind the door, in order to hear the *Rebbe* review the portion of the week. So he hears how the Rebbe is grousing about the sentence, '*..and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*,' making the remark: 'Ha? –as thyself?...' and after several minutes th e Hasid heard the Rebbe pronounce the word with the trope note '*esnakhta*[60]:' '*O-o-khamoka*! The form of the question and the reply severely disturbed the Hasid; he could not understand its meaning. The Hasid sneaked out of the *Rebbe's* room, and asked R' Hirsch Tomashover for the meaning, and he explained to him briefly: the Rebbe himself asked: how can the Torah say that a man must love his friend like himself, can a person indeed love himself? '*Kamokha*?" This seems like a contradiction, in contrast to the way of Kotzk? Self-admiration engenders falsity, to self-delusion, to alien thoughts?.... But the answer to this is as follows, this is the explanation: Since we have to conduct ourselves with modesty, in a lowly way, with self-hate, we must, in the same measure show love to a second person, unbounded affection for our fellow man... this is what the Rebbe meant: *Ha-a...Kamokha? – O-o-kamokha!....*

R' Hirsch Tomashover once came to Lublin, and came together with R' Leib'leh Eiger ל"ז, who had previously traveled to Tomaszow to the Kotzk [*Rebbe*], but afterwards went to Izbica, to R' Mordechai Joseph ל"ז: This was after the *Rebbe* of Izbica had passed away. So R' Leib'leh said to R' Hirsch: I would really like to travel back to Kotzk. R' Hirsch Tomashover said to him: When you can feel within you the condition that prevails for an ascetic: '*and the first of the days shall fall*,' that the entire time that you had gone to Izbica has fallen away, as if it never happened....then you can return to Kotzk.

Rabbi Yehoshua'leh Tomashover ל"ז

After the passing of the Rabbi R' Yoss'leh ל"ז, the Rabbinical seat was taken over by his son, R' Yehoshua'leh ל"ז.

The writer of these lines remembers Rabbi R' Yehoshua'leh, who in my childhood years was an incredibly old man. Most of all, it was his sanctified patriarchal appearance that made the greatest impression on me, on the occasion when he was invited to come to see us in the Turzysker-Kuzmir *shtibl*, and act as a *Sandak* at a *brit [milah]*. To this day, I remember that pious visage and silken caftan, with the broad *gartl* and the high hat.

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60 Torah cantillating makes use of a series of well defined musical notes, each of which has a Hebrew name. This is on of them.

This R' Yehoshua'leh was a greatly important personage to the Holy *Rebbe* of Sanz, R' Chaim Halberstam ז"ל, who played a rather large role in the Hasidic scholarly world, and indeed with the [characteristic] Hasidic ardor, as he learned it in Sanz, he conducted Hasidism in his own house of worship, 'R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*,' as well as the Hasidic *Bet HaMedrash*. R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl* was the most observant of all the *shtiblakh* in Tomaszow. It was so, to the extent, that it was possible to recognize the young people and boys as coming from R' Yehoshua'leh's Bet HaMedrash. There beards, side locks, their entire demeanor, dress, was different from that of the Hasidic Jews who worshiped in the other *shtiblakh*.

In the book, '*Dovayr Shalom*,' the following is presented: ...that one time R' Yehoshua'leh Tomashover was spending *Shavuot* with the old *Rebbe* of Belz, R' Yehoshua'leh ז"ל. So, the *Rebbe* of Belz asked that at his Tisch, the following verses be sung:

'And they all came to the Covenant together,
'We will do, and we will hear, they said as one,
And they began and replied with 'The Lord is One.'

With great feeling, the Hasidim sang this once, and then again more loudly and with greater spirit. Suddenly, the Rebbe of Belz gave a wink to signal for the singing to stop. And he said: Our Sages say: At the time that the Torah was given [on Sinai] the Jews responded with 'Yes' to all positive commandments, and to each commandment of prohibition – no! And our Sages continue: '*I am, and Thou Shalt not* [61] – were uttered simultaneously. That means, that the positive commandment of '*I am*' and the prohibition commandment '*Thou shalt not*' were said together, in one expression. As a result, the Jews did not know whether to answer 'Yes' or 'No.' Because, were they to say 'Yes,' it would be possible that God forbid, they could be seen to assenting to the '*Thou shalt not,*' commandment, which is a commandment of prohibition. And if they say 'No,' one could err and construe that they are rejecting the commandment of '*I am.*' In this connection, they counseled with one another, and they responded with 'The Lord is One,' [i.e. the verse, 'And they began and replied with 'The Lord is One.''], the reason being, is that this constitutes a response to both commandments. And the *Tzaddik* of Belz said with all his energy: 'And they began and replied with 'The Lord is One,'' and he did this with such a leonine roar, and with such a vigorous voice that a great dread fell upon all those who were within earshot, and R' Yehoshua'leh had said, that a fright fell on him [as well] when he heard the *Rebbe* of Belz utter in such a loud voice: And they began and replied with 'The Lord is One.'

Rabbi Yehoshua would travel extensively with his Gabbai throughout Galicia and Hungary, where he spent the larger part of the year in transit. And it was through him that our city of Tomaszow became familiar to peoples in Galicia and Hungary. When I would simply recall my birthplace in the presence of Galician and Hungarian *landsleit,* they would immediately reply with: 'Ah, R' Yehoshua'leh Tomashover!



61 Shorthand for the first two of the Ten Commandments

The Rebbe, R' Leibusz Neuhaus ז"ל

Another Rabbinic dynasty in Tomaszow was the Neuhaus family. The founding father was R' Leibusz ז"ל. They descend from the great *Gaon* The Ba"Kh ז"ל. and it is from him that they get their family name. The acronym Ba"Kh stands for *Bayit-Khadash* – a new house [sic: Neuhaus]. He was referred to by the name of his great book, '*Bayit-Khadash*,' – Ba"Kh.

For a certain period of time, I studied with the Rabbi, R' Nachman, a grandson of the Rebbe, R' Leibusz, in the 'Chelm *shtibl*.' R' Nachman k"z, was a great Torah scholar, and a very handsome man of magnificent presence, having a patriarchal persona, which elicited respect and deference. He was the Rabbi of Krasznik for many years, and in his older years, he took up residence in Tomaszow.

In passing, I wish to introduce a word that is told of the Rabbi, R' Leibusz, זצ"ל: A Tomashover *Hasid* was with R' Sholom Joseph ז"ל, the oldest son of the Holy Ruzhiner ז"ל. When he returned, he related to R' Leibusz what he had seen there: that during the time that the Rabbi, R' Sholom Joseph was saying his prayers in his private chamber, he did not hear a single voice, he only heard the tread of the *Tzaddik*, going back and forth. After praying, the attendant entered the private chamber, and he brought out a soaked shirt that the *Rebbe* had taken off, and hung it up to dry. The Hasid from Tomaszow wondered about this greatly, but the attendant said to him: this is a daily occurrence, every day after praying, I must take off the *Rebbe's* shirt, which has been soaked through, and dress him in another shirt.

When the *Hasid* told this to the Rabbi, R' Leibusz, that which he had seen at the home of the *Rebbe* R' Sholom Joseph, the Rabbi R' Leibusz remarked: this is the test that is referred to in the '*Kedushat Keter*' which is recited on Rosh Hashana: '*Zayot, bli l'ot, m'khil kisay.*' This means: the heavenly host does not sweat from exhaustion, but from trembling before the Throne of Glory....

My Grandfather

The Tomaszow Rabbi. The *Gaon*, R' Moshe Rogenfish ז"ל, was well-known in the scholarly and Hasidic world, not only in Tomaszow and its environs, but also throughout all of Poland.

Previously, he had been the Rabbi of Chmielnik, for seven years, and then Konskowola. Afterwards, he was in Tomaszow until he died, 18 MarHeshvan, 5640 [1879].

Here, I wish to cite what my father, ז"ל writes in his book, '*Shearit Yisrael*,' about the appointment of my grandfather as the Rabbi of Tomaszow. This actually took place in Trisk, at the home of the *Maggid* of Trisk, זצ"ל.

My father traveled with my grandfather to the *Maggid* of Trisk, to ask his advice, as to which seat of the rabbinate to accept. Th reason for this, is that he had been asked by two cities, in Hrubieszow and Tomaszow. The *Maggid* of Trisk then said: he does not consent to the Hrubieszow appointment even if the entire populace of residents agreed to it. By chance, on that Sabbath, the most important *balebatim* from Tomaszow happened to have arrived in Trisk, and it was immediately decided there that he should assume the pulpit in Tomaszow.

My grandfather's '*Questions & Responses*,' were printed by the greatest of the *Gaonim* who lived in his time, in their own books, such as the book, "*Responsas of Khidushei HaRi"M*,' of the first Rabbi of Ger. And many responses were lodged with us from the Rabbi of Sanz ל"ז, and also in the book, '*Avnei Nezer*,' of the *Gaon* of Sochaczew ל"ז, there are printed responses from my grandfather.

In the book, '*Shearit Yisrael*,' the author writes that when the Rabbi of Sanz ל"ז was told that the Rabbi of Chmielnik (my grandfather was at that time the Rabbi of Chmielnik) had come for a visit, he went out to receive him, and in greeting him, took him in both of his holy hands, and led him into his study.

He knew my grandfather personally, apart from the fact that they corresponded over questions and their responses. The Rabbi of Sanz was a friend of Rabbi Joseph Neustadt, the son of the author of '*Maor V'Shemesh*,' ל"ז, and when the Rabbi of Sanz was in Neustadt, all the Rabbis in the area would travel to him for the Sabbath, and there they engaged in dialectic and learning And my grandfather had a brother, R' Yaakov Yitzhak ל"ז, in Lancut, who was a great scholar, and who also traveled to Sanz, and he wrote to his brother that the Holy Rabbi of Sanz had said: I can relay regards to you from your brother, the Rabbi of Chmielnik, because I was in Poland, and I entertained discussions with many Rabbis, and I regard your brother as the greatest scholar of all the Rabbis that I encountered in Poland.

I still recall the many hand-written questions and responses done by my grandfather which were [left] with us. One could have produced several large volumes from them. Among others, there were questions and responses from the Rabbi of Lemberg, R' Joseph Shaul Natanson ל"ז, the author of '*Shoel U'Mayshiv*,' from the Rabbi of Radomsk, the author of '*Tiferet Shlomo*,' from the Rabbi of Jass, the Rabbi of Kalisz, R' Chaim Elazar Wachs ל"ז, the author of '*Nefesh Khaya*,' from R' Yehoshua'leh Kutner ל"ז, and from many other great Rabbis.

The hand-written responses that were with us are recalled in the book, '*Shearit Yisrael*,' complete folios, which were not printed, from the greatest of the righteous, from the Rabbis of Berdichev, Kazachina, Ruzhany, ל"ז, which tragically were all consumed by fire in the 'Destruction of Poland.' A small part of them are reproduced in the referenced book '*Shearit Yisrael*,' written by my father.

One hand-written essay, called '*Pri Maggidim*' [sic: the fruit of the Orators], from which my father copied, and finally was completed and published by Rabbi R' Pinchas Mendl Singer[62] ל"ז, a scion of Tomaszow, who was for many years a director of Judaic tradition in Warsaw.

May grandfather ל"ז, knew the *Tzaddik* of Ruzhany [personally], and he traveled to sees him in Ruzhany (Russia), even before he took up residence in Sadagura (at that time in Austria). And this was the way he wrote down the appearance of the *Tzaddik* of Ruzhany: Once, the *Tzaddik* of Ruzhany ל"ז said: It is cited that King Solomon had little hair, and yet, it is said of King Solomon thus: 'And he was wiser than all men,' and this despite the fact that he had little hair, as it is said in the world: 'Long on hair – short on common sense.' And here is what he wrote:[63]

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62 It appears that this may have been the father of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

63 Despite the fact that this is given in both the original Hebrew and Yiddish, only one translation is given here.

'I the writer had the privilege of seeing his sacred countenance while he was still in Ruzhany. He did not have a beard, like a lad of fifteen, and at that time he was already forty years old. It was only about the lips that he had any hair, and afterwards, I was privileged to be with him in Sadagura, after he was confined to the prison in Kiev. He had a wart like a pea, out of which grew a number of strands of hair that could be counted. So writes Moshe, the Rabbi of Tomaszow.'

As the Rabbi, my grandfather would pray every Sabbath in the Great Synagogue. Only on the Festival Holidays, did he have discretion over where he would pray. In this respect, he exercised a prerogative to pray at the Trisk *shtibl* on *Simchat Torah*.

As a little boy, I studied in the small prayer house of Husyatin, with R' Moshe ז"ל, an elderly Jew, who knew my grandfather very well. He would tell me very interesting stories about my grandfather. However, this is not the place to retell them. I will only relate a single item.

In that time, the Synagogue, which had come to ruin, underwent repair and many letters that had been written on the walls in ancient times had become erased, and in many places, entire sections of the wall had been chopped down.

An especially talented artist was specially brought in, who drew out a variety of artistic pictures, which symbolized historical events. For example: the Western (Wailing) Wall, Rachel's Tomb, Cities in the Holy Land, etc. One picture near the entrance to the synagogue portrayed the 'Binding of Isaac' where Isaac lies stretched out and bound on the altar, awaiting the slaughter, and Abraham stands with the large knife in his hand. Abraham [is pictured as] tall with a handsome white beard, a patriarchal figure, with a broad sash, a high forehead, wearing a Polish *shtrymel* on his head. The artist had presented my grandfather as Abraham, 'that is exactly how your grandfather looked,' – my Rebbe told me.

The sentiment on my grandfather's grave stone reads:

Both a Hasid and a modest man who cried out and offered praise
A great Rabbi, who can retell his grandeur
His thorough knowledge of the Torah, was praised by all who heard it
He judged with integrity and did charity in Israel
Placing his own soul as dust for all who beseeched God
The great beacon of a Rabbi, the leader of Ariel's Diaspora.[64]

Our Teacher, Rabbi R' Moshe son of Rabbi Ephraim Fishl זצללה"ה, The *Bet Din* Senior of Tomaszow.
Grandson of the ShL"A and ReM"A. May he rest in peace and rise up at the end of days.
Moshe ascended on high on 18 MarHeshvan 5640
The year: The days of weeping and mourning for Moshe, was a heavy period of mourning for the Jews.

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64 The first letter of each line in the original Hebrew forms the acrostic for the words, *HaRav Moshe*, or Rabbi Moshe.

Rabbi R' Shmuel Singer ז"צ[65]

One of the great Rabbis, a Director of the Faith, was Rabbi Shmuel Singer ז"ל. I can recall his patriarchal figure yet from my childhood. Rabbi Shmuel actually lived in our house: when he died, I was still a little boy. But his sacred persona still stands before my eyes. The great white beard, with his large *tallit katan*, the open collar of his shirt, where two strings hung, in place of buttons, to tie up the collar opening. The high forehead with the large skullcap on his head. This is how he sat, sunken deeply into a large book, either a *Gemara*, or *Yoreh De'ah*. When he went off to pray, he carried a large prayer shawl and phylacteries under his arm, with a staff in hand, a caftan with a wide sash, and a high hat on his head.

The Rabbi, R' Zvi Yekhezkiel Mikhlsohn, The Lord avenge his blood, writes, in his book, 'Honor the Father,' that the Rabbi, R' Shmuel Singer, the Director of Faith in Tomaszow, told him that which he heard from his parents, an interesting thing about the Rabbi, R' Shmulik. Here is not the place to retell it. Also, in the book, 'Wonders of the Rebbe,' Hasidic sayings by him are included.

Rabbi R' Pinchas Mendl Singer ז"ל, the son of R' Shmuel Singer, was the Rabbi in Lenczyn and afterwards the Director of the Faith in Warsaw, enumerates the pedigree of his father R' Shmuel of Tomaszow-Lubelski, in the book, *'Maggidim Hadashim,'* who was the son of the Rabbi of Konskie, the *Gaon* R' Yeshaya ז"ל, a grandson of the Rabbi, R' Moshe of the '*Sadeh Khadash*,' (Neufeld) who was one of the disciples of the *Baal-Shem [Tov]*.

Rabbi Shmuel's wife, the Rebbetzin Tamar'l or Tema'leh, as she was called, was one of those righteous women and also a very wise person, and she enjoyed an excellent reputation in the entire area. Our house belonged to her parents, and their heirs sold it to my father ע"ה. But Tema'leh did not want to sell her share without a provision, that she be allowed to live in one room with a kitchen so long as she lived. And, indeed, this is the way it was. She lived for a long time after her husband passed away, and lived in our house. She dealt in jewelry and stringed pearls. In her later years, she dealt with salt that was kosher for Passover, which was bought from her by the entire city. This must have been a sort of concession granted to her by the Tomaszow community, as well as Sabbath candles.

The Rebbetzin Tema'leh had a very distinguished pedigree. She was a granddaughter of the *Rebbe* Ber'ish Meiseles through his daughter. A very graceful woman of middling height, with a permanent smile on her lips. On the Sabbath, after noon, she would give me a Sabbath snack, a small apple or a small pear, and directed me to recite the blessing over the fruit out loud, and then answered 'Amen.'

My Father

Page 133: *R' Israel HaKohen Garzytzensky* ע"ה

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[65] This appears to be the grandfather of Isaac Bashevis Singer

I recall R' Israel HaKohen Garzytzensky ל"ז, or as he was called: *R' Yisrael dem Rav's*, from my childhood as having a blond-whitish beard that was mottled, charismatic, a rather lean build, with attractive blue eyes: always dressed in clean clothing, with polished shoes.

While still a young lad, he has a reputation for being intellectually outstanding. He was greatly dedicated to scholarship. At the age of sixteen, any number of financially attractive matches were proposed for him, but it was my grandfather, who at that time was the Rabbi of Chmielnik, that 'snatched him up' as a bridegroom.

After the wedding, my grandfather taught him '*Yoreh De'ah*,' '*Orakh Chaim*,' and other rabbinical texts. He wanted to prepare him to become a Rabbi. But even while still living under the patronage [i.e. subsidy] of his father-in-law, he bought into forest property with a partner, and they both succeeded [in the venture]. He did not want to be a Rabbi, and accordingly, for all his years, he was a merchant that conducted large-scale businesses. He would often quote Rabbi Yaakov Emden ל"ז, who would recite the blessing *'Shelo Assani AV"D*[66]*'* It is a word play on the blessing recited each morning: '*Shelo Assani Eved*,' [Eved – Hebrew for a 'slave'] and *AV"D*, the acronym for *Av Bet-Din*, a Master of a Bet-Din [e.g. a sitting Rabbi].

At the time of his wedding, he received ordination from a prominent Rabbi, with the privilege of leading religious discourse, and he had the possibility to become a Rabbi.

I recall, as a young lad, how each morning, he would conduct a study lesson in the Trisk *shtibl*, with outstanding young men. Also, he would engage in single study between the afternoon and evening prayer services. As engaged as he was, he had a factory with several tens of workers, and also an export business to Galicia, but he did not miss his study periods.

My father was also active in community affairs, and he was the '*Dozor*' for decades, the President of the town Talmud Torah, etc.

He would write innovative things about Torah text, and carried on a correspondence with many Rabbis, many of which were published in rabbinical journals, such as '*HaBe'er*,' '*Ohel Moed*,' '*Kol Torah*,' and also Hasidic books that his *mekhutan* Rabbi R' Menachem Mendl Woldin ל"ז, published: '*Or HaNiflaot*,' '*Niflaot HaRabi*,' '*Ohel Yitzhak*' and so on. Almost in every letter that he ever sent me, he would add a bit of a new commentary on Torah text. And, indeed, it was from these addenda, that I assembled and published a book, '*Sefer Yisrael*,' dedicated to his eternal memory.

Up to the First World War, Torah and greatness were in one place for my father ל"ז. Apart from the businesses that he ran successfully, my older brothers, while still young men, bought a 'lottery ticket' in which they won a large prize of seventy-five thousand rubles, which cam into Tomaszow. An they had a quarter of this. The other quarters belonged to: R' Joel Shafran, R' Yekhezkiel Lehrer, and R' Abraham Steinworcel. In those years it was a huge fortune. My bothers gave the money to my father ל"ז, which, as he conducted himself in all of his businesses, tithed [to charity]: I can still recall, as a child, when on the Sabbath after he had collected the money in Warsaw, how he was called to the Torah, and he donated five hundred rubles for the building of the Talmud Torah, and other charities. He also underwrote the writing of

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[66] This is Rabbi Yaakov ben Zvi Emden (1697-1776), sometimes known by his acronym '*Yaave"tz*.' He is best remembered as the scourge of the Sabbatean movement and the Hasidic movement that arose in the vacuum after the fall of the false messiahs, Sabbatai Zvi and Jacob Franck.

a Torah scroll, and at the celebration of the completion of the scroll, he led a great parade with the scroll from the market square to the synagogue, with music and fireworks which has been especially brought from Warsaw.

Almost every night, after the members of the household had retired to sleep. he would first sit down to write. He copied an older edition of '*Pri Maggidim*,' which was about one hundred fifty years old, and in addition, the paper was 'cotton,' and very hard to read. He gave the manuscript to his friend, the Rabbi, R' Pinchas Mendl Singer ז"ל, the Director of the Faith of Warsaw, a scion of Tomaszow, as son of the Director of the Faith of Tomaszow, Rabbi Shmuel Singer ז"ל. who published it in Bilgoraj in the year 5670 [1909]. And, in the preface, he does, indeed, write a thank you to my father ז"ל. This book, today, is a rare collector's item, that is not available for purchase. I have one copy.

Additionally, my father ז"ל also copied over a handwritten set of lessons from the Tzaddik of Ruzhany k"z, but it has been lost.

May father ז"ל also had a large library, including first editions that are today not to be found. This is apart from the books and handwritten manuscripts, which were left to him by my grandfather, the Rabbi of Tomaszow, he would also buy many books, but tragically, everything was incinerated after the First and Second World Wars.

During the time of The First World War, when the Austrians occupied Tomaszow, my father was arrested, and was held for ransom against the large taxes that the army had levied against the Jewish populace. With the retreat of the Austrians, he fled with his family to Minsk, where he remained for four years, until the end of The First World War.

After the War, when my father returned to Tomaszow, he found the city almost entirely burned down, Immediately, he went over to the wall of the house that had been burned down, and recited a blessing, to fulfil the words of our Ancient Sages: As one should bless all good fortune – similarly one should bless misfortune. He only cheered up when he was told that part of his books were saved. My fried, R' Yaakov Griener, who saved himself, and today lives in Brooklyn, told me that he had his store in our house, and, a bit at a time, he packed away the books in boxes, and hid them with him. When my father ז"ל, saw these books, tears of joy poured from his eyes.

Incidentally, in the book, '*Shearit Yisrael*,' he describes that the books found with him were highly valuable ancient texts.

After my father passed away, Rabbi Israel Dov HaKohen Frishman, ה"ד, the editor of the rabbinical journal '*Unser Geist*,' writes n the edition of the month of Nissan 5698 [1938]:

> 'A scholar that has passed away...I was dismayed and upset by this saddening news, of his passing, the great rabbinical torah scholar, and of Hasidim in every appropriate measure, a scion of treasured roots, etc., Our Teacher R' Israel Garzytzensky ז"ל, of Tomaszow Lubelski, the son-in-law of the renown Gaon etc, Our Teacher, Rabbi Moshe Rogenfish זצ"ל, the Bet Din Senior of Tomaszow. With the passing of the deceased, the Jewish community of Tomaszow has lost one of its most important sons and supporters, who during his long life, to the very end, worked at, and did mich with commitment for the benefit of strengthening The Faith.'

'*Dos Yiddishe Togenblatt*' of 3 Nissan 5698 [April 4, 1938] writes:

> At the age of 93, the highly regarded Rabbi, R' Israel Garzytzensky, known as *R' Yisroel'i dem Rav's* passed away in Tomaszow-Lubelski after a short illness. The deceased was the President of land finances for over fifty years, and for that number of years, he led the local Talmud Torah, where he was the President.'
>
> It is interesting, that in the course of his life, the deceased had met with over one hundred great *Tzaddikim*, such as the *'Khidushei HaRI"M* the *Maggid* of Trisk, the Elder Rabbi of Sanz זצ"ל, et. al. The deceased was a scion of distinguished rabbinical families. The funeral took place on Friday. The procession was led by all the children of the Talmud Torah who called out: 'Walk before a Righteous Man.'
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> In the shtibl of Trisk-Kielce, where the deceased worshiped, a series of eulogies were delivered after the *Hakafot* . Despite the heavy rain and wind, the deceased was escorted by an enormous number of people. The deceased left behind a will, in which a substantial amount of money was given away to charity. In this, were several hundred zlotys for the local Talmud Torah.
>
> It is interesting that despite his advanced age, he did not lose his faculties up to the end. He took care of himself, and not depending on anyone, the deceased was a contributor to a variety of rabbinical monthly journals and periodicals. He also left behind original compositions about Torah. apart from this, he was a great scholar of Hasidism.
>
> Woe, unto us who have been bereaved, but we will not forget!
>
> ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Rabbi Chaim Aharon Zvi Shidkovsky זצ"ל

Rabbi R' Chaim Aharon Zvi Shidkovsky was the Rabbi of Tomaszow in my time. The Hasidim referred to him as 'The Litvak.'

Up to the age of fifteen, I was absorbed in study and Hasidism, going to the Trisk-Kuzmir *shtibl* day in and day out, learning at the *shtibl*. I peered into Hasidic books, and listened to Hasidic tales.

I remember one time, when I went as a messenger from my father זצ"ל to deliver a letter to the Rabbi, R' Chaim Aharon Zvi, he received me in a friendly manner, and asked me what I was studying, and simultaneously tested me a bit... from that day on, I became a frequent visitor, almost daily. Twice a week, he would conduct a study lesson for me and his son, Yekhezkiel.

But apart from studying at the lesson, I learned other things there. He had a modern home. A variety of

worldly people would enter there, and many discussions would interest me. The language of discourse was different from that used by the ordinary Tomaszow Jew. In fact, the Yiddish spoken there was different, spoken with a Litvak dialect, and many times, Russian was also spoken.

Rabbi Chaim Aharon Zvi had studied in Lithuanian Yeshivas, and he was an exceptional student of the Lublin Rabbi, the Gaon R' Hillel Lifschitz ז"ל, the author of 'Bet Hillel.' The Rabbi of Lublin had written an explanatory letter to my father, [in which], he recommended and requested that my father support the candidacy of his pupil, R' Chaim Aharon Zvi to become the Rabbi of Tomaszow, which for a long time had been without a Rabbi, because the city was unable to achieve a consensus, therefore there were only men appointed as 'Directors of the Faith.' After his first sermon in the 'Plain Bet HaMedrash' he was, indeed, hired as the town Rabbi.

With the passage of some time later, when the 'Kozioner Rabbiner' Dolgenos died, the town Rabbi R' Chaim Aharon Zvi also became the 'Kozioner Rabbiner.'

This reminds me of a fine thing he said to the Rabbi of Moscow, Rabbi MZA'H ז"ל. As is known throughout Russia, and Poland, which also at that time belonged to Russia, there were two kinds of Rabbis hired by a Jewish community, a Rabbi who was a scholar, a sage, and a God-fearing man, and a Rabbi specified by the government. It was not required that the 'Kozioner Rabbiner' scholarly education, he directed the statistics of births and deaths, and officially represented the Jewish community to the government. He was called the *'Rav MiTa'am,'* meaning a Rabbi set up by the rulers.

In this connection, Rabbi MZA'H had said: Rabbis have four characteristics, just like there are four kinds of species in the Sukkot fruits. the Lulav had taste but no smell, the *Etrog* has taste and smell, the myrtle leaf has smell but no taste, and the willow has neither taste nor smell (*Midrash Rabah*).

A Rabbi that has taste but no odor? – that is a Rabbi – *MiTa'am*, because he does not exude the odor of Torah.

What sort of Rabbi has both taste and an odor? – this is a '*Rav MiTa'am*' who is also a Torah scholar.



Page 139: R' Fishl Garzytzensky ע"ה

Who is the Rabbi who has no taste or odor? – This is a Rabbi who cannot study or be a Kozioner Rabbi.

And what sort of Rabbi has an odor and no taste? – This is a Rabbi that can learn, but cannot be appointed by the government....

Rabbi Chaim Aharon Zvi Shidkovsky was both of these: A Rabbi *'MiTa'am* ' appointed by the government, and a Sage.

I learned a great deal from the Rabbi of Tomaszow. Not only Torah, but also secular things. I studied with him for about three years. These were the stormy years of Russian Jewry, the time of the First and Second 'Duma' (Parliament), after the Russo-Japanese War, in the time of the Russian pogroms against the Jews.

Every day, the newspapers brought us new accounts of spilled Jewish blood, which shook up the Jewish reader. In Poland, pogroms took place only in Kielce and Siedlec. In Russia and the Ukraine, much Jewish blood was spilled. The newspapers reported on a pogrom almost every day.

In those days of '*Sturm und Drang*,' I began to read Hebrew and Russian periodicals. It was the most burgeoning time for the Hebrew Press. '*HaTzefira*,' and '*HaTzofeh*' appeared in Warsaw, '*HaMelitz*' in Petersburg, and '*HaZman*' in Vilna. Four daily Hebrew papers, and I read almost all of them.

No Yiddish periodicals reached Tomaszow in those years, despite the fact that '*Der Moment*' was already being published in Warsaw, as well as '*Heint*.' Later on, Yiddish periodicals also began to arrive in Tomaszow, but a genteel person of standing, who was a Torah scholar, was embarrasses to read a Yiddish periodical. They were referred to as the paper for workers and women. And when the occasion arose that a Hebrew periodical was not delivered, because the censor often intervened, closing them down for a period of time, or confiscated [the issue] for writing articles against the regime, then Russian periodicals were read, so long as one didn't have to resort to reading the '*Zhargonisheh*' newspapers, which is what the Yiddish papers were called at the time. Many Hebrew writers were opposed in spirit to the Yiddish language, which they called 'the tongue of the housemaid.' A struggle over language arose at Zionist gatherings, at which a resolution was adopted: 'Hebrew or Russian,' meaning that either Hebrew or Russian was to be spoken.

But Yiddish too, had its advocates. It was, indeed, at that time that 'The Czernowitz Conference' took place, at which the great thinker, Nathan Birnbaum ז"ל, the later leader of 'Agudat Israel,' called together in Czernowitz, in which the greatest Jewish writers took part.

A variety of discussions took place at the Rabbi's home concerning questions of the day. After the study lesson, 'politics' were discussed. And when a Rabbinical Court had to be empaneled, we left the house, and we sat on the bench that was at the side of the house. Non-students also came by, who were better informed on worldly matters, and we, the idle, listened n on, and took part in the discussions. Naturally, this was done quietly, when the Rabbi was taken up with the proceedings of the Court, or just generally with an important matter.



A variety of people would come to visit the Rabbi: Rabbis, preachers, and once an 'international emissary' who demanded of te Rabbi that he be given permission to speak in the *Bet HaMedrash*. Also there were those types who were sent by Yeshivas, institutions from large cities, and it was at those times that we could become acquainted with the larger Jewish world, which was so far from the Jewish life in Tomaszow, as the distance from east to west. I remember one time, a preaching Rabbi came with a wide handsome beard and long hair, that fell over his throat, and he wore a cylindrical top hat on the Sabbath, which was news in Tomaszow. He had difficulties, until the Rabbi granted him permission to speak at the *Bet HaMedrash*. He called himself an 'international emissary' and had been sent by the 'Odessa Committee.' On a Sunday, between afternoon and evening prayers, he spoke in the 'Plain *Bet HaMedrash*,' (It was also a Hasidic *Bet HaMedrash*). He had a resonant voice, began to speak softly, but got louder and louder. It was after the

pogrom in Gomel[67], and when he portrayed scenes from that pogrom, tears flowed in his audience. Loud crying was also heard from the women's gallery. His talk was laced with Torah quotations and the sayings of the Ancient Sages. He portrayed the 'Russian Diaspora' in dark terms. And afterwards, he unfolded the Zionist concept, which we heard for the first time in our town. The impact was very great. I still remember, as if it were today, how he cited passages from Ezekiel, how the prophet sees the valley with the 'dry bones.' He limned this image with such talent that we thought lo, we are seeing the prophet Ezekiel with his large unkempt beard, and the mound of the dead, desiccated human bones, and here, it seems that the skeletons bestir themselves, bone connecting to bone, arm to arm, and soon they come to life...

He wanted to bring out the concept that is attributed to Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever ז"ל, about the founders of *Hibat Zion* and Zionism, the majority of whom were free-thinking people, and this caused the observant orthodox Jews to distance themselves, and for many more to become opponents of Zionism.

One time, at a gathering, Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever spoke about the resuscitation of the dry bones. He recalled a saying of the Ancient Sages (*Sanhedrin* 92, b): The *Gemara* asks: 'and who were these dead that Ezekiel brought back to life? These are people who have no *mitzvot* to their credit. These are people who forfeited their privilege at the time of the Raising of the Dead. These are the people who covered The Sanctuary with worms and vermin.' With this saying, Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever explained to the observant folk that Ezekiel also, when he foresaw the revival of the Jewish people, knew that, initially, the first to revitalize the nation in its own land, will be people who do *not* perform *mitzvot*, and do not conduct themselves in the same manner as proper Jews.

I was so impressed with this discourse, that I could not sleep that night. I thought a great deal about this speaker, and I decided to write up this 'event' for a newspaper. Having said it, I set down to do it, writing and erasing, re-writing it, and sending off two short pieces to '*HaTzefira.*' I told no one abut it, because I, myself, did not believe that the periodical would print it.

One day after another passed, a week after a week, and I had already given up, and thought, that to begin with, this didn't appeal to the editor, and he dropped it into the dust bin.

On one morning, as I opened the 'HaTzefira' periodical, I see my name under the title, 'Letters from the Hinterlands,' black on white, yes, really, I did not believe my eyes. My name under the report of the speech of the 'international emissary.' And what an impact that made.

I hid myself for several days, as I was afraid to go into the Trisk-Kuzmir *shtibl.* Two *balebatim* from the shtibl were subscribers of '*HaTzefira,*' and I thought that for certain they would publicize my

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[67] This pogrom, in what was then Byelorussia, was contemporaneous with the Kishinev pogrom in the Ukraine (Bessarabia). Of it, it is said:

> The Gomel' pogrom must be regarded as a turning point. The organization of pogroms was subsequently looked upon by many administrators as an act of patriotism and as a legitimate weapon in the fight against revolution. This did not change appreciably even when Pleve was assassinated and his place taken by Svyatopolk-Mirsky. The change meant merely that the *pogromshchiki* could no longer count on the automatic blessing of the Interior Minister. But to keep a check on local authorities, and especially on officers, was beyond the power of the new Minister.

correspondence. It was for this reason I was frightened... but one, by chance, hadn't read it, and the second actually praised my writing.

A while later, I receive a letter from the Central Zionist office in Warsaw, with a request that I should take the initiative to establish a Zionist Union in Tomaszow. The letter was signed by N. S. (Nahum Sokolov). My initial reaction was that certainly, an error had been made here, because where do I, a seventeen year-old *Bet-HaMedrash* student, come to found a union? And how is it that the editor of a great Hebrew Newspaper comes to write to me? I read the letter again, and it is inescapable that at the top, printed in large letters it says: 'The Office of Zionist Leadership for the Country of Poland, the Warsaw Valley, Address: N. Sokolov, Bureau, to Mr. Moshe Garzytzensky in Tomaszow.'

The letter is typed on a typewriting machine, which I saw for the first time ever, in Hebrew letters, and it looks like it is printed. And even though it is now more than fifty years later, since I received this letter, I remember as if it were today, how overwhelmed I was to read the letter, and I simply didn't know what to do, what am I supposed to reply? Should I answer? Not answer? How does it come for me, a seventeen year-old *'shtibl-bokhur'* to have dealings with these prominent people, with a great man such as N. Sokolov? All I did was look for a place to hide...

When, today, I glance back at that time, this is already 'history.' And the letter, indeed, needs to go into the Zionist archive, so that it should become possible to see how Zionism began to develop in Poland. Today, Bless God, when we have been privileged already to see a State of Israel, it is sadly without a Polish Jewry: Over three million Polish Jews have been exterminated by the Nazis ימ"ש. When one reminds one's self of this, one is seized with a shudder, and a shiver courses through all limbs.

And as I write these lines, the original letters lie before me, Dated: Warsaw 13 Elul 5665 and 6 Tishri 5666 [1905]. To Mr. Garzytzensky in Tomaszow. A half century has gone by since that time, but it seems like it happened just yesterday.

I asked myself: How do they know my address? And how do they come to write to me? And what can I, a youngster do? Am I to become a community activist? – I was helpless, and didn't know what to do, and was even afraid to show anyone the letter. I thought I would be laughed at.

In the end, I decided to reply to them, and tell them the truth. That to begin with, I was just a boy, who was a student in a *Bet HaMedrash.* And that Tomaszow was a Hasidic *shtetl,* with Hasidic *Shtiblakh.*

At that time there were ten or more such *shtiblakh* and small prayer houses. Religious unions or parties simply did not exist in towns the size of Tomaszow. The Mizrahi and Agudat Yisrael were first founded only after The First World War. I wrote out my answer, indicating that Tomaszow was not the place, and there is no one here with whom to found such a union. And the Hasidim would certainly not tolerate such a thing, and similar replies of this sort. I sent off the letter, and I thought I was rid of the matter, and this caused my heart to become lighter. I also asked how it is that they came to write to me. However, in a short while, I received yet another letter, and my replies were dismissed. And the cause of all this had been my 'correspondence' that had been published in '*HaTzefira.*'

In that time, when I saw my letter published in '*HaTzefira*,' a thought occurred to me to publish a weekly periodical just for myself... My brother Joseph (ע"ה) ד' ה, who knew Hebrew very well, wrote letters to my parents frequently, and he would add something to me as well, and he encouraged me to write to him almost every week. Accordingly, I wrote him a short piece of four sides every week, and I composed it and made it look like a periodical. In the upper right, in printed letters stood '*HaMabit*.' I gave it the name '*HaMabit*' because this is the acronym for my name: Habokhur Moshe Ben Israel Tomaszow. And the Hebrew word '*HaMabit*' means 'The One Who Looks,' and so everything that I had seen and heard I covered in '*HaMabit*.'
News from the house, news from the factory, from the Rabbi's home, etc. I still possess copies of this 'periodical.'

There is still a living witness who say my '*HaMabit*.' He lives in Haifa, in the State of Israel, and this is my friend, R' Zusha Kawenczuk. My '*HaMabit*' fell into his hands under the following circumstances: One day, I bring several copies of '*HaMabit*' into the shtibl, to show it to my critic R' Nathan Greenwald. As it happens, this R' Nathan was a wise Jewish man, a scholar, and also a reader of '*HaTzefira*.' And even though he was in the same business as my father, and there was business competition between them, despite this, I was on good terms with him. And when I wrote a piece for which I wanted an opinion as to its quality, I showed it to hum, for him to give me insight. And whatever did not please him, I attempted to improve.

It was in this manner that one time, I brought several copies of '*HaMabit*' into the *shtibl*. As it happens, R' Nathan was not there at that time, so temporarily, I placed them in my *Gemara*, so that I would be able to show it to him on the following day. My friend Zusha took note of this, and when I went home, he took them out of my *Gemara*. On the following day, when I arrived, and opened the Gemara to take out the copies of '*HaMabit*,' they were gone... it was only returned a while later. And I became aware that this was the work of R' Zusha.

Incidentally, when my wife and I visited Israel in 5709 [1949], it was my friend R' Zusha who received us. I barely recognized him, with a handsome beared countenance, a truly Hasidic appearance. His father, R' Shabtai Kawenczuk ז"ל, was the *Gabbai* of our *shtibl* for many years, a wise Jewish man, and apart from his businesses, he had a 'sideline' serving as a mediator at many Rabbinical Courts. And it was possible to rely on his mediation. He was also a loyal friend to my father ז"ל.

R' Shabtai Kawenczuk discharged his duties as a Gabbai with a firm hand. With discipline: I recall that on the Sabbath of the first portion of Genesis, immediately after worship, he gave a bang on the table, and he called out: I am announcing and notifying that everyone is to place their prayer shawl on the table, and nobody should take their prayer shawls home. And, just as he said it, he placed 'watchmen' at the doors of the shtibl, and everyone had to take off their prayer shawl, brought it forward, and meekly carried it over and placed it on the table. On this Sabbath, after the [concluding] '*An'im Zemirot*' prayer, my father immediately took off his prayer shawl and was the first to place it on the table, so that everyone could see as the line says: Look at what I do, and do accordingly....

The prayer shawls became security for outstanding debts, in connection with the levies each individual had to pay to sustain the *shtibl*.

After *Havdalah*, R' Shabs'l would send the prayer shawl to my father, and on the morrow, Sunday in the morning, a note already hung on the door, enumerating the amount each individual was obligated to give, in accordance to an assessment developed by a committee.

There was, in all years, a Cossack Regiment stationed in Tomaszow, which was a border town between Russia and Austria. Additionally, there were also 'Watchmen' who patrolled the border and the vicinity. The Don Cossacks would come from their homes with their horses. A 'Cossack Steed' was something else. And when they rode out on maneuvers from their 'Brigade,' on the other side of the town outskirts, in a cohort of a hundred troops, with their officers and seniors, all of them rode on horseback with their rifles and long pikes, from the market to the highway. The Regiment Commander rode first, and their music band with the large copper kettle drums and other musical instruments, all riding on the tall Cossack horses, which called forth children and adults to wonder at their might and to hear the music.

Half the town made its living off the Cossacks. There were *balebatim*, Jewish contractors, providers of livery services, who had contracts for the supply of all products, foodstuffs for the recruits, hay and oats for the horses. Also there were tailors and shoemakers who were 'busy' on their behalf.

R' Shmuel Putter, R' Shmuel Neu, and R' Benjamin Weinberg were contractors for hay and oats for many years. My brother, Fishl, ע"ה, who had the nicest and biggest foodstuffs emporium dealt with them all these years. Officers, and the Regimental Commander would come to his store often. And they were very friendly.

In this connection, it is worth noting that all of the contractors had beards, and dressed in the Jewish manner. And all the stores were closed on the Sabbath and open Sunday. The servants of the officers already knew that on Friday they had to shop early in the day.

The 'elite' of the Jewish community, that I knew, worshiped in our Trisk-Kuzmir *shtibl*. I still remember the elderly Jews, of a type one no longer encounters any more. They were committed solely to Torah and to prayer. Decency and piety emanated from them. The eldest of this group, the oldest, and most handsome of these Jews was the 'Little Joseph.' He was a spiritual leader. He was called 'Little Joseph,' because there also was a 'Big Joseph,' bit I did not know the latter.

'Little Joseph' as was known, had the appearance of Rabbi Akiva Eiger ז"ל. He wore a *spodek* as a hat on his head. No one dared to sit in his appointed place, or as it was called, his 'station,' in the *shtibl*. His 'station' for the third feast of the Sabbath was at the beginning of the side. I recall him to be the oldest among the 'Venerable Old Jews.' His *mekhutan*, R' Ben-Zion *Shokhet*, and was also among the really Venerable Jews. He would lead the *Musaf* services for one day on Rosh Hashanah. These were Jews who were scholarly sages, and who observed the tenets of the *Shulkhan Arukh*. A second person who led the Musaf prayer during Rosh Hashanah, was R' Mott'leh Greenwald, a merchant, a handsome one of the *balebatim*, and musically gifted. R' Moti the *Gabbai* was also an attractive type of individual, an elderly Jewish man, who prayed every morning in his phylacteries and prayer shawl from early morning on until after the noon hour. Apart from '*Khok*[68]', Psalms, and other studies that are part of the prayer service, he would also study the *Tanakh* and *Mishna* while standing by the table. Among the prominent balebatim were: R' Nahum Neu, R' Netanel

[68] Reference to '*Khok Yisrael*' an all inclusive book for basic daily study.

Ratzimer, R' Heschel Schlagbaum, R' Eli' Drimmler, R' Fishl Garzytzensky, R' Nathan Greenwald, R' Sheps'l Kawenczuk, R' Shmuel Meldung, and others from among the younger prominent Jewish men: R' Kalman Ehrlich, R' Yaakov Schlagbaum, R' Yerakhmiel Mermelstein, R' Lipa Honigsfeld, and others. These were Jews who were learned scholars, merchants, and knowledgeable in Torah, an impressive gallery along the eastern wall.

The tables and benches in our shtibl were configured like the letter *Khet* [sic: A rectangle with only three sides, open on the fourth side] on both sides of the Holy Ark, and on the north and south walls. Between afternoon and evening prayers, there was a recess of one hour on a daily basis. The host would be seated around the tables with open texts of the Gemara under large electric lights. And anyone who did not occupy a place in a timely fashion, could not find a seat at the table. There was also a 'second place' in the shtibl, a large baking oven, where matzos were baked on the Eve of Passover. an entirely different sort of inspiration was manifested by us, the young men, each year, several days before Passover, to make all the preparations to clean out the oven, and to get all the implements ready for baking the matzos on Passover Eve. It is difficult to describe the ardor and the commitment we gave to doing this: at the time the matzos were being baked, we would recite the Halle prayer, and verses from the Psalms; every participant had a right to receive a few matzos that were baked on Passover Eve.

There were no Yeshivas in Tomaszow: there were no Yeshivas throughout Poland in the same way as was the case in Lithuania. The Lithuanian Yeshivas garnered a reputation throughout the entire Jewish world. However, in Poland, it was the *shtiblakh* of each rabbinic dynasty that existed for advanced study, such as [the study of] *Gemara* with the *Tosafot*. In Galicia, such an institution was called a '*kloyz*.' Every refined Jew, whether one of the *balebatim*, a Hasid, lived out his life in his *shtibl*. I spent the best part of my youth in our *shtibl*, the Trisk-Kuzmir *shtibl*. There was no set curriculum as to what to learn, and when. One learned what one wanted to. There was also no overseer, or director. everyone did what they thought was the right thing. The rules of the *shtibl* – the Hasidim would say – were in the first section of the *Shulkhan Arukh*, *Orakh Chaim*: Yehuda ben Tema says: 'Be strong as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and powerful as a lion.' No matter how early I would arrive at the shtibl, I always found Jews already seated, one with a book of Psalms, another with a *Gemara*, another with the *Mishna*. Whether winter or summer, before dawn, or late at night, whether with a teacher, or with an older young man. When I went out from under the teacher, I studied with my older friend, Ephraim Faygl'eh's, he was a dedicated student, with worldly aspirations. The young men were of various ages, and each learned what they wanted to, as the Sages say: 'A person will always be capable of learning that to which his heart is drawn' (*Avodah Zarah*, 19). The young men who studied in the shtibl were not disciplined, as was the case in either a Yeshiva or in a Heder, the conducted themselves in a free manner, setting their own timetables for study.

Despite the fact that in the shtiblakh there was not a set curriculum, with a lesson from a Head Master, with oversight from a 'Spiritual Director,' as was the case in the Lithuanian Yeshivas, but only through self-study, nevertheless, profound sages and scholars, even *Gaonim*, came out of the *shtiblakh*. Foremost in the larger cities, such as Warsaw, Lodz, Lublin, Radom, etc. young men were found who were scholars that developed into great Rabbis. By and large, the Jews of the shtibl were studious people, genteel folk, some more so, others less, but almost all were people who were acquainted with the Book, i.e. the Pentateuch with *Rashi* commentaries, a chapter of the *Mishna*, or the *Shulkhan Arukh*, with which almost all were conversant. In this regard, they were all in the ambit of being 'God-fearing.' It was enough to say of an individual that he worshiped in the Hasidic *shtibl*: that being tantamount to saying he was a true Jewish person. Foremost, when one entered the shtibl, one had a sense that one was in the company of scholars, because everyone sat with

either a book, or with a *Gemara.* One would occasionally see a father sitting and learning with a son. All were looking into books written in Hebrew.

Every Sabbath toward dusk, a *Melaveh-Malka* was arranged for the very inspired Hasidim, from the leftovers that had remained from the Sabbath foodstuffs that had been provided for these occasions. Many times, a hot borscht with potatoes was cooked in addition, not to say anything if there was coincidentally a Yahrzeit of a *Rebbe.* On those occasions, a '*L'Chaim*' was also drunk... the observance for the *Maggid* of Trisk ז"ל was celebrated with great spirit. My older brothers, Yeshaya and Joseph played on musical instruments, and at the highly inspired *Melaveh Malka*, they would play Hasidic melodies and also 'marches.'

The western walls of the *Shtiblakh* were covered with shelves. Layers of books from above to below, books without end. The complete Talmud *Shas*, the works of the *Rambam*, Questions & Responsas, copies of the *Shulkhan Arukh*, and Hasidic books, books of the God-fearing. Large thick volumes, smaller, and smaller books, without end. In our *shtibl*, we also had a '*Tikkun Sefarim.*' One of the young men would go around every Friday with a collection box, to solicit funds for buying new books and rebinding old books. We also had among us 'silk-stocking young folk' young people living under subsidy [sic: by in-laws] who sat and studied for almost an entire day: some for the sheer sake of study, and others with a goal in mind... Such a 'silk stocking young man' created respect and dignity for his in-laws. They studied so long as their father-in-law provided the subsidy, and then he went on to become a merchant or a 'wood turner,'.... many gave priority to their study, and went on to become true scholars, 'Grandiose Jews.'

All of this was before The First World War

But, in 1918, when I visited the town of my birth, after my departure for the four years of the War, I didn't recognize it: many neighborhoods of the town had been burned down. There was no trace of the 'Cossacks.' All the wooden houses had been burned down. All that was left were the [sic: stone] walls, the stone and brick houses, and many of these were wrecked. People wandered about like shadows, the businesses empty, without any customers, no merchandise. Wen I entered the business premises of my brother Fishl, I didn't recognize it... The shelves almost bare, the joy was absent, the life was absent, and this was also the case in all the other places of business. Tomaszow had become a small, bare town. Also, the Trisk-Kuzmir *shtibl* was gone. Everything had gone up in smoke. On the Sabbath, the Trisk-Kuzmir Hasidim worshiped at the home of R' Anshel Brand. Many of the people about whom I inquired, my friends, were not there: Many had remained in Russia, many had been killed in the war. The Trisk-Kuzmir Hasidim organized themselves to rebuild the *shtibl.* Also, our house and factory had been burned down, all that was left was the front wall. Export to Galicia had stopped, and it was no longer a border town. The Rabbi was no longer alive. I did not recognize the *Rebbetzin,* she was as a widow.... a beautiful scholarly-modern house had been destroyed. With whomever I spoke, I got only groans and sighs: how does one rebuild a home. 'If I were only Rothschild – I thought to myself – then I could do a lot'... Regrettably, I traveled away from Tomaszow back to Vienna, where we lived during the time of The First World War, with enough money to barely be able to buy a ticket home....

Now, after The Second World War, my town of Tomaszow has again been emptied of its Jews. There no longer are any Jews in Tomaszow. They shared in the fate of the three and one-half million Polish Jews who were exterminated by the cruel and murderous German nation, with the assistance of Polish anti-Semites,

may their names be erased, and my God avenge their blood.

Earth, earth, do not cover up their blood!



Spring in Tomaszow

A. H.[69]
Wroclaw

A

The snow has melted,
There are many mud puddles,
The month of May arrives
And dries them out quickly.

Hey you! Look and delight
At the great miracle:
Spring has come to the world
The bloom and lilac sprout

Soon the sun will shine!
The air is enchanting and clear.
The green field, the woods,
Spread their scent.

It arouses one from sleep,
The sun shines into the window,
Wake up, Tomaszow! –
Today is, after all, spring....

And as day begins to barely break,
With the first cock crow,
One runs, one hurries, one chases,
It is spring, May!....

Yaak'leh Rofeh

B

With a nose like a shofar,
With prayer shawl and phylacteries,
Yaak'leh Rofeh proceeds
To the synagogue to recite Psalms.

He recites his Psalms,
Not missing a hair,
He carries on his shoulders
[The weight of] Eighty-eight years already.

Every day he goes up,
Praying with an ardent voice –
And if someone falls ill:
It is him, indeed, who is called.

Yaak'leh-Rofeh comes up,
And immediately begins to ask:
'Tell me, if you uncover yourself,
Are you really cold?'

'And when you cover yourself up
Are you hot for sure,
This is indeed – I mean
The miseries, you see, I know!'...

On the parade on the Third of May,
No matter, it is no shame:
He marches in the first row,
Of the Fire Brigade.

With an insignia that shines in the distance,
And sparkles like a crown.
He marches firmly and with broad step,
An heroic figure to behold.

An how high he raises his feet,
Looking like a young man actually.
Go figure him for one
Who is eighty-eight years old...

After his death – the wag quips
When it flashes lightning and thunders severely:
'Yaak'leh-Rofeh rides for water,
To extinguish fires in the marketplace....'

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[69] The author of this work submitted his composition from Poland, and did not wish to provide his name.

The Jewish Way of Life in Tomaszow

By Joseph Moskop

Page 155: Jews learning the Gemara in the Great Bet HaMedrash

A.

Tomaszow Lubelski was a town like many others with a mixed population, that consisted of Jews and non-Jews. The former constituted the majority in the town. Among the latter were Poles and Russians, or Ukrainians. I say 'or' because they [sic: both] spoke Russian and were of the Orthodox faith. But the latter were considered to be Ukrainians by the Ukrainian National Movement. In the latter years under the Polish regime, they practically vanished off the surface of the earth.

In the city, the Jews occupied the center, and the streets around the center. The Polish populace [occupied] – the outer streets and byways.

Over the course of several centuries, Jewish life took hold in the town, with its various religious, social and cultural institutions. There was a very attractive synagogue, houses of study and houses of worship, there was a cemetery, a Hevra Kadisha with a large number of other community-active institutions, which through their work, gave an expression to the religious and Hasidic way of life, up to The First World War.

Up to The First World War, Tomaszow found itself at the southern border of Russian-ruled Poland. Close to, but outside the town, the toll house could be found, where the Russian border officials inspected the papers and baggage of everyone riding through. A few kilometers to the south was already the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

As a border town, apart from the 15th Cossack Division, there was also a division of the border patrol, the so-called '*Obieshchikehs.*' It was not rare to encounter a drunken Cossack terrorizing the people with his drawn sword. However, no serious incidents ever came from this.

These two military divisions, help a bit to provide a living for the Jews. Apart from these, a number of Jewish providers of various products became wealthy from this. Among these providers, or as they were called, 'contractors,' were R' Shmuel Putter, R' Leibusz Barg, R' Fishl Garzytzensky, R' Shmuel Neu, R' Benjamin Weinberg, etc.

Up to The First World War, Tomaszow was situated far from a railroad station. The closest one was in Rejowiec, approximately 90 km away. The means of communication consisted of horse and wagon: light passenger wagons, such as coaches, and at the latest, an omnibus traveled only as far as Zamość, which is 35 km to the north, on the highway that leads to Warsaw. All other roads, that led in other various directions, were rough, not paved with either stones or bricks, and they were referred to as 'Polish Roads.' In the fall, as also in the beginning of spring, when snow fell, it was very difficult to travel on these Polish Roads. Mud puddles were deep and sticky at that time, and the horses would pull the wagons laden with goods only with great difficulty. And because communication was so difficult, very few people made trips of any substantial distance, and that is why it used to be said that Tomaszow was located in a backwater, a God-forsaken corner of the world.

Jewish life proceeded normally along the ways that had been laid down by their ancestors, fifties of years earlier. There were *Hasidic* Jews who worshiped in their *Hasidic shtiblakh*, and also unlettered Jews, most of them manual laborers, who worshiped in the 'simple' *Bet HaMedrash*, or in the synagogue. The former took the primary place in public life, having an opinion in public affairs, such as in: hiring a Rabbi, a *Shokhet*, etc. Frequently disputes would break out all over among one group of Hasidim and another in these matters. Such a dispute broke out close to the beginning of the War, regarding the hiring of a *Shokhet*. The *Hasidim* of Radzyn proposed a candidate from one of their own, and the others did not want to permit a *Shokhet* in the city that wore fringes, one of which was dyed in the traditional blue. This dispute took on some very sharp forms.

Apart from periods when such a dispute occurred, life went on placidly on a daily basis. Jews would awake quite early to go pray, one, getting up really early to rush off to a rural village to buy something there from a peasant before his competitor, also a Jew, would not beat him there, another to the workplace of tailors or shoemakers, and then those who first needed to go to the *Mikva*, and after worship, take in a page of the *Gemara*, and afterwards open up his place of business. All of this had already become quite routine, and was not remarkable. With the dawn of every day, the *Shammes* would walk through the town, banging on the shutters to call people to 'Serve their Creator.' His usual practice was to knock three times with his wooden cane, the first two together, and the third time, separately, after a pause of some seconds. If however, someone passed away in town, the Shammes would only rap twice. Then all the Jewish men and women would anxiously ask one another: 'Who came to life this night?'[70]

The places of business opened a bit at a time. Also, the ladies who sat in the marketplace would begin to carry out their stands with greens, fruits, and also dairy products. For several hours each morning, there were also several stands with fresh war baked flat breads and fat bagels. Children on their way to *Heder*, would buy a flat bread for a two-coin piece, and a small piece of cheese for a groschen, to take with them. For the entire week, the wagons of the peasants would rarely be seen in the marketplace, and the storekeepers would stand in their stores, conversing with one another. Thursday was the market day, or as it was called '*Der Yarid*.' Peasants from the entire vicinity would then come to town to sell their produce, and livestock, such as cattle, horses, pigs, fowl, eggs, etc., and afterwards buy everything that they needed for their own use. At that time, all the stores were overflowing with customers. In the evenings, the saloons were all full of peasant drinkers.

On Friday, before sunset, the *Shammes* would circulate and bang out 'Come to Synagogue,' at the time of candle-lighting. Jews would hurriedly close up their stores, rushing to their Sabbath preparations. The marketplace becomes empty, and from the various houses of worship, the long, drawn out melodies of the prayers welcoming the Sabbath waft forth. Girls, with their hair freshly braided and in their Sabbath finery go out for a short stroll, until the people go of to pray. After the Friday evening repast, the Kiri Highway becomes crowded with young people going out for a stroll. Jews sit at home or go to the shtibl to review the portion of the week, twice in Hebrew, and once in the Aramaic *Targum Onkelos*. These same – Hasidic young men, often sit well into the night, telling the tales and miracles of Good Jews. It happens, on one occasion, that the *Rebbe* comes as a guest for the Sabbath, and at that occasion the town feels itself to be especially festive. On Friday evening, the *Rebbe* worships in the Synagogue with all his Hasidim. After worship, large masses of other Hasidim arrive to seek the *Rebbe's* blessing. After eating, the populace goes

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[70] This is in keeping with a superstitious practice of not making direct reference to evil occurrences, in order not to attract the attention of the 'Evil Eye.' Accordingly, the 'opposite' of the evil occurrence was employed in speech.

to the *Rebbe's Tisch,* at who's head the *Rebbe* sits, with his Hasidim, and those close to him surrounding him, in a full and packed *shtibl* of the entire town. The *Gabbai* distributes food tasted by the *Rebbe.* A person with a good voice sings melodies, and the audience derives pleasure from this. Before the blessing after the meal, the *Rebbe* delivers a Torah homily in a very soft voice. An enthusiastic dance by the Hasidim ends the '*Tisch,*' and the last of the Jews escort the Rebbe home. A *Tisch* of this sort is also conducted by the *Rebbe* on the Sabbath after noon, or at the Third Feast.

The education of children was a strictly religious one. After the birth of a male child, a group of elementary school children, directed by *Belfers* (i.e. assistants) come to the mother in confinement, every evening, up to the Brit, who read the Shema prayer, and the first Torah portion and the sentence '*The Angel Who Redeems Me...*'[71] Each of the children receives a sweet, and on the final time, a little piece of honey cake. At the age of three, if the child is a boy, he is taken for the first time to *Heder,* wrapped in a prayer shawl, where the *Rebbe,* the assistant and the remaining children in the *Heder,* are given some food. There are *Heders* for: 1. The beginners, learning the alphabet up to beginning the study of the Pentateuch. 2. Translation from the Pentateuch with *Rashi* commentaries. 3. For the older boys, up to *Gemara* with *Tosafot.* For the 4-5 year olds, the *Belfer* comes to their home, helps with getting them dressed, and recites the first prayer, *Modeh Ani,* along with the child, and takes them to *Heder.* With girls, he recites the morning prayer for girls. Older children go to *Heder* by themselves. The *Heder* is in the home of the *Melamed,* the children sit crowded around a long table. The Rebbe (Melamed) sits up front with a switch in his hand, enforcing strict discipline. For even the slightest wandering of the eye, from the Pentateuch or the *Gemara,* one receives a whack with the switch. It was enough that a child would give an innocent smile in the middle of study, and the stern glances of the teacher would fall on the child, whose attention was wandering along with a question: Shim'eleh, where are we up to?! And woe betide Shim'eleh if he didn't know the place. Often, the *Rebbe* tests the children on Thursday on the material they had learned during the week, and the children are indeed apprehensive about Thursdays. Children regarded *Heder* as a bleak fate, and they wished that they would get sick, in order to avoid going to *Heder.* The complaints of the *Rebbetzins* to their *Rebbes* did not have a good impact on the children. Since she considered her husband a luckless incompetent, not earing enough to make a living, 'Proper men make a decent living, and bring all good things into the home, and this is worth nothing.' The Rebbe would take his anger out on his pupils. Going home from Heder, we play with buttons and sticks, etc., and it happens that the *Rebbetzin* sees this one time, and tells this to the *Rebbe,* and no one is spared from punishment. In the winter, when the mud freezes over, or snow falls, the children of one *Heder* carry out 'fights' with the children of other *Heders.*

A number of years before The First World War, an yeshiva, for boys between the ages of ten and thirteen, opens in Tomaszow. It is divided into three grades. Even though the studies were the same as those in the Heder, the yeshiva brings in many important changes. In place of the crowded living room of the Melamed, the children learn in the long annex, the first grade with R' Nathan Melamed ע"ה, in the Women's sanctuary – the second grade with R' Benjamin Tepler and a smaller group of older boys – in the Tailor's Little Synagogue, with R' Moshe David ע"ה. On every Sabbath, the classes are tested by town *balebatim* who are educated. After the test, a note is put into a metal box, prepared for this purpose, that has the student's name on it, with a mark, in which Aleph meant 'weak,' Bet meant 'middling' and Gimel meant 'good.' Those who involved themselves in the Yeshiva were: R' Mendl Leubort, R' Mikhl Yuda Pflug ה"ד, et. al. After the outbreak of the War, the Yeshiva ceased to exist.

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71 Jacob's Blessing of Joseph's sons. See Genesis 48:15

After completing *Heder* at 13-14 years of age, one went on to study in one of the *Hasidic Shtiblakh*, and one is then counted as a 'young man' of the *shtibl*. Girls would only attend the elementary level of *Heder*, in order to master Hebrew, that they be able to pray. There were also Jewish teachers who taught the children to write Yiddish, learning from a letter-writer, and a bit of Hebrew. Such individuals included R' Yaakov Scherer ע"ה known as '*Yaakov Lehrer*,' and R' Joel Handelsman (Joel *Badkhan*), et. al.

The Jewish settlement stood on a rather low economic level. Apart from several rich families, there were also many wage earners. but there was also no lack of families who had no means to make a living, with a rather significant number who could not afford to permit themselves a bit of meat to eat in the middle of the week, excepting for the Sabbath.

The town subsisted almost entirely off of the rural vicinity, that is, off of the surrounding peasantry. Jews had stores with a variety of goods, some were larger, some were smaller. There were stores, or business establishments for manufacture, leather, shoes, glass products, peasant clothing, many food stores, tea and solid foods, saloons, soda water and sweets, and a row of others. Factories were made from small wooden boards, used by pharmacies. Such establishments were run by R' Israel Garzytzensky ע"ה, R' Yaakov Putter, R' Nathan Greenwald and R' Yekhezkiel Reisenfeld ה' י"ד. There was a factory for cigarette boxes. The owner was R' Shabtai Friedlander ה' י"ד and several soda factories belonging to: Zlata Laneil ע"ה, R' 'Itcheh'leh *fun Beidl*,' R' Shakhna Lerner and Shmuel Schwartz (*Shmuel Leib'leh's*). There was also a factory for swine bristles belonging to R' Getzel Lehrer and Jonah Singer. Two brush factories, one belonging to R' Leibusz Greenbaum, and [the other] to R' Yehoshua Eilin ה' י"ד.

There were also Jews who derived their sustenance directly from the rural areas, by traveling through the villages, buying up small quantities of grain, flax. barnyard fowl, etc. from the peasants, carrying it back to their home on their own backs, and then first selling it off to merchants operating on a larger scale. There were bigger grain merchants who bought up the smaller lots, and sent them off to the larger cities, or they ground it up and sold the flour to flour merchants. Also, the larger egg merchants would send larger transports of eggs out of the country.

As a border town, there were also Jews in Tomaszow who moved merchandise across the border illegally. They were called 'Black [marketeers].' There were also those who illegally smuggled immigrants across the border from foreign places, for whom it was difficult to obtain a governmental pass into their city. A small, insignificant number lived solely off the Jews, such as clergy, which included 3 Rabbis and 3 *Shokhets*, those who served as a *Shammes*, one Cantor, and a group of ten or so teachers, two scribes, and several booksellers, from whom one could buy prayer books, bible texts, prayer shawls, phylacteries, and also children's story books in Yiddish.

In a hygienic sense, the city found itself in a very low level. Apart from the stone road that cut through from the Kiri to the Zamość highways, all the other streets, including the marketplace, were unpaved and muddy. The sidewalks of boards was broken in many places, and were totally absent in the hind streets. Not everyone wore whole shoes, and wet socks had to be dried in the kitchens, where food was cooked. The larger part of the townsfolk lived in cramped quarters, families of 8-10 souls often living in one room in which cleanliness cannot be observed in any manner whatsoever. The municipal (Jewish) baths was heated only on Fridays, and in that case, only for men.

Clothing was, in general, traditional-Hasidic. Men usually wear small linen caps, on the Sabbath, Hasidim wear velvet ones. Without exception, all the women wear wigs, most of them cutting off their hair immediately on the second day after the wedding ceremony.

Generally, the Jews live tranquilly, feeling close to one another. Should, God forbid, a misfortune strike someone, all feel that it is their misfortune. The same is true of joyous occasions. Weddings are celebrated by large numbers of participants, often for the entire night, until daybreak. Everyone fells as if it was their own personal festivity. If it happens that people or families quarrel because of making a living, or over an inheritance, when Yom Kippur Eve arrives, one forgives the other, and wish each other a Happy New Year. Should a Jewish person, God forbid, fail in business, having failed in his enterprises, ways are sought, as far as possible, to help him get back on his feet. The very poor are provided for, making sure , by their neighbors, that they should have fish and meat for the Sabbath. If it occurs that there is a poor young girl for whom it is difficult to arrange a marriage, it becomes a burden to everyone separately and a Jewish daughter is not permitted, God forbid, to remain a spinster.

More or less, this is the way things looked in the sacred congregation of Tomaszow-Lubliner until the year 1914.

B.

On the first Sabbath after the outbreak of the War, in August 1914, in the morning, when Jews were engaged in the midst of their Sabbath repast, a tumult arose in town. Shmuel Putter permitted his team of horses to be hitched, and rode off, and if Shmuel Putter leaves the city on the Sabbath, it is the best sign that the city is in danger. Almost the entire city grabbed those packages, that can be carried, and sets out on the Zamość road. Wagon drivers lay their packages and bedding on their wagons, and set out on the road. As they proceed, they take on children and old people, to the extent they have room, on their wagons. Consequently, only a very small number of residents remain behind in the city. The following Wednesday, the city is taken over by the Austrian military. A fire then breaks out on the Kiri Highway, in which the entire street is carried off by the flames. A little at a time, the residents that fled begin to return to stores and their homes. After three weeks of occupation, the Austrians leave the city. Several days before their departure, they levy an assessment of a large sum of money on the city populace, arresting the Director of the Faith of the city, R' Joseph Leibusz, R' Israel Garzytzensky and R' Shimon Kossowsky as hostages. Being pursued by the Russians, they show themselves willing to take in only a part of the set sum, and they abandon the city, first freeing the hostages. The Russian forces push even further ahead, capturing areas in Galicia. Life again normalizes itself, as the battlefront moves away. Businesses are again open, the peasants come again for the market fair days. Illegal commerce begins in the trafficking of goods to the occupied cities of Galicia.

Children, once again, go to *Heder*; the mood, however, is tense. War... day in and day out, military cohorts march through the city on their way to the battlefront. and hordes of wounded are transported from the front, women who have their sons or husbands in military service walk about with worried faces, and a sense of insecurity weighs on everyone's spirit. Once again, Jews go the *Kabbalat Shabbat* prayer on Friday evening, but the tones are not the same. Instead of the elevated sense of spirit, a sense of moodiness is elicited. *Lecha Dodi* is not sung, and the entire prayer ritual is executed as if by rote, and in this manner, the entire Sabbath loses a great deal of its sacred character. Jews live with an inner fear of the unknown. Here and there, they hear stories from 'Mediums' who have prophesied about the swift end of the war. The 'Table Medium' becomes quite popular. Anyone who had a table made entirely of wood with no metal, such as a nail, and the like, sits about ten men around the table, with their palms on the top of the table, holding this position for about 10 minutes. Afterwards, they lift up their hands a little higher off the table, and pose questions to the table, such as 'How much?' The table levitates onto two legs, and lets itself down with a bang, and the number of bangs is the answer to the question. Jews were very curious to know how many more weeks the war would last, and the tables indeed answered. The trouble was, that among the tables themselves, there was

no agreement, when one would answer 6 weeks, a second said 8, and the third even 16. The 'Table Medium' at that time was the town hero; but this incensed the participants even more. Having no choice, the leading tables were put aside, and the matter of peace was turned over into the hand of fate, hoping that peace would not ask that we wait for it for too long a time.

In the summer months of 1915, the Germans took over the Austrian front, and break through the Russian lines. The retreat of the Russian armies begins. A little at a time, the fighting draws closer to Tomaszow, and a shudder runs through everyone's skin, in considering the dangers that are connected to it. Many Jewish families abandon the city at that time, heading in the direction of going deeper into Russia, in order to distance themselves from the killing fields. On the last night, a great deal of robbery takes place, by the retreating Russian military, [who assault] the defenseless Jewish populace. With the dawn of 16 Tammuz 5675 [June 28, 1915], the shelling of the city by German military commences. Jews live through quite a lot under the shelling. They group themselves together in the houses with stone and concrete walls, for protection. The Synagogue becomes packed with Jewish families, who respond to each report of a cannon with a shout of '*Shema Yisrael.*' Isolated Cossacks come into these shelter locations and demand money or jewelry from the assembled, frightened Jews. A grenade breaks through into the women's synagogue, and a 20 year-old girl loses a foot as a result of this, and her young life comes to an end eight days later, after intense suffering.

At about 4 in the afternoon, the arriving German military is spotted, and then, first, we breathe easier.

The pulse of municipal economic activity comes to a halt under the German military rule. Stores remain closed, and the peasants don't come into town at all. The Germans take away their produce, and also horses. An illegal trade starts for every type of item. Jews go to the village to buy grain from the peasants, or other produce to be eaten. but if a German spots a Jew carrying something of this nature, he confiscates it. A cholera epidemic breaks out, which claims many victims, and with each passing day, the toll of the dead keeps rising. The *Bikur Kholim* Society works tirelessly to help those stricken by the disease, but it is rare that any of them is fortunate enough to remain alive. At that time, the Jews of Tomaszow make use of a special ritual, namely: one pairs together a poor groom and a poor bride, an orphan, and the city underwrites their wedding. The wedding takes place in the Hasidic *Bet HaMedrash*, and from there, the entire community escorts the groom and bride to stand under the canopy which is erected in the cemetery. And noteworthy enough, several days later.... the epidemic ceases.

A civil administration is created under the military administration of the city, in which Jews take an important part. R' Yehoshua'leh Fishelsohn ז"ה, becomes the burgomaster, and the municipal militia is made up mostly of Jews. This is explained by first noting that the majority of the city population was Jewish, and second, the Jews, by virtue of their facility with Yiddish, find it easier to understand the Germans.

After another interval of time, the military administration passes from the Germans to the Austrians. At that time, many easements were introduced to [daily] life, despite the fact that flour and bread were distributed through the use of standards set by ration cards, it is possible to obtain almost all things. People obtain passes for travel to Lemberg without difficulties, and with the small train constructed by the Germans, both young and old travel to the Belzec rail station, from where they travel to Lemberg with the train, conveying merchandise back and forth. The commerce is not legal, but is almost entirely unimpeded. A variety of concessions are granted to the Jews such as: trafficking (tobacco trade) and the principal commerce is obtained by R' Abraham Yitzhak Blonder ע"ה, who becomes rich from it. He thanks the Master of the Universe by sponsoring the writing of a Torah scroll. He escorts the Torah to the Hasidic *Bet HaMedrash*

with an intensely joyous parade with music; he also orders a large feast, to which the officials of the kingdom in the town are invited. R' Benjamin Weinberg ע"ה obtains a flour concession, With regard to a variety of other products – R' Israel Lehrman in partnership with his brother-in-law R' Hertz Feldsehn ע"ה. All of the recipients of these concessions become wealthy from this.

Under Austrian hegemony, the entire configuration of the Jewish community undergoes a transformation. Jews have open doors to all the governmental and municipal officials. Overall, they are received in a friendly manner. Jews stop thinking of themselves as second-class citizens. Their national sense of identity is awakened, and takes on an animated form. A Zionist organization is established in Tomaszow. The first speaker they invite, is R; Chaim Gottlieb from Zamość, who speaks to a large audience in the 'Simple' *Bet HaMedrash*. Jews gape, as an Austrian military officer, stands at the door of the *Bet HaMedrash*, to protect order. A library of Hebrew and Yiddish books is opened. Jewish theater is performed. When has Tomaszow ever seen such? True, the pious Jews manifest a sharp disapproval of these things, but the young people don't want to know anything about it. In many homes, the domestic tranquility between parents ans children comes under sharp assault. Young people begin to dress in the European style, exchanging the small Hasidic caps for full-sized hats. In certain *Hasidic shtiblakh*, this comes to an outbreak of scandals, in which the prayer service is abruptly halted on the appearance of a person wearing such a hat. Parties are established one after another. '*Mizrahi*' a religious-Zionist organization is established, but it elicits a sharp opposition from the Hasidim, who argue that the 'Mizrahi' will ultimately lead the youth off in more free and liberal directions. A progressive *Heder* is opened, where children are taught in Hebrew. '*Poalei Zion,' 'Tze'irei Zion', 'HaShomer HaTza 'ir'* are established, as well as '*HeHalutz,*' which sends young boys and girls off to do agricultural work, to prepare themselves for *aliyah* to Israel. The *Bund* also arrives, which has an anti-Zionist position. Almost all of the young people of the town who rally to these parties, throwing themselves with all of the ardor of their young souls into partisan activities, and not knowing how or from where, the town finds itself in the middle of an inter-partisan cauldron. Disputes with Hasidim vanish, their place taken by heated discussions between the adherents of the various parties. A Rebbe rarely comes as a guest, in contrast with partisan orators who come, literally, every Monday and Thursday, which takes place, apart from the party premises for the members, also in a public hall, and not infrequently in the *Bet HaMedrash*, at which time one gets ready for a community 'wedding.' The members of the speaker's party feel like they are 'members of a wedding,' who need to protect [the interests of] the 'groom,' to assure that , God forbid, no consternation befall him –to be frequently interrupted, and to eject sharp-tongued opponents It was in this manner that the imprint of Hasidism, that lay on the Jewish settlement for several generations, was leached out and made pale, with the prime place taken over by an inter-partisan ideological struggle, which reigns in the public life of the town. True, each Sabbath, the houses of worship are full of worshipers, and also in the middle of the week Jews attend to prayer, as also do the young, but it has the appearance of an old habit, a natural thing.

It is the year 1918. The War is not yet over, but the intense support for the War is practically done for. As an occupied territory, Tomaszow was not subjected to any draft into military service. Jews accommodated themselves to the new circumstances, and a bit at a time, acclimatized themselves to the Austrian regime. A broad, multi-branched illegal commerce developed, principally with Lemberg. The general situation regarding making a living was without a doubt higher than it was in the pre-War era. As a result, Jews began to take cognizance of the fact that the education of their children had in large measure been neglected. an initiative was then undertaken to establish an elementary school Yeshiva. Among the activists were R' Mikhl Yuda Pflug ה"ד, R' Abraham Yekhezkiel Biederman ע"ה R' Itcheh Meir Gartler, R' Lipa Honigsfeld ע"ה R' Eliezer Gershon Teicher ה"ד R' Sholom Reis ה"ד and others. Immediately after Passover, the Yeshiva opened with two grades. R' Simcha 'The *Melamed* of Komarow' taught the younger grade, in the annex, which was in a long side room on the premises of the 'Simple' *Bet HaMedrash*, which was the place of

worship for a large number of the less-educated Jews, most of whom were craftsmen. R' Nathan *Melamed* ע"ה taught the second grade in the women's sanctuary of the 'Simple' *Bet HaMedrash.*

In recollecting Nathan *Melamed,* it is worth noting that this very R' Nathan ע"ה was a wonder of a *Melamed.* Himself born in Jozefów, a scion of a working-class family, e married Moshe Fishl's daughter in Tomaszow. He was outstanding in his pedagogical skills, which almost had no peer in the surrounding area. H never struck a child, and nevertheless, the children feared his stare, just as they loved him. Himself an accomplished scholar, he had an awesome capacity for explaining things to children. The town, however, did not have the privilege of retaining him as an educator for a long time. A chronic lung ailment shortened his young life. The town accorded him a final honor with a formidable funeral, when he was escorted to his eternal rest. His funeral came out on the second day of Passover, and of note, on this same festival day, was the funeral of the great scholar, R' Hirsch'eleh Moshe Eli's (Gelernter) ז"ל, and these very two funerals cast a pall over festival sun, which, with all its might, tried to raise the downcast spirits of the Jews of Tomaszow, with its substantive springtime rays.

More than 100 students attended the two grades of the Yeshiva, and the activists began to prepare themselves for the expansion of the Yeshiva, however a tragedy took place that summer, namely: a fire broke out in the middle of the night, and burned down the larger part of the town, together with the *Schul.* The Yeshiva no longer was opened.

C.

Fall 1918. Austrian soldiers drag themselves along, singly and in groups, banded together, undisciplined, and beaten as if after a battle they have lost, in the direction of the south. They sell off their coats, and other military effects, to lighten their way home. Organized groups of Polish youth stand on the Kiri Highway, taking away the horses and ammunition from the disorganized troops of the disintegrated Austrian army. A Polish civil militia is formed, and Tomaszow becomes part of the liberated independent Poland. A great deal of trouble for Jews is connected with the arrival of the Polish regime, Dormant Polish anti-Semitism is awakened, and races insanely through cities and towns, striking the sensitivities, possessions and sometimes also the lives of Jewish citizens. Jews, from their perspective, see this as nothing more than a natural phenomenon, with which one must make one's peace through submission. Jews feel wronged and insulted, they protest and demand justice, which is expressed in the strongest terms by the Jewish Deputy Yitzhak Greenbaum of the Sejm. A new era of Jewish life is initiated in Poland, in which a generation proceeds with a self-awareness of their Jewish national identity while under threat. A generation that is very focused on every injustice that comes from the anti-Semitic character, reacting with an aggressive decisiveness, like never before. It can be confidently stated, that from this generation, came the fighters for and the builders of, the modern State of Israel. How id this period play out with us in Tomaszow?

Because of a lack of clarity concerning a series of events that took place at that time in our place, during that history-making epoch, I must leave this interesting chapter to those who remember it with greater exactitude and are therefore called to do so.

I would, however, not discharge my obligation, if I did not cite the following episode for which, I myself was an eye witness. In those times, a host of young Polish recruits appeared marching in columns along the highway, in the direction of the Kiri Highway. Jews shut down their places of business, and Jews also fled off the streets, in order to avoid beatings from the Polish recruits that were drawing nigh. In the marketplace close to the highway, diagonally across from the Koscielna *Gasse* three Jews stood carrying on a

conversation, and in the fleeing, two of them had also fled, but the third, and that was R' Jekuthiel Fogel ע"ה, then already an older man, was left standing on the spot. The recruits, spotting such a 'bargain,' approached the Jew, but he, R' Jekuthiel was not afraid of them, and with his stick, laid out two young hooligans before they even showed any signs of accosting him. And even then, our heroic Jew did not flee. Then the entire host fell upon him and beat him. A patrol of the civil militia rescued him from their hands, and led him, bloodied, into the home of Shmuel Reizl'eh's. R' Jekuthiel went about for a long time with his head bandaged, and had the sympathy of all the Jews of Tomaszow. May his memory be for a blessing.

The Tomaszow Box Factories

By Rae Fust

Page 169: *R' Nathan Greenwald and his wife, Mal'tcheh,* ה"ד

Page 170: *Sarah'leh & Liebeh'leh, R' Nathan Greenwald's Daughters.*

Old and young, from the poorest of the city, worked in the box factories, beginning with little girls, eight years old, up to married men.

The work began with the sawing and splitting of blocks of wood, after which slats were cut. The 'children' were only girls. All the yung boys, without exception went to *Heder.*

Work commenced very early, and they worked until nine o'clock at night.

For gathering and sorting out the slats, a starting child received 50 kopecks a week.

Older girls became glue appliers. they received a ruble a week.

Those who hammered together the bases earned two rubles a week. The packers were paid by the speed of their packing. One hundred boxes were packed in a single bundle.

Family people were paid four, and even five, rubles a week. Grown boys, who no longer attended Heder, received two rubles a week.

Older boys earned three rubles a week, depending on their job. (Etta'leh Greenwald was her father's secretary, and it was through her that I found out how much each type of individual earned).

There were three box factories in Tomaszow.

The closest box factory to our house was R' Nathan's/ In the city, he was called: *'Noss'eleh Mott'leh Fultsheh's.'* His mother was called: *'Shayndl'eh Mott'leh Fultsheh's.'* Among the merchants and tradespeople, he was already called by his last name also: Nathan Greenwald.

R' Nathan's factory was on the Krasnobrod *Gasse,* not far from the Praga. Since many poor people lived in the Praga, their little children went to work in R' Noss'eleh's factory. He, R' Nathan was a 'modern' Jew already, he knew Hebrew very well, and wrote to *HaTzefira.*

As to his wife Mal'tcheh'leh, who was called Mal'tcheh Noss'eleh's, she wore a *shytl,* just like all the other Tomaszow women of that time. She often helped her husband out with the factory work. Her help consisted of always being occupied with the leasing of enough attic space among the neighbors to dry out the slats, from w2hich the boxes were made.

R' Yisroel'eh the *Rov's* who also had a box factory in the marketplace on the covered walkway, was called *'Srolyeh dem Rov's.'* He also dealt in eggs (*hortowna*) and he was Noss'eleh's closest competitor.

Poor girls from the Praga, when they were seven years old, would ask one another: – Where will you go to

work, to Noss'eleh's or *'Srolyeh dem Rov's*?'

The third factory was located on the Kiri Highway (the Lemberg Gasse). The factory belonged to Pesach Putter. Pesach Putter also became a competitor of Nathan's, because Nathan Greenwald had already had his factory for 25 years when the other two factories opened for business, first *'Srolyeh dem Rov's*, and afterwards Pesach Putter.

When these three box factories were located in a city like Tomaszow, many workers were attracted by the work in these factories. Many girls were seen with their nails stuck together from glue, that they used to put together the boxes. The glue was produced by the factories themselves.

Each factory had a large yard, or a barn or base made of wood. In passing through the factory, one could hear the sounds of sawing and cutting, carving and chopping.

Strong men worked to produce the slats from the blocks of wood. In the production areas of the factory, machines stood, with which the slats were cut in accordance with a set length, bases were cut, with each base in a number and set size. Special cutting tools were also employed to cut the slats.

The boxes were used in the pharmacies.

Entire wagons filled with packages of boxes were conveyed to Ryowiec to the train, and from there to Warsaw, to Kiev, and to wherever they were needed.

The factories produced boxed up to the outbreak of The First World War. Because of the War, the factories closed. R' Nathan Greenwald, who had the oldest box factory in Tomaszow had eight children: six daughters and two sons, who together with a servant girl, made up eleven people [in that household].

In order to feed the family, he also began to deal in gasoline and salt, because his father, Mott'leh Fultsheh's has a cellar in the marketplace for the sale of gasoline. The Greenwalds were known as gasoline merchants. So R' Nathan Greenwald, the former box factory owner, received a concession from the municipal governance to enable him to deal in gasoline and salt. Tomaszow, at that time, was occupied by the Germans, and Austrian military were posted in the town.

When Hitler came to power, the first box manufacturer, Nathan Greenwald, his wife Mal'tcheh, his daughter Sarah'leh and her husband Yeshaya Lehrer and their two children, were killed along with millions of other Jews. Additionally, also their daughter Liebeh'leh with her husband Nathan Szparer.

Honor their memory.

My Father's Factory

By Rachil Fust-Lehrer

Page 173: R' Elyakim Getz'l son of R' Pinchas Eliezer HaLevi Lehrer, died 13 Av 5717 [July 21, 1956]

It was before the First World War, and our factory for processing swine bristles had already been separated from our dwelling.

Outside there was an intense frost. The residents of the Tomaszow Praga closed their shutters early, in order to conserve a bit of warmth.

It was dark outside. Through the cracks in the shutters, a dull glow leaked out, which illuminated a forbidding and frozen earth and a bit of pavement.

It was still. Only from my father's swine bristle factory, did a melody emerge:

'The wheels turn,
And the machines clack,
The manufacture of swine bristles goes on.
One's head gets busted,
The eyes darken,
Darkened by tears and sweat.'

The song was carried on the stillness of the night and resonated like a prayer:

'Stop already, you worker,
To shed tears,
You make a stain on the work.
Soon the overseer will come in, angry,
And will whip you away from your work.'

A cold wind began to blow, tearing the shutters from the windows. The melody sorrowfully accompanied the wind:

The worker's life,
Is an embittered life,
He never has any rest,
He cannot straighten his back during the day,
And he cannot sleep peacefully at night.'

Aunt Tema with Uncle Jonah Singer, and their family lived opposite us. The windows of our swine bristle factory looked over the factory of Uncle Jonah, from which my father had separated. So the workers picked up the melody and sang it in the production areas.

But the singing of my father's workers in the swine bristle factory carried with more force.

Not far from us, a valley led to the lake where a guards used to live. The path led to the street to the brigade

building. where the Cossacks were billeted. Passing by our house, they heard the singing of the factory workers often, and picked up the melody.

Young Heder students, with lanterns in their hands, well wrapped in colorful scarves around their necks, would often stop, and take in the words of the songs.

In the neighboring Belz shtibl (where my father worshiped), yung teachers sat, and swayed back and forth in front of open Gemara texts, and their tunes would become mixed with the melody of the worker's songs.

The workers worked and sang, no knowing who was the recipient of their songs.

The song was sung differently in each factory, matching their own words to the melody.

My father's factory was lit by small naphtha lamps. The lamps hung over the production areas. At each workstation, there was a worker and a lamp.

The spreaders, who straighten out, sort and lay out the bristles into small batches, stood by their workstations and straightened out the bristles. Their hands were wet and red. The skin on their fingers was soaked like those of a laundress.

The combers stood by their machines which had large combs on them, with long metal teeth, and combed the batches of bristles. Each comber held a bundle of bristles in both hands, standing bent over the comb. They would move their limbs faster and faster, speedier and speedier the bristles ran through the large iron teeth of the comb.

Bandaged fingers, stabbed by the teeth, moved quickly in pain, in order that the swine bristles be made smooth and straight.

The binders would gather the bundles together in round packs, and tired them tightly together with fastening cord.

So the combers combed, the straighteners straightened, and the binders bound the bristles to the sound of the singing.

The air in the factory was filled with the strong smell of the bristles, which were being dried in the oven.

I, a small girl, sat across from the fire from the factory kitchen, and listened to the singing.

My cheeks grew red, and my eyes shimmered from tears that were held back.

– *Rekha'leh* (Rachel'eh), come inside, it is already time to go to bed! – my mother's voice could be heard saying.

My eyes were sticking closed, but it seemed like a shame to leave the factory.

– Don't you hear your mother calling you?! – my father asked.

So I picked myself up from the floor, and said in a dissatisfied manner:

– I'm going already, father! and I leave the factory.

The 'electric lamp' was lit in our house, and near the kitchen stood a kneading station, and a trough to bake *Challah* for the Sabbath.

It was Thursday night. My mother, Chaya Nekha (whom in Tomaszow was called: *Chaya Getzel Pinia's*) was occupied with squeezing raisin wine through a linen napkin in honor of the Sabbath. Her apron was stained, and in the house while she worked, she wore a white head covering on her shaven head fastened with a tie (when she went out of the house, as well as in respect of the Sabbath and Festivals, she would wear a wig).

It was still in the house. My older brother, Chaim Joseph, who had studied for a short time with the Rabbi of Belz, was already back in Tomaszow, and studied until late with the Rabbi, R' Nachman on the Krasnobrod Gasse. My younger little brother, Moshe, was already asleep in a alcove of my father's bed. My sleeping place was already made up, but I didn't want to go to sleep.

I went up to my mother and asked:

– Mama, who made up the song that the workers sing?

– What song?

– The song with 'The wheels turn and the machinery clangs.'

– What do you mean who? Who writes all of the songs? My mother answered me with a question, herself not knowing the name of the composer.

– Mama, something is not right with the song!

– Not right? Why?

– The workers sang it and Father laughed.

– Well, what did you want, that he should cry?

– No, not that. I mean why did they sing the song on our premises?

– Why not? – My mother answered.

– Father is not a mean master. Why then must they sing that by us – I asked sorrowfully.

– Go, little fool, they weren't referring to your father, which is why he laughed. He knew they were not referring to him.

I still was not satisfied with the answer, and I asked again:

– At our swine bristle factory, no wheels turn, and machines do not clang, so why do they sing such a song?

My mother's smooth brow became furrowed, she sighed and said:

- To tell the truth. I, myself, do not know who wrote this song. I only know, that when it is sung in your father's factory, they say: 'The swine bristle factory is running,' and when it is sung in the box factory, they say: 'The box factory is running,' but it seems to be most suitable to the tailors. There, wheels do, in fact, turn, and machinery clangs. Accordingly, it is sung in the sewing factories of all cities and towns, because the workers love the song. The workers change it, and insert words that fit their places of work – so my mother said, scrutinizing the raisin wine in the carafe.

– But Mama, they don't mean my father, I continued to ask.

No, not your father. After all, he works right along with the workers and treats them better than other *balebatim* – my mother answered with pride.

It fell silent in the factory.

The workers went home tired. Only Moshe Janower, and Leib'l, remained, because they lived and ate with us.

Apart from serving the family, my mother also served the workers.

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The Bulak-Balakhovich Pogroms in Tomaszow-Lubelski

By M. Zeldin

(A Bloody Chapter from the Year 1920)

In comparison with the brutality of the Nazi destruction, after the bloody extermination of the Six Million Jews by the *Brown Beast*, many of the decrees and slaughters of prior times seem rather pale. To those belong the pogroms carried out by the bands [under the command] of Bulak-Balakhovich in Polish cities at the time of the establishment of the new Poland, after The First World War, which was resurrected from the dead.

It was a time when the new state struggled for its stabilization. In the motherland, the ten existing provinces of Crown Poland and the genuine Polish areas – the Posen area and Western Galicia, the condition of the regime was sort of semi-stable from the standpoint of state sovereignty. It was clear, that this was *Poland.* The new state had a difficult way to fo in the eastern areas, called 'Kressyn.' In that time, a new array of nation states were taking shape, who were supported by a variety of factors, and there were very many elements with claims on this territory. On one side, the Bolsheviks held that they were the legal heirs to this land, which had belonged to Russia, and on the other side, other pretenders appeared – Ukrainians and a variety of other 'Batkas,' anti-Bolshevik Czarist officers, who put together 'armies,' and carried on in these areas, which in specific times were under anarchy and chaos.

A rather prominent place among these bands and military groups was occupied by the army of the prominent general, *Bulak-Balakhovich.* This former Czarist general was not a Pole: he was just involved in the battle for Poland. He pretended to become the ruler of Polesia in White Russia, and parts of Wolhynia, if the Bolsheviks were defeated. The territory over which this general projected his control indeed stretched from Kovel'-Wolhynia to the Pinsk marshes and encompassed parts of the Chelm-Zamość areas.

His army consisted of former Czarist White Guards, together with all sorts of Ukrainian-White Russian elements, among them some really lowlife personalities, who saw, in their 'military' careers a way to enrich themselves through plunder and murder. For such elements, such an 'army' was the best place to be in such chaotic times.

The activity of this army, first and foremost, manifested itself in assault and robbery of Jewish cities and towns. It was referred to, not as a fight against the Jews, bit against 'Bolsheviks,' – and do appreciate that this meant the '*Zyds.*' Plunder, murder, rape, arson, these were the daily practice of these bands. We say bands, in the plural, because apart from this general Bulak-Balakhovich, there were others of this kind.

N the months of August-September 1920, the Bulak-Balakhovich army preyed in the Chelm-Zamość area. In total, as a result of the activities of this band, tens of cities and towns were subject to pogroms. Among them, also was *Tomaszow-Lubelski*, through this pogrom.

In one 'march' of this army, which began on August 8, 1920 in the village of Werbkowice, and later through Hrubieszow, Tyszowce, Komarow, Krasnobrod, Laszczow, Tutszow, they entered *Tomaszow.* This 'army' was in Tomaszow on two occasions. The first time on August 25-26, a patrol entered here, and later, on August 30 and 31, a military detachment arrived. Both incursions were bloody – plunder, rape and destruction.

At that time, Dr. Yitzhak Szyfer[72] sat in the Polish Sejm at as a Deputy, elected from this region. He came down to this area and carried out a very exacting investigation and probe. On the basis of this investigation, he Jewish caucus of the Sejm , in November 1920 introduced a suitable interpolation to the Polish parliament (Sejm). All the details of destruction in the entire area was preserved in the documents and bulletins of the Jewish faction in the Sejm. We excerpt only those portions that have a relationship to Tomaszow.

Every datum, every detail, every name, is today history, despite the fact that this did not happen very long ago. Especially now, when all the residents have been wiped out: the living witnesses have been exterminated, together with the other evidence of that time, and it is important for the history of this community that nothing should be lost. So, indeed, we bring here, the documents about Tomaszow, as they were and stand. For a variety of reasons, certain names appear only as initials.

All the documents represent eye-witness testimony, which were taken by Dr. Y. Szyfer, verified by him, and entered into the parliament-interpolation.

Document Number 1

Letter from the Tomaszow Magistrate to the Commander of Military Unit Number 3.

We advise the commandant, that this evening (August 26, 1920) a detachment of the second division of the Don Cossacks from the Volchansk Division carried out a pogrom against the residents of R\Tomaszow as follows:

M. Z. was raped, and an attempt was made to rape A. L. Apart from this, they carried out actions of plunder amounting to a sum of approximately 300,000 marks. To the extent that is now known, robbery was carried out in the houses of Yitzhak Lieberman, Eliyahu Kreitzer, Yaakov Lederkremmer, Aharon Faldberg, Aharon Feldsehn, Leib'eh Waldberg, Mordechai Gelernter, David Zafern, and many others, who have not yet been audited.

Burgomaster: Krzyzanowski
Secretary Dornfeld

Document Number 2

The eye witness account of Shia Fishelsohn, municipal representative in Tomaszow, 33 years of age, and of Chaim Horn, municipal representative, 31 years of age, who declare:

On Wednesday the 25th, or Thursday the 26th of August, a detachment of the Balakhovists passed through our city, which consisted of one officer and approximately 20 soldiers. They stopped over night. They

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72 He was better known as Dr. Ignacy (Ichak) Schipper (1884-1943). A historian and politician. Published mostly in Polish. Originally from Tarnow, a distant relative of Leon Szyfer, he is also mentioned in *Pinkas Zamość*.
A prominent historian, one of the leaders of *Poalei Tzion* (right wing), he was murdered by the Nazis in Majdanek. (See verso side of second smut sheet).

immediately went to the Rabbi and demanded a 10,000 mark contribution and two half barrels of spirits. The Rabbi called together the Jewish councilmen and people of means, who assembled the amount referred to, which was turned over to the officer of the Balakhovich detachment by the community councilmen: Benjamin Weinberg, Mendl Reichenberg, and the Rabbi. The officer counted out the money, and remarked in Russian with a smile, '*Velikolepno!* (Outstanding!): 'By tomorrow morning, you must add an additional 10,000 marks.' When Weinberg asked, in our presence, 'Why are you subjecting us to a levy?' the officer replied: 'You Jews receive the Bolsheviks all around, and that is why I wish to speak with you again in the morning, so that you have a memento, that Russian might had been here.' In 2-3 hours later, at about 11 o'clock at night, the referred to 20 soldiers began to engage in plunder of the Jewish residences. They robbed the houses and stores of Yaakov Lederkremmer, Ely'eh Kreitzer, Yitzhak Lieberman, Aharon Feldsehn, Leib Waldberg, Mordechai Gelernter, David Zafern, and in general, the entire Jewish neighborhood. The Jews, who live in the outer neighborhoods where there is a Christian majority, were spared. the damages inflicted are estimated at approximately one million marks. Up to eight Jewish women and girls were physically accosted. There were also several incidents of Jews that were beaten. The robbery and rapes lasted until five o'clock in the morning.

On Wednesday, August 26, the local doctor, Zawadzki went off (intervened) to the commandant of the Balakhovich detachment; he found him completely drunk, among overturned bottles. On the same day before noon, this detachment left Tomaszow.

In the course of three days, the town was without any authority in place.

On Monday, August 30, between 600-700 Balakhovists entered the city. They came through the city and set off in the direction of Jezorno (4 km past Tomaszow). During this march through, about 60 men broke off and immediately began to plunder, asking for Jewish domiciles. Corporal *Sikorski*, from the police in Losinko, took part in this detachment. He pointed out the Jewish houses to the robbers (especially the houses of Chaim Putter, Yaakov Lederkremmer, Israel Lehrman, Leib Schwartzberg, Abraham Blonder) and also personally participated in the plundering. They plundered this way for four hours and afterwards went off in the direction of Jezorno. At night, approximately between 4-5PM, I Shia Fishelsohn, and Josef Gozdek, a shoemaker from Tomaszow (we were both on guard duty at the behest of the municipal militia) encountered Sikorski with six Cossacks on the Lemberg Gasse. Sikorski was standing near Leib Schwartzberg's house beside a wagon loaded with goods, and the Cossacks still persisted in breaking into Jewish homes. They continued to plunder this way for about two hours, when I, Fishelsohn, approached Sikorski with a reproach that he has complicity in the plundering, and he made an effort to come up with an alibi, saying that he will spare my house: He ordered Gozdek to leave immediately, and if not, he will shoot him on the spot.

On Tuesday August 31, before noon, a group of Balakhovists came into the city of about 150 men with an officer at their head. They stationed themselves in various sides of the city as if they were patrolling, and approximately an hour later they took to plunder. My intervention with the officers helped not at all.

The plunder lasted until 5PM. At about 1PM three officers assaulted the residence of the Rabbi, *Yerakhmiel Weinberg* and demanded a levy of one-half million marks from him as a tribute, threatening him with death. It happens that I, Fishelsohn, entered the Rabbi's house and was present at this scene. I then approached one of the officers, and explained to him that the Rabbi was a poor man, and has no such influence to be able to gather such a sum of money. I presented myself as someone to undertake this task. the officers let the Rabbi go, and went out with me to collect the money from the Jews. We went off to the Lemberg Gasse, and along

the way, I attempted to negotiate with them, that they should satisfy themselves with 20,000 marks, because the city was severely damaged. I received blows from a *nagaika*[73] as my reply, and struck with a sword, so that I fell powerless. I have just now been able to get myself into the pharmacy, where I was refreshed.

In the end, the Jews managed to get together and turn over 17,000 marks. The plundering continued for all of Tuesday, and the damages reached several millions. In the process, several tens of Jews were beaten severely and lightly. Up to 50 Jewish women were raped at that time, among them F. L.....who was, at the time only 3-4 weeks after childbirth confinement. She was raped by six Cossacks and currently lays sick. Also, N. F. was raped, who also was only several weeks after childbirth. There were several instances of rape against girls that were younger than 15 years of age, and women over the age of 60.

On Tuesday evening, the Polish military arrived, and the city became quiet from that time onwards.

S. Fishelsohn ; Ch. Horn.

Document Number 3

Eye Witness Account of Ely'eh Kreitzer, Feldscher, Age 71.

O the night of the 25th and the 26th of August 1920, 10-12 Balakhovists entered my residence and robbed my premises. I was dressed in the European fashion, and I therefore explained to them that I was a Christian, but they did not take that into account. They took away 600 marks, clothing, a silver watch and 8 meters of material. They took to my daughter, who lay ill, and tore off her earrings, and rings, and in the end wanted to rape my younger daughter, whom they had dragged into the kitchen. When I began to shout, they put a revolver to my head. hey dragged my daughter out to the field, but a Polish gendarme came upon them and drove the *pogromshchiks* away.

Eliyahu Kreitzer

Document Number 4

Eye Witness Account of Yaakov Lederkremmer, Age 38, Wine Merchant.

On the night of the 25th to the 26th (of August 1920), a detachment of Balakhovists surrounded my house and wine business. They broke in, and stole about 1,600 marks from the safe, and broke up the furnishings, broke open the door to the wine cellar and carried out a variety of drink stuff worth 150,000 marks. During this plunder, they beat my wife, who, nevertheless, was able to flee from the house. She ran to the officer who was in charge of this detachment, who was at the residence of the tax collector Fanasewicz, where he sat at the table, on which were set out bottles of the stolen wine. She pleaded for his assistance. However, he threatened her with a court martial and death by firing squad. In the end, he turned her over to his orderly, whom he ordered to accompany my wife to my wine store and take a bottle of wine. When my wife found herself in the wine cellar with the orderly, he wanted to rape her. He drew his sword on her. However, she seized the sword, thereby wounding herself, but frustrated the attack of the *pogromshchik,* and fled from the cellar, The Balakhovists robbed my residence a second time on the night of the 30th and 31st of the same month.

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[73] A Cossack horseman's riding crop.

Yaakov Lederkremmer

Document Number 5

Eye Witness Account of Hirsch Bleicher, 52 Years old, Merchant.

On the night of the 30th on the 31st of August (1920) 5 Balakhovists dropped into my home, dragged my two daughters, Sima (22 years old) and Chana-Rivka (19 years old), out to the attic, in order to rape them. They severely wounded my wife with a blow from a sword to the head. I was severely beaten with rifle butts on my back. They robbed goods from my house in the amount of several thousand marks.

Hirsch Bleicher

Document Number 6

Eye Witness Account of David Zafern, 45 Years Old, supported by his Children.

On 11 Elul [corresponds to August 25 in 1920] several Balakhovists dropped into my home. They robbed all the value from my pockets: 300 marks and 180 crowns. They robbed 3,000 marks from my son Joseph, while threatening to shoot him. finally, they accosted my daughter, Liebeh-Mindl. When I came to her defense, they threatened me with a revolver. When my son Joseph came to protect his sister, they beat him with rifle butts. In the end, one of them grabbed me by the throat, and put a revolver to my eyes, and the second dragged my daughter away in a second room and raped her there.

These same two broke into my house a second time, and threatened to shoot me, but they ran off quickly.

David Zafern

Addendum of Liebeh-Mindl Zafern, age 18, daughter of David Zafern: I have heard what my father has told: I confirm what he has related.

Document Number 7

Eye Witness Account of Shia-Shimon Putter, Age 50, Owner of a Saloon.

On the night of the 25th to the 26th of August (1920) several Balakhovists broke into my home, who beat me and took away 900 marks and 10 dollars.

On the following morning, I communicated this event in a report to two gendarmes who could be found in the local central hotel, together with Dr. Zawadski. At that time, I recognized the two Balakhovists, who robbed and beat me. The gendarmes presented these tow to me. Whether these guilty parties were punished or not, I do not know.

Shia-Shimon Putter

Document Number 8

Eye Witness Account of Joseph Sznycer, Age 29, Merchant.

Five Balakhovists dropped into my home on the 30th of August, took away 150 marks from my brother-in-law Yaakov Winder, and Jekuthiel Vogel, who was in my house, under the threat of being killed by the sword, which they placed against his throat, took 40 marks – he had no more. On the following morning, yet again, 8 Balakhovists with two officers at their head, dropped into my house, and shook out all the belongings, furniture and clothing. They took away the clothing, laundry and loaded it into a wagon that they had brought with them.

Joseph Sznycer

Document Number 9

Eye Witness Account of Dvora Stempel, Age 20, living with her parents.

On August 30th the Balakhovists robbed the home of my parents. They took away goods worth 2,000 marks, 1,000 marks cash; and jewelry worth in the neighborhood of 3,400 marks. They also knocked out the windows of the dwelling.

Dvora Stempel

Document Number 10

Eye Witness Account of Chana-Sarah Lichtman, Age 35, a trades woman.

On Tuesday the 31st of August, before dawn, Balakhovists robbed my place of business. They took away all of the merchandise that was worth 7,000 marks. My neighbor, Esther Haut, informed me the police corporal Sikorski directed the plunder. She related this to the local military commandant in Tomaszow, Muszczynski.

Chana Lichtman

Document Number 11

Eye Witness Account of Aharon Feldsehn, Age 62, Merchant.

Soldiers from Balakhovich's army carried out robberies in my house two times. The first time they took 1,825 marks from me, silverware, and other things. The second time clothing and underwear.

On August 30th, about fifteen Balakhovists broke into the home of my son-in-law, Israel Lehrman, who were led by the police corporal Sikorski, and demanded 100,000 marks. They permitted him to leave the house, in order to get the money, but held his wife and children as hostages. In the end, he brought 5,000 marks, but this sum did not satisfy them, so they plundered the premises, and beat the family in a terrifying manner. My seven-year-old grandson jumped from the window out of terror, and broke a leg. Two Jewish servants at my son-in-law's were raped.

Israel Lehrman, Age 38, son-in-law of Aharon Feldsehn, confirms everything.

Document Number 12

Eye Witness Account of Tsanel[74] *Putter, Age 37.*

One of the Balakhovists ripped the jewelry off of my wife, Sala. My wife, at that time, was hiding in a Christian home, and a Cossack that entered the house noticed how my wife went pale, and so he called out: '*Ty Zydowka!*' and then pulled off her jewelry worth about 30,000 marks. The Christians, present in the house, were untouched.

Ts. Putter

* * *

Up to this point we have conveyed the incidents of the pogrom in *Tomaszow* proper. Among the materials of the Sejm, are also found, however, information and eye witness accounts of Tomaszow residents who provided information about the surrounding settlements.

1. In this manner, for example, the Tomaszow merchant Mordechai Gelernter, Age 45 who came from Laszczow, tells about the robbery and murder in the village of Telatyn, where about 25 Jewish families lived. The same [person] tells about the murder of *Israel-Pinchas* Feil in the village of Tuczapy, which took place a couple of days before Rosh Hashanah.

2. *Joseph Eisen*, Age 33, a merchant from Tomaszow, related the pogrom activities of the Balakhovists in Laszczow.

3. *Shia Lehrikh*, Age 70, a merchant from Tomaszow, relates that in the village of *Telatyn*, the Balakhovists murdered the Jew *Yitzhak Montok*. This news originated with the Jew Yankl-Shmuel Kalenberg of the village of Falazyna, in the Tomaszow district.

4. Abraham Mehrer, Age 70, of Tomaszow, who among other things, held a management lease on an orchard in the village of *Krzemien*, six *viorst*[75] from Laszczow, tells about the pogrom of Balakhovists against the six Jewish families, who lived in that village.

Letter from the Laszczow and Komarow Communities to the Jews of Tomaszow

The prior documents have a relationship to the Balakhovist pogroms in Tomaszow. At the outset, we have already taken note that this 'army' of bandits was active in the entire vicinity. Among the communities that suffered, they found, among others, the communities of *Laszczow* and *Komarow*. In the same archive, apart from the materials associated with the banditry plunder, murders, and rapes by the Balakhovists, we also find documents of *fraternal assistance*, that Jews rendered to one another in that troubled time. Two letters were preserved, one from the Laszczow community, and the second from Komarow. These letters, to the

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74 Editor's Note: Here, the intent was to say Sinai Putter. the writer of these minutes apparently made an error, changing the name from Sinai to Tsanel.

75 An Eastern European measure of distance, usually so spelled *verst*. 1 verst = 1.508571 miles

Tomaszow community, are important period documents that illustrate, notwithstanding that Tomaszow was one of the settlements that suffered, the settlement rendered support to the neighboring smaller communities. We convey these letters as they were written. We translate it from the Polish text, which is contained in these Sejm bulletins, which were translated [themselves] from Hebrew.



Letter from Laszczow

To the Generous-hearted Jewish populace in *Tomaszow.*

We received the bread salt and candles that you sent, and we respond with '*God will repay you,*' despite the fact that the proffered assistance was literally but a drop in the ocean, in light of the greater need that reigns among us. In the course of three days, (the bandits) murdered, spilled innocent blood, robbed, raped women, and one of them actually died. May her death be an expiation for our Jewish settlement. Up to 60 men have been lightly and severely wounded. Up to 100 girls and women raped; the entire worth of the *shtetl*: cash on hand, jewelry, outerwear, underwear, and things of this nature, were plundered. The plight of the populace is tragic. The majority are hungry, begging for bread, which we do not have. Because we fear to show ourselves outside of the city, we have no opportunity to solicit assistance from distant places. We, therefore, are sending you a plea: take pity on us; collect donations from the residents of your city and if it is possible, request help form *Zamość*, because the communication link with *Zamość* is broken.

We ask that your assistance arrive no later than Sunday, the eve of Rosh Hashanah, in order that Jews may have bread for the holiday.

We are keeping our letter brief because of the terribly straitened circumstances which reign here, in connection with the recent events.

On behalf of the Aid Committee in Laszczow
Mordechai Joseph Zucker



Letter from Komarow

To the very prominent Rabbi, *Rabbi Yerakhmiel Weinberg,* his helpers and the entire Jewish populace of *Tomaszow.*

You most certainly already know about the frightening pogrom, plundering, murdering, that took place here (in Komarow) on the 14th and also the 21st of Elul [August 28, and September 4, in 1920]. Fifteen men were killed; a large number were wounded and almost the entire Jewish populace was robbed. In the plain sense of the word, they have nothing with which to cover themselves. Widows and orphans have been left without the means to sustain themselves. To make matters worse, this misfortune had to occur on the eve of the High Holy Days, a time when more resources were needed to cover outlays. The expense is unconscionable, and it is not possible to talk about earnings. A panic has seized us to the point that we are afraid to show ourselves in the streets, or outside the city. Apart from this, our greatest difficulty is with primary products.

In view of the fact that you and your brethren are in the nearest area close to us, we implore of you to send us aid, however more quickly, and also send emissaries to the surrounding neighboring communities regarding help, because we are unable to do this, because 'someone imprisoned cannot free themselves from prison by their own hand.' To our sorrow, we must confirm that to this day, nobody had noticed our misfortune. I am compelled to approach you, to arouse the awareness in your hearts; the compassion for us; believe us dear brothers, that those who were not here during these events, will indeed be unable to imagine the extent of our misfortune. Everything that Jeremiah expressed in his 'Lamentations' has come to pass with us.....

A List of the Murdered by the Band of the Bulak-Balakhovists in Komarow-Lubelsk

1. *David Zisman* – Shames Age 49;
2. *Paya Zisman*, his wife, Age 38;
3. Their 10 year-old son, their 12 year-old daughter;
4. *Yitzhak Tsaler*, a merchant, approximately 60 years old;
5. *Yitzhak Neuerman*, Tsaler's son-in-law, Age 35;
6. *Shmuel Reis*, a Tailor, Age 43;
7. *David Trost*, a Butcher, Age 40;
8. *Rachel Trost*, his wife;
9. *Baylah Maulstein*, a sister-in-law to David Zisman, Age 30;
10. *Abraham*, the son of *Wolf Zeidl*, Age 18;
11. *Elazar Puster*, Saloon Keeper, Age 56;
12. *Mendl Herzig*, Merchant, Age 68;
13. *Joseph Slomowitz*, Tailor, Age 60;
14. *Pina Schuldiner* (from Wolica);
15. *Chaim Wild*, Comb Maker, Age 52.

Permit us to add, in conclusion, that this bloody epoch of Bulak-Balakhovich pogroms, plunder and murder, received no recording in our historiography. There is an extensive literature about the pogroms of that time in *Ukraine*, in *Galicia* (Lemberg and its vicinity), about the events in *Pinsk*, but about these acts of predation, the Jewish chronology is silent. And this march of plunder and murder encompassed hundreds of cities and towns.

It is also known that in the decade of the twenties, two young men from Ratno, Aharon-Yaakov Ginsberg, and Neta Royzkes began to assemble materials about these events. And so, they were arrested by the Polish authorities and the assembled material, a very rich compendium of information, documents, lists, eye witness accounts, and the like, were confiscated.

The Re-established, Liberated Poland

By Shmuel Shiflinger

In the Spring of 1920 or 1921

That, which I wish to record, took place in the time when the newly-formed Polish regime, among its first acts, began to recruit a new regular Polish Army. This was the time when General Haller arrived in Poland from the outside with his army, when the 'oafs,' or as they were called, the 'Hallerists' let themselves go, amusing themselves with a variety of assaults on the Jews in cities and towns, on trains and on roads, wherever they found themselves, and they especially hounded Jews with beards. If they trapped a Jew of this sort, he was not to be envied. One of the Hallerists would hold him tightly, and another would cut his beard with scissors, and when the Jew struggled and tried to stop them in their depraved task, the Hallerist – willingly or unwillingly – cut the Jew on his face and throat. We learned of these 'lovely deeds' perpetrated by the Hallerists, who were supposed to be the core of the newly created Polish army. This was heard not only from the Jewish periodicals, but also from Jews who came traveling from those places where the Hallerists preyed. The facts reached the larger Polish population, and without doubt, there was a specific number of Poles, whether from the intelligentsia or the urban rank and file, who were not only very dissatisfied about these sorrowful events, but actually, among themselves, spoke of the shame it was to Poland. Until not long ago, they had heard of such 'lovely stories' concerning the Russian bandits, but this was totally inappropriate for Poland. In many Polish cities, Polish workers supported Jewish self-defense, and to protect Jews from Russian *pogromshchiki*, as I personally saw in Lodz in 1905-1906.

In connection with what has been written above, I read the following fact, which was a reaction outside of the country regarding the sorrowful deeds of the Hallerists. As I recall those years, the first post-war conference of the representatives of Europe and America had perchance taken place. The ministers came togther, and among them was also a minister from the newly-established Poland. So many of these ministers were meeting for the first time, and did not know one another, and as was the practice, some minister would come over to a group of other ministers, and introduced himself, as to who he was, and what country he came from. At a certain point, a minister approach, I do not know exactly who, whether from Holland or Norway, who happened to be the only minister with a long beard. He put out his hand to greet each minister to whom he was introduced, and when he was introduced to the Polish minister, he quickly covered his beard with his left hand, pressing the hand of the Polish minister, but saying nothing as to why he was clutching his beard, but all the [other] ministers looked on and smiled. But all of them understood very well what this meant, and the Polish minister was embarrassed and felt very badly, and he let the Polish government know about this, and demanded that the wild predations of the Hallerists be stopped, and in fact, immediately afterwards, the predations were stopped.

As mentioned above, the predation of the Hallerists were no secret from the rural populace, especially the young 'oafs,' who were recruited into the army. In our city, the Faber Commission was then in the brigade buildings, which were left behind by the Russian army after the war. Twelve districts belonged to our city, and the young recruits were brought by wagon from each district separately. First thing in the morning, one could see the long row of wagons arriving, at the head of which was the administrator and the secretary of the district. The long row of wagons with the recruits would pass through the Zamość and Lemberg Gasse in order to reach the brigade headquarters. In riding to the city, they would beat every Jew they met along the way. But also, even in the city, they would jump out of the wagons, and fall upon a Jew, or leap into a

Jewish place of business and grabbed whatever they desired. The young, newly created militia with the head of the militia did not react at all to the wild behavior of the recruits. And seeing this, the recruits became more hopeful and confident in themselves, that their wild behavior was not punishable. This condition lasted for about 3-4 weeks, and it is superfluous to write down how sad this was for the Jewish populace. When the wagons with recruits would arrive, the stores were locked shut, and people hid themselves wherever they could, in order to avoid encountering the recruits. A terror fell upon the Jewish populace, and it was simply not possible to bear it.

On a certain day, the *Dozor* of the Jewish district, Lejzor Lederkremmer, came to me, and asked me to accompany him with a delegation to the *Starosta* to request protection and complain about the militia. I accepted. On the morning of the following day, I accompanied the Rabbi and Lederkremmer to the *Starosta*, immediately that morning, who was at the end of the Lemberg Gasse, in the building where at one time there was the Circuit Doctor Shamarayev's Hospital. We went early in the morning before the recruits arrived. and not to fall into their hands. The *Starosta,* Ittner, immediately received us, greeted each of us with a handshake, and asked the reason for which we had come. I had been designated to speak. I conveyed to the Starosta everything that had been going on for the last 8-10 days, and that we ask of him as the 'patriarch' of the entire area, to protect our lives. I saw immediately that he was moved by my tale, and immediately asked why we had not come to him before this, that this is the first time he hears of these events, and it is possible that this occurred because no one had seen him in the city, and he immediately called in his secretary, Michalkiewicz, and immediately ordered that the Chief of Police be summoned to him, who was located on the Lemberg Gasse at the house of Itcheh Karper. Fifteen minutes later, there was a knock at the door, and the Chief of Police entered. A tall dark gentile, in the uniform of the police, he remained standing at the door, as we, the delegation sat, the Chief of Police stood for the entire time at the door. The *Starosta* told him that the delegation came to him to complain about the Chief of Police, regarding the assaults by recruits against the Jewish populace, that the police do nothing to protect us. The Chief of Police was frightened, and attempted to defend himself, saying that he has insufficient manpower in the police force, and as a result he has no option regarding the undisciplined recruits. I immediately requested the privilege to speak and said, that I do not agree with the response of the Chief of Police, because I personally saw a day earlier, how four recruits went into a place of business, of Abraham' tcheh Warter on the Lemberg Road, and immediately leapt out of there with robbed items, when precisely at that same moment an elderly resident came by who, upon seeing them leap out with these items, began to club them, and shout a them. 'how do you not be ashamed to do this, have fear of God, you louts, and the recruits were frightened by this single, solitary elderly and weak man, and dropped all the items they robbed and fled, so I ask the *Starosta,* if four recruits were frightened by such an elderly and weak man, with only a stick in hand, how could they not be fearful of even one policeman? The Starosta was visibly convinced by my words, and asked the Chief of Police, what answer he had for the delegation. The Chief of Police replied, that from this day forward, he will see to it that there will be no more assaults against Jews. With thanked the *Starosta* and were satisfied with our mission.

From the following morning, to the end of the draft, the city became free to the Jews, and one no longer saw any recruits. because the police did not let them into the city, and they were kept locked up in the brigade building for an entire day, and afterwards, they were escorted out of the city by militia.

The other day, sitting in front of the house where I lived at my father-in-law's, I see from afar that the Chief of Police is heading in my direction. I felt that it was possible he was coming to rebuke me for what I had complained about him to the Starosta, but it became evident, that he had actually approached me, greeted me heartily, and asked whether I was satisfied with the order than had been implemented, and that finally there was quiet in the city, and I thanked him for this, and showed my satisfaction.

Halutzim in Tomaszow

By Fishl Hammer

Page 195: **The first Halutzim in Tomaszow:** *Moshe Reichenberg, Yisroel'keh Greenbaum, Moshe Karper, Shmuel Gelernter, Yoss'l Meldung, Abraham' eleh Dornfeld, Nathan Goldstein, Abraham Zilberberg, Ary' Levenfus, Fishl Nat. Klerer, Paltiel Herbstman and Yoss'l Singer.*[76]

Page 197: *Certification from* Agudat HeHalutz of the year 5680 [1920][77]

Page 199: *Certification from* Agudat HeHalutz of the year 5680 [1920][78]

The writer of these lines does not remember precisely when the Zionist spark began to burst into flame in Tomaszow, it could be after the [establishment of] *Hibat Zion* movement, yet from the time of Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever, and from Rabbi Yitzhak Yaakov Reien's times, and a great number of other prominent people among Jewry who afterwards founded the *Hibat Zion* movement, whether the Zionist concept and the Zionist ideal was secretly instilled in single young people, or 'sons-in-law supported by fathers-in-law.' In the end, this led to the result that years later in Tomaszow a strong Zionist movement arose in Tomaszow. A nationalist tree grew, from whose roots eventually grew: the *Mizrahi*, *Tze'irei Mizrahi*, general Zionists, *Tze'irei Tzion*, *Poalei Tzion*, and the well-known first of the *Halutzim* who organized themselves as pioneers to make *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

Of course, our Tomaszow was not the only city that produced these parties. Almost every city in Poland produced *Halutzim*, pioneers, who later became the builders of the Land of Israel. Who, indeed, are the leaders and creators of the State of Israel, if not those *Halutzim* of yore who grew up in the cities and towns such as our Tomaszow was.

And it was precisely these *Halutzim*, who were those that were the first to go to [training] camp (as the scripture says: *Every armed man of you going across Jordan before the Lord till he has overcome and sent in flight all who are against him*, etc. [Numbers 32:21]. And so, the pioneering spirit also penetrated to us in Tomaszow,

It was this pioneering spirit that penetrated the hearts of a group of fourteen young '*shtibl*' youths in our Tomaszow, They youths, children of *balebatim*, on one day, assembled in the beautiful house of Moshe Karper, ע"ה, and officially organized themselves as: *Agudat HeHalutz B' Tomaszow Lub.* Each of the young men took the oath: 'We will pass as pioneers before the children of Israel.'

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76 The choice of spelling in this caption does not always agree with the following text. It is preserved for consistency.

77 The text of this document [in Hebrew] suggests that it certifies Fishl Hammer (Nad) as having completed his preparation as a *Halutz*.

78 A further certification of Fishl Hammer (Nad) as having mastered the Hebrew language.

As officers, the following were elected: Aryeh Levenfus, Chairman, ה"ד Abraham Zilberberg, Secretary today has an important job with the Israeli government in Tel-Aviv. Ephraim Fishl Hammer (Nat), in N. Y. in America, Paltiel Herbstman in the Land of Israel. Israel Greenbaum in the Land of Israel – in the *Va'ad HaPoel*. The following friends were the first *Halutzim* in Tomaszow: Moshe Reichenberg ה"ד, Moshe Karper ז"ל, who died in Galicia, Shmuel Gelernter ז"ל, who died in N.Y., Yoss'l Meldung, in Argentina, Abraham Dornfeld in N. Y., Nathan Goldstein in Israel, Mott'l Eisen, Chaim Hirsch Gelernter, Joseph Singer ז"ל, who died in Israel.

The first group of youth consisted of the first *Halutzim* in Tomaszow, which they founded. We immediately established contact in writing with the central committee in Warsaw, where we were immediately accepted and recognized as Agudat HeHalutz, and we received instructions which we relate further here.

Thus, the establishment of a pioneering movement in Tomaszow took place before one even conceived of the Balfour Declaration. What did the parents of the *Halutzim* say? It was *Tisha B'Av* in their homes. The parents raised a hue and cry, and mostly when we shut our Gemara texts, and began to diligently learn Hebrew, *Tanakh*, and the geography of the Land of Israel.

I will never forget our first leader, teacher and director, R' Yaakov Mordechai Dornfeld ז"ל, from whom we drew energy and inspiration. He implanted a true love in us for Hebrew and the Land of Israel. Twice a week, we gathered together to hear lectures from him in Hebrew, the Prophets and the geography of the Land of Israel.

Rabbi Yaakov Mordechai Dornfeld was a great scholar. He was a first-class Hebraist, and had an equal command of Russian, Polish and German. He was a bookkeeper by profession. He occupied an important position in the municipal government. Regrettably, he did not live to make aliyah to the Land of Israel, he died in New York in the year 1954, but he was privileged to live long enough to see the establishment of the State of Israel. Honor his memory.

Since we already had a society of *Halutzim*, and we were able to speak a bit of Hebrew, it was necessary to start the most important of initiative of our mission. That means, we had to make a transition from theory to practice, we simply had to go out into the fields, and assume the burden of [agricultural] work. Here stood the question of where we would obtain the use of a field that would permit us to learn agricultural labor. No Jewish land proprietors, you understand, existed in our region, to be found.

But after a great deal of searching,. We were able to obtain a bit if field to rent outside of the city from a gentile 'resident' and also the resident was required to teach us how to engage in agriculture. After a conference, it was decided that our first planting should be potatoes. The gentile told us that we needed to fertilize the field with animal manure,, and you would think an easy thing to come by, manure. Go find the manure of cattle in Tomaszow where not a single cow can be found. Mazel Tov! We find a Jewish man at the edge of the city (regrettably, I do not remember his name) who has a cow, who sold us a wagon load of manure in exchange for a sack of potatoes that we will, God-willing obtain as a yield from our bit of rented land.

The Halutzim are conveying manure.... speaking of conveying manure, we are conveying the wagon load of manure like a groom is escorted to the wedding canopy.... with joy and song. Of the fourteen Halutzim that we were in the group, just a bit less than half had the courage to escort the wagon of manure on both sides, and that wagon of manure was deliberately conveyed through the middle of the marketplace, with the singing

of *Hatikvah*...
The storekeepers came out of their stores, and looked at us, many with resignation and many with sorrow. They reckoned without a doubt that we had all lost our minds or gone crazy, God save us. Upon bringing the manure to the field, the group took to the work. The gentile, our 'agronomist,' and gave commands as to how the manure has to be spread over the field. And when the fertilization came to conclusion, the gentile told us to go home, and come back tomorrow very early and that we should bring shovels and take once again to the work of conditioning the soil.

Appreciate that we were on the field at 6AM, but not everybody brought shovels. and again the same question: which of us owned a shovel? But despite this, we brought more than a half dozen shovels, and the digging began with song and happiness, we literally tore to the work. The spring sun shone and warmed us, and we sweated and were able to feel the dictum: '*By the sweat of thy brow wilt thou eat bread.*' Digging the ground this way, until midday, all of us got raw hands, and mud between our fingers.

And as we contemplated this tiny parcel of a field that we had dug up, and the large tract of field that we yet needed to dig, and feeling our hands rubbed raw... we only then first apprehended that it is not so easy to be a peasant, it is much easier to sing 'In the hooked plow lies the blessing of luck,' that to be bent over and digging in the earth.

On the second day, our gentile came leading a horse and an iron plow, and the field was plowed into a number of rows. Only after the plowing and harrowing, did the real work begin, meaning the planting of the potatoes. But this was much easier and more acceptable than digging in the earth.

But what else do we do? Until the time that the potatoes would grow in, and become ripe, we obtained a garden from R' Nathan Neu, which we, again, dug up with shovels. By this time, incidentally, we all had shovels. Where we all got shovels, was indeed a matter of salvation, and the novelty was even greater when you think about these future peasants.... land workers posing for a picture, most wearing cravats, and most in their Sabbath finery.... well, these maters remain unanswered. Whatever we are, we are, but we are *Halutzim*, That is what we sang, and we were proud that we had the privilege to be the first of the youth of Tomaszow who prepared themselves to make *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

But only two of our comrades had this privilege to make aliyah to be in the Land of Israel, Moshe Reichenberg and Israel Greenbaum, but tragically, they later returned to Tomaszow, for reasons unknown. But from those who later made aliyah, the following did indeed stay there: Abraham Zilberberg, Nathan Goldstein, Paltiel Herbstman, and Joseph Singer, and the remainder from the group were killed by The Unclean Ones, the Germans, may their names and memory be eradicated to the end of all generations.

The War and the Birth of Tze 'irei Zionist Parties

By Rae Fust (Lehrer)

Page 204: **Members of the Tz. Tz. Poalei Tzion at the Establishment of a Training Kibbutz**

Standing from the Right: Benjamin Herring, Moshe Unterbukh, Yaakov Herbstman, an unknown person, Ber'ish Kellner, an unknown person, Shimon Szparer.
Second Row: Meir Eisen, unknown person, Michael Katz, Neta Eisen, Fyvel Hartz, and others.

Because Tomaszow of the Lublin District was near the border (the border was Belzec which belonged to Austria), Tomaszow was always ringed with military forces. The 15th Cossack Division was stationed there, and security details that guarded the border. The city was a bit active because of the military [presence], because a part of the Jews made a living from the fact that they provided the military with food, sewn clothing, etc. Even in times of liberty, one always hear the report of firearms in Tomaszow, because the military often went out on 'maneuvers.'

There was always life over at the brigade buildings: performances, market fairs of products of all sorts, took place at the brigade location. One could even hear musical concerts emanate from there, only Jewish life in Tomaszow was ossified.

When the war of 1914 was only a day old, shooting could already be heard, but this time not coming from the brigade premises, but from the Kiri Highway (the Lemberg Gasse). Several *Uhlan* scouts had crossed the border, and immediately were on the Tomaszow Kiri Highway. Then an exchange of fire took place and the *Uhlans* fell. [They were] the first victims of the war in Tomaszow.

Most of the menfolk were already in the military. Only women, children, and the very old remained in the city, or men with physical defects. There were also those who held certain types of positions. Martial law was declared in the city: at specific hours before nightfall, it was required to leave the streets. and cover the windows.

With the onset of The First World War, the ossified Jewish life in Tomaszow came to an end. Some remained, of the type who did not have to go to military service. Minors began to play a role: young people discarded the small Polish-Jewish caps and hats were donned that had shining visors, a part began to wear hats of a modern style, bought somewhere second-hand, because no new materials for civilian use were being produced. And even those who continued to wear the Hasidic hats and long caftans, were already wearing pressed collars with ties or cravats. And despite the fact that all the remaining men and young boys were hotly pursued to dig trenches in the forests, movement arose among the young people: unions began to be formed.

At the beginning of the war, people were occupied with the scrutiny of paper currency, to see if it had holes or not. Even a hole the size of a pinhead made the bill suspect, In addition to this, Russian paper money had no value at all: inflation set in: stacks of paper money began to be exchanged for gold and silver (if anyone had it).

The city overflowed with Russian military personnel. In the Praga, and other neighborhoods, field kitchens were set up.

Several soldiers were billeted in each home, especially the oldest, in order that they not have to sleep in the streets. The ordinary soldiers slept not far from the field kitchen. Several military people also came to billet in our house. In our home, we had no adult male, because my father, and older brother Joseph were already in America. My mother remained [behind] with three young children, and cousin, Joseph Singer, the son of my father's sister, Tema, who came to sleep with us, so that my mother and her children should not be alone with soldiers.

Cousin Joseph Singer was a pious lad, a scholar, and he used to study in the courtyard of R' Yehoshua'leh. At that time, cousin Joseph Singer was still so observant that he did not cut off the first hairs that began to sprout on his chin, but rather, as he sat studying, he would pull on them, and then put them in his book.

In the same week that the war broke out, my grandfather, R' Elkanah Zeidl, my mother's father from Komarow, came to use in a large wagon with a driver, and took all of us to him, thinking that the war would not come to the mountainous *shtetl* of Komarow.

After fleeing the Komarow fronts, we wandered through a variety of cities in the Lublin District, and returned to Tomaszow, and survived the great battle when the Austrians and Germans came in, and Tomaszow remained under their occupation until further developments.

In the meantime, the young people matured, and did not have to present themselves for military service. Then, an upheaval truly took place in Tomaszow,

The now grown up religious youth became liberated. Cousin Joseph Singer became a freethinker, and not only him, but also others of his age. hey began to read books, becoming familiar with the programs of various parties, and began to teach themselves Zionist songs.

My observant uncle, Jonah Pinia's Joseph Singer's father began to hate his unbelieving son, pursuing him and harassing him. So he would come to our house to read books and sing songs. He was especially fond of the song: 'In the plow, lies good fortune and blessing.'

He would read the books out loud to my mother and I listened as well.

My mother, despite the fact that she was observant, and the daughter of a scholar, loved it when Cousin Joseph Singer read for her, and sang Zionist songs. It was a festive occasion when Joseph would arrive with his little book.

The war continued. No end arrived. We went hungry, disease spread.

Apart from the military hospital, a large hospital was set up for the civilian population. The hospital was on the Lemberg *Gasse*, on the way to the Szkoci Dolina Forest[79] that leads to Belzec. All those, suffering from typhus, were taken to the hospital together along with those who were well, with their bedding, and the house was sealed. There, everyone had their hair cut off.

Doctors from the Austrian-German military would go from house to house to examine everyone. Anyone who had a fever higher than normal was required to go to the hospital. I was among the fortunate who did not get

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[79] This may be the Yiddish name for the *Puszcza Solska*, which was the large forest of the area.

sick, and would stand with my healthy friends, looking a the beautiful hospital building from afar, full of patients who were getting better, who would come out wrapped in sheets to take the fresh air. We strained to see people we knew, and indeed, my friend Tova Gelber, and her mother, little Sarah'leh and Tova's little brother Joseph and her little sister Feiga'leh. All the girls had their hair shaven off.

My friend says to me: You know, Leah Dornfeld, Yaakov Dornfeld's girl, already had her hair cut off.

Yaakov Dornfeld played a rather prominent role in the organization of the young people for the Zionist ideal.

As a young man he was a great scholar. Later on, he became a municipal employee. Thanks to him, and others like him, the Library was founded, where the awakened youth began to read books. The fanatics prevented their children from reading books, and a 'library reader' became a pejorative term, or nickname for them. Despite this, one continued to read. When one developed a bit, there began a process whereby one would not agree with another over Zionism. for example: Yaakov Dornfeld was the leader of the General Zionist Union.

The more observant founded a Mizrahi Union. The workers had a *Bundist* Union. There was a *Poalei Tzion* Union for Zionist workers.

And a class of young people came of age for which the *Mizrahi* was too observant, and the *Poalei Tzion* too far to the left, the general Zionists too far right, so they founded the *Tze'irei Tzion* Union.

To the extent that I can remember, among the founders were: Abraham'eleh Zilberberg, my cousin Joseph Singer, Pesach Gartler, Bronfman (the older brother), Esther Eilbaum and her brother. Adding: Yehoshua Weissleder, Yaakov the son of the *Kozioner Rabbiner*, and others whose names I cannot recall.

At the time of the founding of the *Tze'irei* Zionist organization, an upheaval took place in the world. A revolution took place in Russia. We, the minor children, did not know what such a revolution meant. Only those, who were a number of years older, and could read a periodical in which this was written about, could understand something about it. A periodical that one person received from Warsaw or Lublin, was passed from hand to hand. News and words were snapped up. To me, it didn't register yet. I was preoccupied with a sick mother, and with my tiny little brother(s) Eli' Ben Zion and Moshe. The youngest brother, Eliyahu Ben Zion was four years old, but looked younger because of malnutrition.

It was cold in the house. Cousin Joseph Singer took a log of their wood, so that his father would not know, and brought it to us in the house. With the large sharp axe, he began to chop up the hunk of wood, singing at that time a new song already.

And when the fire caught in the kitchen, and the house became a bit warm, he sang:

'In the smithy by the fire,
Stands a smith who smiths,
He bangs the iron,
Sparks of fire leap,
And sings thereby a song.'

Cousin Joseph Singer looked at my sick mother and sang, as if the song would energize he. He presented the song:

'From the freedom that will come,
He sings heartily, sings with ardor,
And he does not feel how running,
From his face are rivers of sweat.'

After my mother's death, cousin Joseph Singer became my spiritual mentor.

One time, I remember it was the summer of 1917, cousin Joseph Singer says to me:

– Rachel'eh, we are founding a Tze 'irei Zionist Union, you should join.

– Me? – I ask in astonishment.

– Yes, you – He answers me.

– Are children then accepted? I asked.

– They don't have to know how old you are, tell them you are already 18 years old, because they don't accept anyone under 18.

– I am not even a full 16 years of age; why should I say that I am 18 years old? I can wait with joining up.

– don't wait, we have to have a specific number of members in order to organize the union.

– There already exists a Zionist Union, why do we need another one? – I asked.

So, cousin Joseph Singer explained to me, that the *Tze'irei* Zionist Union will be democratic. *Tze 'irei Tzion* will strive to assure that the Land of Israel will be built on democratic foundations.

– what are democratic foundations? – I asked.

– Freedom, justice, and that all people will be treated equally. – This is how Joseph explained democracy.

This pleased me, and I said:

– If that is the case, I will say that I am already 18 years old. And this was how, along with the founders, I joined the *Tze 'irei* Zionist Union.

I took my friends and relatives, somewhat older than I, into the Union: Gitt'l Rund, Pess'l Kayt'l and Tova Gelber. Later, my younger brother Moshe Lehrer also entered the *Tze'irei Tzion* Union.

The Union was located on the Kiri Highway (Lemberg Gasse). The sentiment in favor of democracy grew. Even Blonder, this wealthy man, also wanted democracy, and joined the *Tze'irei* Zionist Union.

It is difficult to remember all of the names of the members that joined, but I do remember Holtz, and Crook from Zamość, when he would come to Tomaszow to his sister, he would come to the Zionist Union.

A substantial number of the members came from the various *Batei Medrashim*, and also from the General Zionist Union.

In the leadership were: Bramnan (the older brother), Abraham'eleh Zilberberg, Pesach Gartler, Joseph Singer and Esther Eilbaum. I later became Esther's assistant. Esther Eilbaum was the secretary of the Union.

Educational lectures took place. Brafman was the principal speaker. There were also debate evenings.

In the Union, I first hear the three Internationals discussed. I heard talk of a two-an-a-half International, and this struck my immature ears as being funny. Most of us young people did not understand the lectures with their complicated terminology. Only democracy, which we heard discussed in the Union for the first time, towards that we strove, and that we understood. We planned to publish an animated wall poster periodical.

Among the various themes that the speakers spoke about, understandably, was the Balfour Declaration.

It was on a beautiful November day of 1917, when the news spread that 'the Jews were given their homeland in the Land of Israel back.'

Zionist youth was elated. We ran to the unions to obtain confirmation. I ran to the *Tze'irei Tzion*.

Esther Eilbaum embraced me joyfully, and exclaimed:

– Rachel'eh, we already have the Land of Israel!

– What does 'we already have' mean? I asked, being embarrassed at not understanding enough about the issue. In my childish mind, I did not grasp that suddenly they would return the Land of Israel to us. There was something about this that I did not believe, but was too ashamed to say so. I see that everyone is happy, so I must also be happy. However, silently in my mind, I thought: – Turn over so easily? Is this possible? Let's hope there will be no disappointment; Let it be true.

When the news of the Balfour Declaration was proclaimed on November 2, 1917, it was already known to every body and soul in Tomaszow, and the joy was so great, that all the Zionists marched, dressed in their finest clothing that they owned, and filled the streets with melody of Zionist songs: the Balfour Declaration was celebrated.

I remember Yaakov Dornfeld's shining face, and his daughter Leah Dornfeld with a pretty kerchief on her head, because she was still recovering from a bout of typhus and her hair had been shaved off. She led her little brother Moshe by the hand.

Our collective joy was indescribable. Partisan differences were wiped away: all the Zionist parties were united in this great joy at the time when the Balfour Declaration was celebrated in Tomaszow. The hope filled the streets. People exchanged greetings of Mazel Tov, and part of them kissed each other with joy. My friends and I sang along.

Despite the fact that we did not precisely understand what the Declaration said, except that it was a promise about the Land of Israel for Jews, we did understand that if my comrades are rejoicing, and we are singing, it is a good sign. And it pleased me that Jews were marching and singing. I was happy to the point of tears.

Since the establishment of the Polish regime, assaults began to occur. The young people were no longer free. Again, the military draft was instituted.

Despite this, the *Tze'irei Tzion* Union continues to exist as it did before. When a particularly important individual would come for a visit, we trembled, lest something might happen. The Zionist unions are legal, and yet one is still fearful.

The *Tze'irei Tzion* Union is already a year old. New elections need to take place, The elections must be highly democratic, and so the ballot is made secret. This means a written ballot, where we will write down whom we want to elect as our new officers. Some want the elections to take place on Saturday, others are not pleased, for we are still observant.

Not everyone feels free to express themselves at a meeting. One's heart beats furiously at the thought of getting up to say a word.

The leadership knows this. So a box was prepared, into which it was possible to throw in a written thought or thoughts, which one was not yet bold enough to articulate, or that one felt ashamed about. By means of the box, it was possible to criticize, because it was not required to sign one's name, and it was therefore easier to say what one wanted to. The period during which the criticism was read, was interesting and instructive.

In this post box, my girlfriends organized themselves and demanded that no elections take place on Saturday, because it is forbidden to write on the Sabbath. I made use of the fact, that the *Tze'irei Tzion* had invited a renown speaker (I think this was someone named Livertowsky), and it was this very speaker who said that it was necessary to draw in the largest number of people possible into these parties. The note that I wrote and put into the box read: – At the large gathering the speaker said that the masses need to be drawn to us. So the question poses itself: What sort of masses did he mean? Can the small number of 'freethinkers' be called 'the masses?' The masses are still the religious. And therefore no meeting can take place on the Sabbath, because this repels the masses.

My girlfriends: Gitt'l, Pess'l and Tova wrote in a similar manner. We were confident, that with four opinions against it, we could prevent elections on Saturday.

The elections took place without us four minor young girls.

Esther Eilbaum was again elected as secretary. She asked me to assist her in carrying out her work. I helped her. The work, that she delegated to me, consisted of her giving me a list of those members that owed their membership dues, for me to go and collect. It was not voluntary work, and not easy. And despite the fact that I was shy, I undertook this, because I loved the *Tze'irei Tzion* Union, with its democratic program, and I wanted to make myself useful.

When my cousin Joseph Singer married his beloved Malka, the leadership of *Tze'irei Tzion* came to the wedding, among them, Abraham'eleh Zilberberg, who occupies a very visible position in the Israeli government today. My cousin Joseph Singer, at that time wore a tie and a modern suit. He studied agronomy for a bit of time, stimulated by the *Tze'irei Tzion* Union.

I was in the Union until 1920, when, still a minor, I went to America, to my father and older brother Joseph,

with my brothers Moshe and Eliyahu Ben Zion. I was lonesome for the *Tze 'irei Tzion* Union with the lectures, summer celebrations with 'air mail' and the *Kasse Gorten.*

Later, cousin Joseph Singer went to the Land of Israel to dry out the swamps. He brought his family to Israel: a wife, children, two sisters: Baylah Rivka and Grunya, and his disapproving father. That was after the anti-Semites tore out his beard along with flesh, he then traveled to his son in the Land of Israel, and lived there to a ripe old age.

Most of my girlfriends from the *Tze'irei Tzion* Union are today in the Land of Israel, and whether my cousin Joseph Singer, or my girlfriends Gitt'l and Tova, they gave the country two generations of Sabras, Israeli-born, thanks to – the *Tze'irei Tzion* Union.

My cousin, Joseph Singer, died suddenly in *Pardes Chana* on the eve of the proclamation of Israel as the Jewish Homeland, 11 years ago. He was a great idealist, a co-founder of the *Tze irei Tzion* Union. Honor his memory.

The Bund Movement in Tomaszow-Lubelsk(i)

By David Geyer

Page 215: ***The (Leadership) Committee of the Bund in Tomaszow***

From the right: David Geyer, Mottle Lerner, David Geyer's little son, Mordechai Weissberg, Shevakh Kornworcel, and Yaakov Yehoshua Grohman.

The lot has fallen to me, that I memorialize the *Bund*, in this Yizkor Book of our home city, that was cut down by the Nazis. This [is the] movement to which I had the honor to belong, and in which I was active. It has evolved that I am perhaps among the very few witnesses [remaining to attest to] the activity of this very movement, which played such an important role in our city. Being a continuous member of the [sic: leadership] committee of the *Bund,* between the two world wars, the *Bund* councilman in the municipal council, I knew the movement very well, and took part in all of its activities. However, everything that I wish to convey is from memory – regrettably there are no archives of our city, they were destroyed along with the living Jews. It is therefore possible that I will omit specific individuals, and that certain events will not be in chronological order. At the outset, I beg your pardon for the omitted names. It is certain that I will not be able either for the prior reason – memory, or for lack of space, enumerate *everything* about *Bund* activities and its affiliated organizations. I am taking my own account. I do think, however, that in the following lines, I brought out the most important [activities] that I remember of the *Bund* in our midst.

As I said, these notes are made from memory. But in part, where I speak of the origins of the *Bundist* movement, during the Czarist regime, I received information from those who took part in the movement in those years. It is clear that these will also be [just] fragments.

* * *

Solomon Blum ,the son of Yitzhak and Miriam (*nicknamed: Der Bulakheh's*), tells about the beginnings of the Bund movement in Tomaszow-Lubelski, that took place in the year 1904, and he was then a carpenter. It was at that time that the first *Bundist* group was created, even if there were single *Bundists* that were present before. As he recalls, the following belonged that remained in the memory of *Solomon-Shlomo Blum*:

Chaim-Mekhl Horn, Zalman Ardinatsky, Max-Mendl Wunder, Peretz Koeniger, Leib'l Ferder, Chay'keh Ferder, Abraham-Shmuel Knopf, an artisan Abraham-Shmuel, a musician, Pearl-Leah, a daughter of a water carrier, Moshe Greentukh – a chimney sweep, Joseph Greentukh and Isser Greentukh – both barbers, the brothers Shmuel-Mot'ya and Meir Sztum – sons of the water carrier. Yaakov Dornfeld (died in America), Menashe Dornfeld (a druggist in Brooklyn). It is certain that the count was higher, but the teller does not remember any more.

The *Bund* activity in Tomaszow was led by a certain young man, who came from the outside, a lathe operator [sic: a turner] . He was an organizer and a good speaker. Secret meetings would take place outside of the city

very often. The gatherings took place in the Szkoci Dolina Forest, or the Siwa Dolina[80]. From time-to-time, even at the Jewish cemetery. The gatherings were arranged with the greatest care. Sentries were posted along the entire way to the meeting place, which had pre-arranged passwords, such signs, to allow trusted people go to the meeting.

Illegal *Bundist* literature was kept at Shlomo Blum's place. Proclamations were brought from the outside – it appears from Lublin, where the regional committee of the *Bund* was located, or from neighboring Zamość, where there was a strong *Bundist* movement.

Bundist activity was carried out for a couple of years without any special stress. After the more frequent and more active appearances, repressions began on the part of the Czarist police. A search took place of Blum's house, however, the literature was not found. An array of Bundists were arrested, but after detaining them for a specific period of time, they were set free, not having found any significant evidence against them.

After the failure of the first Russian revolution, around 1906, a portion emigrated to America, a portion were called up into the military, and the public became more wary. The *Bund*, as an organization of the masses, ceased to exist, and only individuals maintained contact with the regional committee in Lublin, or with Zamość.

In 1910, Shlomo Blum was called up for military service. He served in Smolensk in 1911 and he fled to America.

With the generally dormant position of the revolutionary movement in Czarist Russia, and also in Tomaszow, close to the beginning of The First World War, there was no organization, only individuals, who subsisted on their romantic revolutionary memories.

A transformation takes place as The First World War breaks out, and our area is occupied by the Austrian authorities. The remainder of Poland was occupied by the Germans, but the Lublin District and the former Chelm *Guberniya*, was occupied by the Austrians, where there was a meaningfully lighter regime that existed under the German occupation.

A new movement arrives in all of Poland, and also by us in Tomaszow, a new *Bund* organization is created., which is serviced by two centers – from *Lemberg*, and from *Lublin*. In Lemberg, the Z.P.S. *(Zydowska Partija Socialisticzna*) still existed, and the A"G '*Galitzianer Bund,*' which sent comrade *Adolf* to Tomaszow. A *Bundist* collective was created in Lublin, which even provided the first Land-Conference of the *Bund* under the German occupation. It was from there that were visited by comrade *Lejzor Levin* (died as a refugee in 1940 in Kovno – Lithuania). We also had help from Chelm, where comrade *Artur Zygielbojm*[81] was already

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80 A local valley. These names are also found in abbreviated form as Szkoci Dol and Siwa Dol.

81 Shmuel Artur Zygielbojm (1895-12th May 1943) was born near Lublin and became a trade union activist. From the early 1920s he was one of the leaders of the Socialist *Bund*, and from 1927 to 1933 served as a Warsaw councillor. He was responsible for the formation of voluntary workers' battalions in September 1939. When the Germans occupied Warsaw he volunteered to be one of the twelve notable Jews held in the Pawiak prison as hostages, and later served on the first *Judenrat*. He then escaped to Belgium and from there to the USA. In 1942 he came to London, where he represented the Polish Jews on the Polish National Council. It was in London that he learned that his wife and two children had been shot near Warsaw. His attempts to get the Allies to

active, the later martyr of Polish Jewry. Chelm was in a unique situation. One of the officers of the Austrian army was *Dr. Shia Fensterblau*, who had been appointed by the occupation authorities to be the vice-burgomaster of the city. Ignoring the fact that he was forbidden by the military leadership from partaking in community political activity, he helped out the *Bundist* work, and a very important *Bundist* center arose in Chelm, which also had an influence on the surrounding province.

Dr. Fensterblau, along with his family were killed in the Treblinka death camp.

The City Library

Our first activity in that period of time was our participation in the city library. There was no place and possibility of a politically free action, and therefore the *Bund* utilized the community cultural institutions. It happened, that after the war, a group of former Austrian officers and non-commissioned officers, remained in Tomaszow, who were Jewish, who married Tomaszow girls. These were the ones who provided the initiative to create a general Jewish library.

It was in the year 1919. The group leading the initiative requested of all the local Jewish organizations to take part in the institution. Among others, the *Bund* committee received such an invitation, to come to the founding assembly. At the meeting, the *Bund* decided to take part, and when leadership positions were allocated, Pulya Haut and I went in. The general composition of the leadership was: from the Zionists: Eldstein and Hirsch Zilberberg, from Poalei Tzion: Fyvel Holtz and Moshe Blonder, from the *Bund*: Pulya Haut and David Geyer.

For about three years, the leadership was harmonious, but the Zionist majority bought more Hebrew books. The secretary of the library, Hirsch Zilberberg drove through his line. This brought to the situation where the *Bund* left the library. Since the needle trades already had a union at that time, which, in reality, had been established by *Bundists*, in resigning from the general library, the *Bund* established its own library at this union.

In the first leadership of the Bundist library the following comrades serves: 1. Pulya Haut, 2. Nahum Schuldiner, 3. Leib'l Szerer, 4. Joseph Meldung, 5. Yaakov-Shia Grohman, 6. Mottl Lerner, 7. Shevakh Kornworcel, 8. Azriel Tsan, 9. David Geyer,

We place ourselves in contact with the Yiddish publishers from Warsaw and Vilna. Rather quickly, we built up a nice library of outstanding Yiddish literature of more than five hundred books. The library becomes the Yiddish cultural center no only for the strict party members, but also an important institution for enlightened Jewish youth. In time, we become the *only* Yiddish library that served the entirety of the Jewish population, which sought after Yiddish books.

However events came to pass that disrupted the library, that were related to the repressions against the *Bund*, in the first years of the 1920's the local police took after the library and its leadership. There were frequent

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act on reports of the genocide in Poland met with little success. Having heard early reports of the final destruction of the Ghetto, and failing yet again to obtain any Allied help, Zygielbojm decided to become one with the ghetto fighters. Around 13th May 1943, Zygielbojm killed himself as a protest against what he saw as Allied inaction

searches, assaults against private activists and in the library, until finally they arrested comrade *Mordechai Weissberg* and shut down the library. The books were taken away to the *Starosta*, and the union local was sealed.
The trial of Mordechai Weissberg attracted a great deal of visibility in all of Poland. It was known as the 'Lublin Trial of the *Bund*.' Apart from comrade Mordechai Weissberg, a whole group of other *Bundists* from the Lublin region were put on trial. The defense team of Henryk Ehrlich (killed by the communists), Esther Iwanska (passed away in Brazil not long ago) and Ludwig Honigwill (today in New York) arrive at the trial. Comrade Weissberg is sentenced to two years in prison, which he served in the :Lublin jail.

The *Bund* committee, however, did not rest. We continuously submitted requests and protests to have the books returned to us, and to permit us to re-open the library. In the end, we were permitted to open the library, but not under the name of the needle trades union, which had become 'unclean.' We opened a second library under a new name, and under a different status. Incidentally, we secreted a number of books out of the library which we hid in Pulya Haut's attic.

It should be noted here. that when we came to the Starosta, when we already had the new permission for the library, and requested that the Yiddish books which they had confiscated from the library be returned to us, a group also came to demand a 'legacy', claiming that they have a share in the library. The Starosta took this demand into consideration... he gave *no one* the confiscated books from the Bundist library. Until the outbreak of the war in 1939, the nearly five hundred books lay in the attic of the Starosta of Tomaszow.

During the time when comrade M. Weissberg sat in jail, we put together a drama circle of amateur players. We would put on theater productions in order to raise funds, in order to support comrade Weissberg's family, father and mother, and their children which he, Mordechai, was their sole breadwinner.

After serving his sentence, comrade Weissberg returned and was again placed at the head of leading the Tomaszow *Bund*.

Again, in the ensuing years, the Bundist library became the Yiddish cultural center of Tomaszow-Lubelski.

In the Municipal Council

Regrettably, as I have already said, I do not have the relevant material about the movement and therefore, the exact dates and the number of elected *Bundist* representatives in the city council, where the *Bund* played such a very important role in defending the interests of the Jewish masses, in general, and Jewish labor, in specific, are missing, What follows is only fragmentary, and does not reflect the full range of activity.

At the beginning of the decade of the twenties, for the first time, the *Bund* received an invitation to assign representatives to the first municipal council of Tomaszow, who did not need to be elected, but rather a sort of 'appointment-election' from among the representatives of the various several groups. The intent of the Poles was, indeed, to allocate a much lesser share of the representation to the Jewish populace, that is due to them according to the numbers in the Jewish population. Again, it did not work for the *Bund* to obtain representatives, but rather to conduct clarification work during the elections, where one had the possibility of putting forth a political propaganda initiative among the broader Jewish folk-mass.

The *Bund* therefore declared, that it would not take part in this 'election,' and excused itself from this sort of 'representation' in the municipal council. – The balebatim of the city ignore the stand of the *Bund* – they

divide up the seats in the municipal council and the advisory council among themselves.

It remains this way until 1927, when elections take place in accordance with the new Polish election law. The *Bund* decides t participate in these elections, and after carrying out a broad election campaign, we receive the second highest number of votes on the Jewish street. On the ballot of the *Bund* three councilmen are elected this time: *Nahum Schuldiner, Leibusz Koppenbaum*, and *David Geyer.*

I will bring just one episode here, about the activity of the representatives from the Bund in the municipal council. an occurrence which is perhaps in the character of the practice of the municipal councils in Poland.

At one of the sessions of the municipal council, where the municipal budget was taken up, the Bundist faction made a motion to set aside a specific sum of money for the '*Opiekno Spoleczno*' or social assistance, in order to be able to purchase wood and coal for the poor populace, which during the winter, is unable to permit themselves to heat their poor homes. It was, at that time, a fierce winter. Wind and frost hammered not only Poland, but also all of Europe.

We sat and waited for the gathering of the councilmen, and privately discussed the current questions and about the agenda of the day for the session...

The Endekinst councilman (from that anti-Semitic reactionary Polish party) who was the school inspector of the entire Tomaszow district, responded to this: 'I do not understand what has happened here. It is many years that we have a municipal council, and a Magistrate, and we have never had items in our budget of the kind under the heading of '*Opieka Spoleczna*' – until the arrival of the *Bundists.* So they started to introduce peculiar innovations. He said further, we have been further pressed to the wall. Who is going to stand against such a proposal, but why must it be a *Bundist* proposal?

We immediately answered him – that he had himself provided the answer to his question. So long as there were no *Bundist* councilmen, indeed, no such proposals were made, and therefore, it is logical that it be a *Bundist* proposal.

The proposal from the Bund was favorably entertained, but the majority of the municipal council (incidentally along with the Jewish community representation) concurred among themselves, that the committee for social help, which will distribute the winter aid, will not admit any representatives from the *Bund.* Not only was this 'vengeance' against the *Bundist* faction, but in the distribution, they omitted and transgressed against those needy who were known to have *Bundist* sympathies. Wood and coal was distributed right and left, but not to those families who were known to have children in the Bund, or in other affiliated Bund institutions. where the facts of discrimination were confirmed, and came out with a protest. The representative David Geyer declared:

> *'...We know your feelings, why you did not allow any Bundist representatives into the committee for distribution of the aid for those in the populace suffering need. It is your revenge because the Bund compelled this action, which was the first time in the history of the Tomaszow city council. Already at the first implementation of the Bundist proposal the President of the committee was seen to dip his fingers into the coal scuttle, and they came out black...'*

I said this in a symbolic sense, not having in mind to accuse the chairman of the committee of stealing. But the reactionary majority, with the burgomaster at their head saw an accusation of theft in this, and demanded that we retract the statement, 'dipped his fingers into the coal scuttle.' Despite the fact that, as said

previously, we did not suspect this chairman in impropriety, we did not want to retract the statement, and throughout we demanded that the statement should go into the minutes, as it was expressed by the *Bundist* representative.
Three entire sessions of the city council were devoted to this issue, and we did not retract the statement. The leaders of the city council, after having a consultation with the Starosta, decided to lock out the *Bund* representative – the councilman *David Geyer*, from the city council.

By coincidence, on that same day, the Senator of the Peasant's Party, *Zubowicz* was to be found at the home of one of the Jewish councilmen, Yehoshua Fishelsohn, to whom this story was related, and the decision of the city council about locking out the *Bund* representative. The senator immediately apologized and took a precise description from me, of the issue. He declared that he will take on this matter *pro bono*. If the matter will entail costs, he, the senator alone, will cover them. After a consultation of the *Bund* committee with the *Bundist* faction, we turned the matter over to the Senator.

The matter lasted for an entire year. It reached the provincial leader in Lublin, and to the Sejm. During this time, the *Bundist* faction, being locked out, as a protest, did not participate in the work of the city council, when invitations were sent out to the sessions. We would set out that e received such an invitation, but as a protest, we would not come, and demanded that our response be entered in the proceedings, that we are simply not attending the sessions.

The outcome was that the provincial court gave out a judgement that the entire city council did not handle this legally, and that the city council is ordered to reinstate the rights of the representative of the *Bund* – David Geyer. The entire *Bundist* faction came to attend the sessions of the city council in which their comrade David Geyer was reinstated. The parliamentary hall was filled with onlookers as never before. After the reading of the judgement from the provincial leadership, that the city council acted illegally in the matter, the entire audience received this with stormy applause. It was a rare success against the reactionary anti-Semitic majority in the city council.

After the provincial judgement annulled the decision of the city council, about the exclusion of the *Bundist* councilman and the *Bundist faction* returned to the city council, we came out against the manner in which the President of the '*Opiekno Spoleczno*,' the pharmacist Frank, an 'Endekist,' distributes prescriptions which were designated for the poorer people. At a session of the city council, the *Bund* representative, (David Geyer) was indeed elected as the ombudsman in the committee with the full authority to underwrite the prescriptions as well as distributing help to the need members of the populace.

I have only presented one example from the activity of the Bund in the city council, which was characteristic, not only for Tomaszow,

The Bund Helps to Organize the Polish Workers

Page 221: ***A Group of the Leadership of the Professional Union***

Standing, from the Right: Nathan Griener, Hecht, Moshke Tsimshans
Sitting: Shirota, Yehuda Winder, Leah'chkeh Tar and Yaakov Haber

Page 225: *A* Bundist *Election Poster from Tomaszow-Lubelski*

One of the first, and most important, tasks of the *Bund,* was to organize the professional unions of the Jewish workers. But not only the Jewish workers knew the address of the *Bund.* The Polish workers, who were to be found in the city and its surrounding areas, also managed to find their way to the Bund, such as, factory workers, workers who worked on the roads and cobblestone paved streets. They would carry out strikes, and come to the *Bund* to consult. It was in this manner that a strike of the factory workers was called in 1921 in Tarnawatka, where their was not a single Jewish participant. At that time, the *Bund* arranged the strike, and indeed, two of the brothers, who were strike leaders, were arrested.

There was yet another reason that dictated why we moved to organize Polish labor. The anti-Semitic incitement and behavior, that had been created, forced us into finding an understanding and a relationship with the Polish street, which would support us in times of excesses. In thinking through the situation, we decided therefore, to assist Polish labor to found an organization of the Polish Socialist Party.

We joined forces with a row of Polish workers. They had their first meetings in our locals. A healthy core of an organization was created, which indeed did work among the Polish laborers. Through our *Bund* comrades in Zamość, we got in contact with the Polish lawyer Swiatkowski who was a P. P. S. Deputy from the Zamość vicinity in the Sejm. A good movement developed, which during moments of intensified activities against Jews, gave a substantive [sense of] security.

The Tomaszow Starosta attempted to disrupt this action. He began to call specific activists from the Polish movement to him, attempting to buy off some with posts, others with other kinds of promises – the essence, however, being his 'admonitions' questioning why they were cozying up to the *zyds*... despite this, a healthy core of a Polish-Socialist movement remained in Tomaszow and the nearby region, which was established with the joint effort of the *Bund.*

Far-Flung Work with the Masses

We have previously mentioned the library, the city council, the professional unions. This, however, was just a part of the activity of the *Bund.* The Tomaszow *Bund* would take part in general initiatives of the country-wide movement, whether in elections, protest campaigns, the war against anti-Semitism, and like things.

There were traditional undertakings, which were observed by the *Bund,* such as the First of May celebrations – through demonstrations, or academies, anniversary-celebrations of the *Bund,* and the like..

Open explanation of ideas occupied a very important place. Apart from the activities of the library, of distributing books in the [union] local was a place of many undertakings, debates, lectures, discussion evenings. A drama circle existed, made up of local talent, or the organization was the address for a variety of professional Yiddish theater troupes from the outside.

Visits by prominent outside speakers occupied a very visible place. A year did not go by that Tomaszow didn't invite a speaker, that the *Bund* sent from the center to speak about a variety of political-social and cultural-literary themes. These undertakings were not only for the Bundists, and the surrounding area, the entire city would come to hear the *Bundist* speakers, who had a reputation in Poland. Even opponents of the *Bund* came to these debates.

The Party press played an important role in this work. Distributing the '*Volkszeitung*' – the organ of the *Bund,* and '*Jugend Werker*' the organ of the *Bundist* Youth organization, *Jugend-Bund,* '*Zukunft*' was a great

obligation of the *Bundists.* From time-to-time, there were 'press days' when the Bundist press was sold in rather wide circles. This was the responsibility of the Culture-propaganda activity.

Youth and Children's Movement

The *Bund* considered its activity among the minor generation to be very important. We had a rather good *Jugend-Bund* organization by us, '*Zukunft,*' and also from the children's organization 'SKF' *(Socialist Kinder Farband*). Work there was conducted in 'circles,' – aligned with the age and development of the members. The circles carried the names of the *Bundist* leaders. We had circles in Tomaszow with the names of Mikhalevich, Medem, Grosser, Bernstock, Arkady, Litvak, and others carried on debates with the circles those raised in the movement itself. Apart from the work in the circles, the young people occupied themselves with excursions, sports, song. A very important part of the work were the '*flying together*' meetings that took place in the summer months, when the youth of the entire region would come together. One such meeting took place in Tomaszow at the end of August 1932, in which several hundred young people took part from the surrounding towns: Zamość, Szczebrzeszyn, Turobin, Krylow, Komarow, Tyszowce, Rawa Ruska and others.

The uniform of the Bundist youth was a blue blouse and red bandana. Indeed, on the festival days, one could run into a significant number of young people in Tomaszow, wearing this uniform.

Contentious Relationships in the Surrounding Jewish Area

It is clear that the *Bund* had opposition in the Jewish environment. Very often, discussions, and conversations with Zionist and communist groups took place. It happened that it was necessary to withstand an assault from the observant part of the Jewish populace, who saw in the *Bund,* the leading away from, and the forsaking of the straight and narrow path, of *Yiddishkeit.* Often times the discussions were quite sharp, and they led to quite serious altercations. Each side held to its own version of the truth, that it possessed the right way. While I do not pause here in connection with specific incidents, it is necessary to say this as a matter of history. The Final Solution, however, was that the Nazi murderer did not look at the party affiliation of the individual when it came time to exterminate Jews. but led off the entire populace to be exterminated.

The Bund Committees

The following comrades belonged to the Bund [sic: Leadership] Committees at various times: Nahum Schuldiner, Leibusz Kaffenbaum, Koppel Shpizeisen, Peltik Lederkremmer, Yaakov-Shia Grohman, Azriel Tsan, Joseph Meldung, Leib'l Szerer, Shevakh Kornworcel, David Geyer, Shimon Leder, and Yitzhak Zygielbojm.

Among those still living: Leib'l Szerer (the State of Israel), David Geyer (America), Shimon Leder (Chile), Yitzhak Zygielbojm (Argentina), Azriel Tsan (Israel), Joseph Meldung (Uruguay), Shevakh Kornworcel died in Uruguay – the remainder were killed by the Nazi murderers.

A Gallery of Bund Activists in Tomaszow-Lubelski

I hold it as my responsibility to further present (in alphabetical order[82]) biographical sketches about some of the active members of the Bund in Tomaszow, who are no longer among the living. A number of them have been mentioned previously in passing. Let the following lines be added support to the memory of those who were exterminated, and also a supplement to the history of our city, where these very individuals grew up, and served the Jewish folk masses in their way.

Yaakov-Shia Grohman

Yaakov-Shia Grohman was born to parents who were tailors. He also was a tailor. He joined the *Bund* movement while still very young, and it got to the point that during the last times, up to his death, he was continuously the chairman of the *Bund* Committee. He achieved a rather high level of development through self-education. He was a rather impressive speaker. He delivered lectures in the *Bundist* library, which was on the first floor of the municipal offices. He was the principal lecturer to the *Bundist* youth organizations '*Zukunft*' and *SKF*. He was also the organizer and leader of the Needle Trades Union. He became sick in the decade of the thirties, and was sent to Warsaw to be cured. His sickness was not cured. He returned, and while sick, took part in all *Bundist* activities. He died in Tomaszow. The funeral was carried out by the Bund, in which a large group of people participated.

Mordechai Weissberg

M. Weissberg was born n the year 1895 in Tomaszow. In the year 1917, he joined the Bund, to which he remained loyal o the last day of his life.

He was immediately placed into the leadership. He takes part in the organization of strikes by the workers, and was one of those who took part in the negotiations with the *balebatim*. He is arrested on every First of May. He is the correspondent to the '*Lubliner Stimme.*' He is nominated to attend to the *Bundist* conventions, as a delegate of the Tomaszow organization, or of the Lublin region.

We have previously recalled that at the beginning of the twentieth century, when arrests were being made throughout the entire Lublin region, Weissberg was among the victims.

I have mentioned, that to give him material assistance, we formed a drama circle. Here, I will enumerate the participants in the circle, according to what I can remember.

1. Raphael – *Pulya* – Haut
2. Miriam Prager-Szerer
3. Chaim-Mikhl Horn
4. Fraydl'eh Reichman – Mairt Be'ers
5. Motya Blank
6. Bal'tcheh Blank

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82 The original order of the writer, given in the order of the Hebrew alphabet, has been maintained.

7. Shayndl Blank
8. 'Vigdor Zucker
9. Mindl Meil-Zygielbojm
10. Joseph Meldung
11. Nahum-Itcheh Schuldiner
12. Itta Teig

I also participated in this dramatic section, but in truth, not as a player. My job was to gather up the necessary wardrobe, the requisite, taking care of the actors and discharge all of the needed formalities with the authorities, and really make sure that the police will file 'good' reports with the higher authorities.

In passing, we need to tell how we would conduct ourselves, in order that the police submit a 'good' report. It was very hard to handle the police sergeant Cieszak, a wild creature, who had, on his account the life of a Jewish child from Narol that he had shot. It was this one who had to report to the Starosta, that at the performance, nothing was said against the Polish authorities... That everything was in order. We would take him behind the stge scenery, and had a *'L'Chaim'* with him, since he dearly loved a strong drink, he could drink like a fish...after each couple of glasses, he would fall asleep and if he would awake, the bottle was quite close nearby, and he would take yet another glass.... and that's the way it went until the play was over. The reports were, indeed, outstanding.

Comrade Nahum Schuldiner was the director and the prompter , who in 1927 was elected as a councilman from the *Bund.*

In the last years, Mordechai Weissberg lived in Argentina, very active in the Jewish movement, and died in 1963.

Shlomo Lieber

He was a child of very poor parents. His father was a *Melamed* in a Talmud-Torah, who earned enough for water on kasha. His mother helped out with earning a living who was known by the name 'Shprinza'leh the Matchmaker.' But, from all of this, it was still hard to make a living.

Shlomo Lieber joined the *Bundist* movement while very young. He was especially active in the *Bundist* youth movement of '*Zukunft.*' According to his age, he got married quite early, and lived in Warsaw, where he was engaged in house painting. He led a hard life. He was a loyal member of the Warsaw organization of the *Bund.* After this, he went to Lemberg. When the civil war breaks out in Spain, he leaves his wife and child, a little boy, behind. He wen to off the Spain illegally and fought in the international brigade. In one of the severest battles on the Barcelona front, his is felled by fascist bullets.

His little boy was taken in by the Bundist Medem-Sanatorium in Miedzeszyn[83], where he was raised.

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[83] The Medem Sanatorium, which existed from 1926 through 1942, stood as a symbol of health and enlightenment.

Peltik Lederkremmer

Peltik Lederkremmer came from a family of Jewish *balebatim*. He came to the *Bund* in Tomaszow from the Lublin Gymnasium. Living there, he turned into the *Bundist* student circles, and was drawn into the movement. In us, Peltik encountered a Bundist organization that was already good, with a wide field for activity. We took him in with wide open arms, because we needed intellectual resources. Indeed, he helped us to organize the evening courses, where we studied twice a week. He was the adviser in writing out the necessary books. He also wrote out all necessary documents, applications to the authorities about speeches, and the like. It is true that we would copy these applications over. His father was the community *Dozor* going back to the old Czarist times, and we didn't want that the young Peltik should suffer from family anxieties...

When the *Bund* was able to get three councilmen elected to the city council in 1927, we made an effort for him to become an employee in the municipal government, where he worked for a long time, after which he worked in the national finance office (*Urzad Skarbowy*). In September 1939, when the city is bombed by the Germans, he is severely wounded in a foot. Not giving heed to his serious condition, he flees to the east, to the Soviet-occupied part of Poland. He takes a Soviet passport, and travels off, as that was the order, to live in a city at a 200km distance frm the border. When the Germans break the treaty with the Soviets and attack Russia, Peltik falls into the hands of the Nazis and suffers the same fate as all Jews.

Leibusz Kaffenbaum

L. Kaffenbaum was born, in 1897, to parents who were tradespeople. His father was a carpenter, and his mother a baker of sweets. There was no lack of money, despite the fact that they were not wealthy people. Being descended from generations of carpenters, Leibusz also became a carpenter and indeed was one of the best in his craft.

He joined the Bund when it was already a multi-branched organization. When the *Bund* went to stand for election to the municipal council in 1927, we found it necessary to put him forward as a candidate on the ballot, and he was, indeed, elected to the municipal council as the third *Bundist* candidate. In fact, he was the youngest of the councilmen. As a councilman, he was a true representative, and loyally filled his mission from the *Bund*.

When the Second World War breaks out, he flees, as did the majority of the Jewish populace, and comes to Rawa Ruska, where he entered the Red Army. The Soviet regime forces the refugees to become Soviet citizens, but most refuse to do so, among them our comrade Leibusz. Together with everyone else, he is indeed shipped to Siberia to do forced heavy labor. He worked in the forests under the most severe climactic conditions and inhuman circumstances. He did, indeed, fall as a victim there, dying of hunger and cold. From the forest, in the place where I had been sent to, I received only one postcard from him. Among others, he wrote down a very meaningful sentence there: – 'David, what do you say about these robbers of the forest?' ...

Shevakh Kornworcel

Sh. Kornworcel was born to very poor parents in Tomaszow-Lubelski. His father, a carton maker, was very sick, but had to work in order to support the extensive family of seven souls. It happened, therefore, that Shevakh had to go to work very young, in order to help out his father to provide sustenance. Later on, he

became the sole breadwinner, when his father dies at an early age, and orphans his large family... He works as a carpenter. He joins the *Bundist* movement while still young. He manages the *Bundist* library together with Joseph Meldung, always assuming important positions in the *Bund* Committee. Especially, he is the party secretary and the press commissar in the year 1931. In the year 1931 he emigrates to Uruguay. Even there, he is very active, in the management of the local Bundist organization. He falls ill with cancer and dies at a young age. He leaves his wife widowed and orphans two children.

Nahum Schuldiner

Page 230: *Nahum Schuldiner, his son Moshe'leh, and his brothers two daughters from Hrubieszow.*

N. Schuldiner was born in 1892 in Tomaszow-Lubelski. His father was a *Gemara melamed*. Even though he gave his children, 4 sons and 2 daughters, a religious upbringing, he permitted them to study secular subjects. The only one to leave home was Nahum, who went to Warsaw before The First World War. He learned a trade – painting. He worked very hard to make a living. When The First World War broke out, Nahum returned to Tomaszow. Hunger compels him to take a job as a disinfecting sanitation worker at the municipal hospital. He works in the disinfection division and he travels around to houses in which there were people sick with typhus that have been admitted to the hospital, in order to carry out a disinfection [process]. He personally becomes infected with typhus, and is admitted to the same hospital, where he lays for a long number of weeks. He emerges weakened, broken, but he must again get up to work. He marries comrade Maleh Zygielbojm; she is a seamstress. They exhaust themselves to earn a living.

He joins the *Bund* and becomes one of the leaders. He is the first Bund candidate who stands for election to the city council during the elections of 1927. He represents, with force, the interests of the broad Jewish folk masses, in the city council. He is also the representative of the *Bund* in the Jewish community. When The Second World War Breaks out, he is cast out to Rawa Ruska as a refugee. The city is full of refugees, and he decides to travel deeper into the country. Together with his family, he wanders to Winizia Podolia. Nevertheless, the murderous Nazi Hand reaches him there – and together with all Jews, he and his wife and daughter are killed.

Koppel Szpizajzen

According to our hometown understanding, Koppel came to us from a family in 'Burzhuaza.' His father was a forest merchant, owned his own home, with a fine fruit garden. The *Bund* overlooked this family 'flaw' but because of this, he needed to withstand reprimands from his parents and his milieu of *balebatim*, who threw his association with tailors and shoemakers in his face... he worked along with the organization in a stable fashion, and we therefore trusted him to educate our young, as a lecturer to part of the *Zukunft* circles.

Incidentally, he wasn't the only 'Disqualified *Bundist*' in the family. His uncles, the father's brothers, were very active *Bundist* doers in the neighboring city of Zamość[84].

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[84] The following tribute appears in *The Zamość Memorial Book*:
These are our friends – the tireless worker Israel Zilber, who was always ready, at every behest, to help either materially or technically, and our friend, Izzy Herman (Itcheh-Leib Herring), who followed our activity from the first day onwards,

He came to the Bund when he was grown up already. After completing military service. Despite this, he served the movement with extraordinary commitment. Before the outbreak of The Second World War, he moved himself to Ludomir, where he got married. There, too, he maintained his attachment to the *Bund.*

He, and his family, were exterminated by the Nazis. One daughter, it seems, was able to save herself, and today is in Canada.

* * *

Here, I have only recalled a few of the *Bundist* activists, only those who are no longer alive. Their ways to eternity were varied, but most shared the fate of millions of exterminated brothers and sisters of the Jewish People. Together with those whose names we do indeed recollect, and those whose names we do not recollect, we offer homage to their [collective] memory.

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since we began the preparation of the *Pinkas.* **These comrades from the United States were seconded by C h a i m S h p i z e i s e n ז"ל from Israel. He was literally fevered with the concept of this *Pinkas,* led and united the *landsleit* from the four corners of the world. Despite himself being a *Bundist,* he aroused all the organizational activists from Zamość (Zionists and Religious people), convincing them to support the *Pinkas* with their efforts.** And wishing him many more years, a large portion in the creation of our *Pinkas* is also due to our comrade, Jekuthiel Zwillich, who after Shpizeisen's death, carried out the entire agenda of generating assistance and researching the required material. Let it also be recorded here, that he carried out the painstaking assembly of the names of our martyrs for the necrology in our *Pinkas.*

Also from the same source:

Those who revived the *Bundist* movement in Zamość were the comrades Itzik Goldstein (today in Russia), Yerakhmiel Brandwein (killed by the Nazis in the Minevich Ghetto), Mikh'cheh Levin (today in New York), Salek Leviv (killed in Russia during the civil war after the revolution), Chaim Shtikh, Mordechai Zwillich, **Ahish Shpizeisen** (all 3 killed by the Hitler-bandits), Itcheh-Leib Herring, Shia Bin (both in New York), Mendel Schnur, and others.

Histadrut 'Tze'irei HaMizrahi' in Tomaszow

By Nahum Ratzimer
Tel-Aviv

Page 232: *The Tze'irei Mizrahi*

Page 235: ***HeHalutz HaMizrahi in Tomaszow, Hol HaMoed Pesach, 5685 [1925]***

First Row from Right Rear: *Shmuel Goldstein, Israel Eisen, Vanna Neu (Holding the Banner), Moshe Feier, Yitzhak Hochman, unknown;*

Second Row: *Leib'l Lakher, Mott'l Taress, unknown, Yoss'l Tepler, Ber'ish Putter, Zeinvil Filmer;*

Third Row: *Chaim Lazar, unknown, Fyvel Blonder, Hirsch Reis, Wertman, Yoss'l Singer, Nahum Ber Glass;*

Sitting: *Simcha Haut, Piurl, Nahum Ratzimer, Ary' Arbesfeld, Shmuel Hanarow.*

It is my desire to produce in this piece, a description concerning the establishment of the *Tze'irei Mizrahi* movement in Tomaszow, and all of its offshoots, such as: *HeHalutz HaMizrahi, Bruriah, and HaShomer HaDati.* However, in order to clarify the events on the foundation of the developments that unfolded in the initial days of the establishment, I have to first precede this with a shore sketch on the development of the Zionist movement in general, and the *Mizrahi*, in particular, during the period of The First World War, and a short period thereafter.

And so, during the time of The First World War, with the departure of the Russians from [this] section of Poland, and the entry of the Germans, the Zionist movement began to spread out with a surprising speed. This was to the point that not a single city and town remained, in which there had not been established some sort of Zionist organization. The Zionist *Histadrut*, which up to that time existed only clandestinely, under the heel of oppression by the Czarist police, which held sway over most of Poland, received, at that time, a very strong push to organize itself anew, and most of the people, especially the youth, rallied to its flag.

It was at that time that many Zionist organizations were founded by religious Jewish people under the name, '*Mizrahi.*' Despite the fact that the basic line of the very pious, especially of the Hasidim, was in those days opposed to the Zionist concept, and there were even instances that they went out to do overt battle with Zionism – despite this, many of the religious Jews were aroused, as previously mentioned, and among them, were many of the greats from the ranks of the Rabbinate, and they founded chapters of the 'Mizrahi,' whose foundations were laid by the Great Leaders if the Jewish people, with Rabbi Reines, ז"ל at their head, as far back as even 5662 [1902] in Vilna.

The first Mizrahi organization was established in our city of Tomaszow in the year 5677 [1917], and its ranks contained young and old alike. And immediately with its establishment, it began to develop initiatives to branch out, into all parts of the Zionist movement – however due to the great fire that broke out in Tomaszow in the summer of 5678 [1918], in which most of the city went up in flames, the work was ceased for a short time. With the end of the war, at the end of 5678 [1918] and the establishment of liberated Poland, the

activity was resumed at full blast.

However, the young people felt that the confinement of being enclosed in the same unit with the elders was too constricting; especially, they came to realize that as young people, they were obligated to special responsibilities, apart from those that Mizrahi has in general, and in order to realize them properly, there is a need for a separate organization of young folk. It was then that '*Tze'irei Mizrahi*' arose. The matter was executed, understandably, on a national level. – The '*Tze'irei Mizrahi*' was established in our city of Tomaszow in the year 5680 [1920], which served to centralize in its ranks the elite of the religious young people of the city, many of them from the ranks of the *Bet HaMedrash*.

The organizer and first head of this organization was the comrade, Nahum Dove Glass, הי"ד. As understood, he also came to the movement from the bench of a Bet HaMedrash, even though, before this, he was already imbued with the spirit of religious Zionism and was already fluent in the Hebrew language. Among the members of the first steering committee the following were nominated: Shmuel Goldstein ז"ל, and to be set apart for long life, Nahum Ratzimer, Shmuel Hanarow, and Joseph Singer.

A short interruption came to an end with the conclusion of the war between the Poles and the Bolsheviks, even though the work resumed with additional vigor after the cessation of hostilities. Here, we must recollect our comrade Yaakov Arbesfeld הי"ד, who at that time joined the '*Tze'irei Mizrahi*' movement. He was a first class force for organization, and in that time, he because the central figure of the Mizrahi movement in Tomaszow in general, up to the last days before The Second World War.

The '*Tze'irei Mizrahi*' branch in Tomaszow was thought to be among the most important in the Polish State. There was not a single conference of the movement in which it did not participate. As far back as the year 5681 [1921] they sent their principal people to the first national conference in Warsaw. These were the comrade, Pinchas Neuhaus, the son of the Rabbi, R' Nachman זצ"ל of Tomaszow, and he was also then elected to the central committee. With the rising strength of the pioneering movement, the '*Tze'irei Mizrahi*' of Tomaszow were among the first who founded '*HeHalutz HaMizrahi*' in the year 5684 -1924], and immediately, in the same year, '*Nagariya*' was founded beside it in Tomaszow, and many of its members acquired carpentering skills there, and then made *aliyah* afterwards, and earn their living from this trade to this day.

In the year 5685 [1925], an agricultural station was established by '*HeHalutz HaMizrahi*' in the village of Martyn, where comrades from the entire area received their training to make *aliyah* and because of this, several of the comrades were sent for agricultural training at the central agricultural station of the Mizrahi at Skoczkowo [sic: Kolonia, Pock]. among them were: Moshe Feier and Yeshay' Gruzhinsky ז"ל, and to be set apart for long life, comrade Shmuel Weisser.

In the years 5685-7 [1925-7], leading conferences took place n Tomaszow, of all the organizations of '*HeHalutz HaMizrahi*' in the area, with the participation of the prime movers from the central committee.

Apart from the pioneering work, many worked in the fields of education and culture. Hebrew lessons were arranged, *Tanakh*, Talmud, and other subjects. It is our obligation here to recollect our comrade Bezalel Bezek (Bizinsky), as the organizer of the international day of Mizrahi that took place for a while in Tomaszow, and he stood at the head of the movement. He dedicated a great deal of his time and ideas, especially to the cultural work and worked a great deal in general to strengthen the movement in Tomaszow.

The years 5688-90 [1928-30] were quiet years, in relation to the Zionist movement, and the work contracted somewhat during this time. However, beginning in 5691 [1931], years of pride came. New members joined in the work, many of these already having received their education in the '*Yavneh*' School. Among them were the Kawenczuk brothers ל"ז, and to be separated for long life, Shabtai Wasserman, and others. – At the head of the movement stood comrade Shmuel Weisser, which developed especially well then, and attracted most of the religious youth in the city to its center.

At the end of my memoir, I see that I have an obligation to dedicate several lines to praise one man, that even though he not once was a member of the Histadrut of '*Tze'irei Mizrahi*,' worked constantly with enthusiasm, and imposed a compelling influence on it. I am referring her to Mr. Chaim Lehrer, without whom, according to my view, it is not possible to write about the Mizrahi initiate at all. He affiliated with the Mizrahi during the early days of its establishment, and immediately attracted the general sympathies withing the movement, being, at that time, among the young people in the Bet HaMedrash who was among the most talented and he was immediately selected to be secretary. With the passage of a little time, he served as the acting chairman, and after wards was selected as the chairman, and he served in this capacity to the final period. He dedicated so much time to 'Mizrahi,' [so much] energy and enthusiasm, to the point where it was hard to figure out how he had any time for his own personal details. In general, he was the living spirit in the entire movement, all this, even though he never received any remuneration, only for the good of the ideal, to which he was committed with his entire soul.

Today, comrade Lehrer lives in Israel, and he is a director in the company that publishes books on 'origins' – To this day, he is very warm to all those who know him and were friends from the old days, and their blessings will follow him always.

The Establishment of the HaShomer HaTza'ir Chapter in Tomaszow-Lubelski

By David Y. Levenfus

Page 238: *The leadership of* HaShomer HaTza'ir *and Kibbutz Benatayim*

Page 239: *[Members of]* Kibbutz Benatayim *in Tomaszow.*

Page 240: ***The Kibbutz at Work***

From the Right: *Tov'cheh Goldman, unknown, David Joseph Levenfus, Herbstman, Benjamin Herring, unknown, Yoss'l Goldman*

The chapter of *HaShomer HaTza'ir* in Tomaszow was organized in the summer of 1933, at the time when a detachment from the Kibbutz *Benatayim* from Lublin came for a conclave. This was a Kibbutz of *HaShomer HaTza'ir.*[85]

I will never forget the Jewish Kibbutzniks in our city.

Young Jewish boys and girls went to the hardest labor in factories and brick making operations, as well as going to chop wood for the *balebatim* of the town, as well as for Jewish bakeries. It was not only once that we would go along with them to help with the work, because they lacked the [requisite number of] hands for the work. The Jews would look upon them in astonishment, that such refined young people would do such hard labor. Many looked upon them with pity. This, despite the fact that thee were many young people who were away at training on *kibbutzim.* According to what I remember, the first [such organizations] were *HeHalutz, HeHalutz HaTza'ir,* and *Poalei Mizrahi.* And many had already made *aliyah* to Israel.

In the summer of 1933, through the initiative of Joseph Goldman (killed by the Nazis, may their name be erased), Brany Korp ((killed by the Nazis, may their name be erased), Israel Tsan (today in Israel), Chana Lerner (today in Israel), David Joseph Levenfus (today in New York), as well as three comrades from Kibbutz Benatayim, Avra'shi Pinsky, Kan Tzippor and White [sic: Blond] Jacob, we were the first to establish the branch of *HaShomer HaTza'ir.*

Immediately on the first day, it made a big impression in town on the young people. The branch became very nicely developed in the course of several months. Important real questions were continuously dealt with, Zionist, as well as social. which touched Jewish and general life in that time.

In the course of a short time, three groups were organized: a group of older youth [*Bogrim*], Group A and Group B.

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[85] As a pioneer movement, *HaShomer HaTza'ir* adopted the language of the pioneers, using the term Kibbutz (settlement) for their chapters. The name '*Benatayim*' is taken for the Hebrew, meaning 'in the mean time.' This was the way the participants communicated what they believed was the 'way station' nature of this enterprise, as a prelude to their final goal – *aliyah.*

We took active part in *Keren Kayemet*, *Keren HaYesod*, as well as the league of laborers in the Land of Israel, as well as helping out in a variety of Zionist presentations.

The *HaShomer HaTza'ir* organization blocked the path of the communists who stalked Jewish youth. Young people, who studied at the Yavneh School as well as public school, found that their place to live out their cultural and social lives was in the *HaShomer HaTza'ir* branch.

A special interest was placed on the Hebrew [language] classes. Interesting *Oneg Shabbat* programs, strolls, and especially the gray 'suite' and the 'tie [sic: scarf] added a touch of grace to the young people. The culmination of the endeavor came, when we linked up with *Kibbutz 'BeMa'aleh'* in Plonsk. This added importance to our branch. And three of our members were designated to go for training.

A Short Overview of 'The Working of the Land of Israel' in Tomaszow

Page 243: ***Elected Members of the P.Ts.Ts.T.***

From Right to Left: *Abraham Meldung, Nathan Mittler*
In the Second Row: *Israel Wertman and Levitt – an emissary from the Land of Israel*

Page 247: ***A Group of Halutzim Which was Traveling for Training***

From the Right, Seated: *Yaakov Herbstman, Unknown, Leah Zilberstein, Chaim Balsenbaum*
Standing: *Fishl Zilbergeld, Joseph Laneil, Toba Stempel, Yuda Zilberstein, Chana Szparer, and Getz'l Berger*

By Asher Herbstman

With the establishment of liberated Poland in the year 1918, I, still a Yeshiva student in a long *kapote*, with a Jewish cap on my head, standing on the Zamość highway, I saw a small music orchestra approaching from the distance, and following them, a company of soldiers. Upon asking who this was, I was answered that these were 'Jewish Scouts' from Zamość, meaning '*HaShomer HaTza'ir*' as they were called. It made a big impression on me when I heard that such a chapter was also being founded by us, and I was among the first who ran to sign up. This was in Moshe Karper's house.

Entering in my long kapote to sign up, they demanded a signature from my father indicating that he gives me permission (because under the age of 18, that signature was required, and I was at that time 14-15 years old). Hearing the news, I didn't know what to do, because obtaining that signature was worse than trying to split the Red Sea, and in the end, falling on a stratagem, my older brother Paltiel gave me such a signature and, fortunately, I became, as was then said, a 'scout.'

The *HaShomer HaTza'ir* was established, encompassing almost the best of the young people of our city. In that time, the goals were to develop the young people spiritually and physically. It carried no political character. Four groups were created according to age. each group had a group head, and the work was carried out accordingly, that is, each group had a variety of courses, such as, for example: Hebrew [language], the Geography of the Land of Israel, Jewish History, etc. Also, trips into the forests around Tomaszow for the entire night, trips to Bilgoraj, Rawa Ruska, everything that could be assumed under the name of 'scouting.' In Poland this was called '*Hartzet.*' and there was also a sports club as part of the organization, called '*HaKoakh,*' under the direction of Mr. Edelstein, such that when we went out for a 'match' with the gymnasium club '*Tomosofia*' we scored 'goals' against them to the extent that they threw stones at us out of anger, and we barely got away alive.

I am reminded of a rather nice curiosity that befell me. At the time that the land conference of *HaShomer HaTza'ir* was supposed to have taken place, it was necessary for us in town to send three delegates and all three were female, so, our young men bruited about their dissatisfaction that not one of them could be found among the three delegates. Not a single male was appointed to be sent as a delegate. But, if one is traveling to a *HaShomer* conference, it is necessary to don a *HaShomer* insignia, and at that time, I was still going

about dressed in a small Jewish cap, as it was called. But what does one do, so it was decided that I would travel to Belzec in my [current] garb, and my group would bring me the insignia, and that's the way it was, in Belzec, for the first time, I changed my outfit to wear short pants, with a broad Brazilian hat, to the point that I did not recognize myself. For the first time in my life I saw a metal train, which was approximately in the year 1920. Imagine what kind of an impression all of this made on me. Arriving in Lublin, where I met with representatives from all over Poland, where, at first, we were led into a great forest where the first conclave was held in the fresh air, as is appropriate for scouts. And I, being weary from the whole tumult, went up to the attic of a *shtibl*, and slept there for a day and a night, so fast, that the girls who had come with me, Rivka Auerbach, Leah Barnstein, Leah Wasserman, did not know what had happened to me. When I awoke, and went down from the shtibl attic, I saw a representation in the following words: Since it is now a day since the delegate named Asher Herbstman has disappeared, we represent that anyone who knows anything about him, or has heard something about him, to please communicate with the head office. So, indeed, I immediately went to report that I had seen the lost party, and indeed, I was him.

And the *HaShomer HaTza'ir* organization existed this way until the year 1925, approximately, when at the same time, the *HeHalutz* organization began to get organized, to which many of the young people from *HaShomer HaTza'ir* transferred. At that time, new winds began to blow in liberated Poland, wins of anti-Semitism, such that Tomaszow youth no longer sought to engage in scouting. Rather, they began to seek 'practical' existential paths for themselves, and no such path could be found in our town. It was at that time that the question was posed: Where? That 'Where' was indeed found in the HeHalutz organization, whose mission was to send its members to training places, in order to prepare them for physically demanding work, which we had never experienced, and then make *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

The founding of the general *HeHalutz* movement, was, as can be said, a salvation for many of the youth of our town, which enabled aliyah to the Land of Israel. In *HeHalutz*, we conducted a widespread cultural and Zionist endeavor, and this also existed within this organization a *HeHalutz HaTza'ir,* that is, a pioneering youth group, to recruit the younger cohorts in place of the members of *HeHalutz* that had gone on, some to training, and others making *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

During the first years of *HeHalutz*, an intensive branching effort was underway, and in the later years, when members had traveled off, the tempo of work was felt to be diminished. There also was no lack of curiosities: for example on a night one time, Bracha Stern came running to me, soaked, with a shout. 'Asher!' Come quickly to the local office, Yaak'l Bekher is waiting there. Already on the way, Yaak'l Bekher encounters me, and asks me, can you provide me with ten members for training in Kibbutz '*Dror*,' near Zolkiew, and not thinking for a minute, I immediately called a general meeting, in order to select candidates for Kibbutz '*Dror.*' After half a night of discussions, we found a number of candidates to send for training, mostly girls.

I have to recall yet another curiosity, because it paralyzed and choked off the work of HeHalutz for a longer time: at a given sitting of the committee, someone proposed that in recognition for my ten years of activity in HeHalutz, I should be awarded a gold medal. Several members, not feeling good in this situation, exactly why I cannot recall, split the HeHalutz into female and male divisions, that is, all of the females stood behind Neta Eisen, and the male members stood on my side. And accordingly, it was bruited about: Which HeHalutz are you in, the women's or the men's....

This entire situation continued and reached to the '*HeHalutz* Central,' to the extent that every time, they sent us emissaries such as My'tcheh Hoffman and Yochanan Morgenstern to put the riven *HeHalutz* organization back together.

In the end, the unity of the HeHalutz organization was re-established, with a renewed intensive work on all fronts we once again approached the realization of the goal, which was '*aliyah*,' such that, in the year 1934, I made *aliyah*, along with such comrades as Y. Herbstman, Y. Lionel, Sh. Zilberman, Ph. Zilbergold, Y. Lerner, Ph. Stahl, B. Stern, R. Herbstman, M. Brafman, G. Szparer, D. Weissleder, M. Lieberman, R. Wertman, and others that I cannot remember. As you can see, this was the active core of '*HeHalutz*,' so that the leadership of the organization passed over into younger hands with young energy and strength.

However, fate decreed otherwise. When the Hitler hordes marched into Tomaszow, and with the annihilation of the Jewish population of Tomaszow, the heroic *HeHalutz* organization was also exterminated, and with them the entire vibrant youth of our city.

In summary, we have here a reflection of our first youth organizations, whose programs did not encompass any political activity. Now I will describe the older and political party, named '*Poalei Tzion*,' as the 'Rightist' were called, because there was no left-wing *Poalei Tzion* in our tow, not even for medical care. One could find everything in the city, such as 'bund' a split off communist Bund, split Zionists, '*Al HaMishmar*,' and '*Eyt Livnot*,' Trotskyist communists, and just plain communists, but 'Left Wing *Poalei Tzion*' were not to be found.

The first sprouts of the '*Poalei Tzion*' movement were raised in 1917 with the return to Tomaszow from Russia of the Messrs. Shiflinger Abe Tevel Eilbaum. It still did not have the character of an organized party, just a participation in all the Jewish institutions in which in that time, the majority of the members of *Poalei Tzion* took part. In the shoe and clothing cooperative, under the direction of Mr. Shiflinger, who was at that time already a party member, and also the Jewish kitchen, which was supported by the American 'Joint.' Who does not remember the song: '*Der Khaver Volf firt di kinder to Kushtsyushki Shteyn*,' also a member of *Poalei Tzion*. Also, who does not recall the mass assembly in the '*Dom Ludowy*' for the installation of the new Poland, when Messrs. Tevel'eh Eilbaum and Mott'l Blank, at the head of a gathered group, strode out in parade, carrying red flags, as well as members of Poalei Tzion, and it was from these single and small number of members, that in the year 1923, with the arrival of comrade Baum from Chelm, and comrade Back, the first organized and centralized '*Poalei Tzion* Party' was established. We had our first party meeting at the home of Eli' Rofeh Crazier, in which counted several goodly tens of members, from a variety of laboring and proletarian population sectors in Tomaszow. These were the first who could be called 'Zionist-Socialist Worker's Party of Poalei Tzion,' because at that time, it was there that almost all the workers, who wanted to adopt a proletarian ethos, concentrated themselves.

I, along with such comrades as Sh. Hauled, M. Lichtenfeld, who specialized in printing and carpentry, also found our place in the *Poalei Tzion* Party. Then, up to that time, it was the most active party on all fronts, such as internal cultural work, to external political work, such as elections to the Polish Sejm, municipal council elections, or elections to the Zionist Congress.

I recall a curiosity when elections had to take place for the municipal council, the worst battle came about over the municipal cemetery. Nathaniel the Lame lived there, and all the parties fought over his vote as if the entire election hung on his vote. It go so, that on the bridge over the river before reaching the cemetery, they would run to grab R' Nathaniel and hustle him off to vote. So I observed a fight taking place on the bridge, and how people were falling off the bridge into the river. Seeing how poor M. Eilbaum was lying wounded, and stretched out in the river, I quickly called to our comrades for help. With the arrival of these friends, we made an agreement with the representatives of the '*Bund*,' the Zionist Organization, '*Agudah*,' that there should be no more fighting over R' Nathaniel. Rather, we would take a horse-drawn cart, and place

him in it, and that each party may have a representative escort him, and take him to the polling place. There, he can vote for whatever party he chooses to. Whoever did not see this cortege, with the wagon, and the accompaniment of the representatives of the parties, has not seen anything more beautiful.

But the party work continued to carry out its local activity. At that time the Manual Trades Union was established, and with the departure of the Messrs. Baum, Sztrulzer and others, a certain weakness began to be felt in party life. We began to go off from the party headquarters to a second place, but the salvation came from a second side, as one says, 'God provides the cure for the plague.' At that time, a merger of *'Poalei Tzion* and *Tze'irei Tzion* took place, after which, it was called '*Poalei Tzion Ts. S.*' This has a repercussion in our town. Before the merger, a variety of intensive consultations took place in which the basis for the merged party was firmly put in place.

In the year 1926, the fiery general convention took place, where fiery speeches were given by both parties. A General committee was also elected that consisted of: Fyvel Holtz, Simcha Haut, and myself, from *'Poalei Tzion.'* Israel Wertman, Shimshon Holtz from *Tze'irei Tzion.* Since the merger that created the united party, called '*Poalei Tzion Ts. S.*' was an auspicious one, we immediately began to carry out many-branched party efforts.

First we rented a headquarters consisting of three rooms (at Novashelsky's). Every Friday at dusk, a sit down meeting took place, in which almost all the parties participated. Every Saturday, during the day, a presentation on real and cultural themes. Our representatives took part in a;; the various committees of te city, such as: '*Keren Kayemet,*' '*Keren HaYesod,*' 'The Jewish School Organization,' etc. A '*HaPoel* Club' was also founded, which had the mission of developing the youth of Tomaszow physically, in many areas, but the essential mission of the party was to create a reserve of youth for the party, with the idea, that as the older party members went off, whether to South America, or to the Land of Israel, and so that there not be a vacant shell, the party committee gave me the task, as the party secretary, to found a '*Freiheit*' youth group. Knowing as I did, that the party thinks of the '*Freiheit*' organization as a reserve for the party, threw myself into the creation of the '*Freiheit*' with my entire enthusiasm.

Freiheit consisted of young people from the age of 14 to 18 years who, during that time, had to be prepared to become culturally enlightened, in order that they understand, that upon entering the party, what will be required of them as a member of the party.

This work was not the easiest, especially when the human resources was a collage assembled from the poorest and most deprived of the yong people, but in spite of this, with a strong will, everything was pushed through. Every evening, discussions took place on a variety of problems, and the members were included in circles, for sociology, Zionist issues, '*Freiheit*' and party matters. In the course of a specific time, the young Freiheit members created a *Freiheit* 'Scout' [troop], consisting of the 10-14 years olds, whose mission was to embrace all of the scouting developments such as: hikes, summer colonies, and a variety of sporting events.

There was no lack of curious incidents here as well. You needed to se when the members of the party got together in the scouting headquarters, where the comrades Ph. Holtz, Y. Eilbaum, Y. Wertman were. When the '*Freiheit*' members and the scouts began to sing the song: 'We are young, and our minds are young,' at that time, the previously mentioned members would go into such an ecstasy in singing along the song 'We are young,' one could not distinguish the young from the old, since everything was caught up in the harmony such that the joy and ardor of the young Freiheit members attracted the attention of not only the party

members, but even all of the passers by, in order to hear the singing of the 'Trask Group' which is te way they used to be called.

So, when I arrived in Tomaszow in the yea 1938, on a trip, that was the year before The Second World War, I encountered a modern 'club' already which was located at Mr. Goldman's on the Kosciuszko street, with 3-4 rooms, in which all of the previously mentioned organizations concentrated themselves.

A year later, with the outbreak of the [Second] World War, and with the marching in of the Hitler beasts into our town, with the extermination of the Jewish populace of Tomaszow, everything that had been created during this entire period was also completely destroyed.

However, one solace remained for us, the ideal that the youth of Tomaszow strived towards, could not be destroyed by the Nazi forces. It is precisely the ideal of the young membership that provided help in the establishment of the 'Jewish State,' where the remnant of out town could come and, anew, establish a life on firm foundations.

The 'Agudah,' Its Establishment and Development

By Rabbi Yitzhak Meir Gartler
Haifa

The '*Agudat HaOrtodoksim,*' later '*Agudat Shlomei Emunei Yisrael,*' and at the last, '*Agudat Yisrael,*' or as it is known briefly, '*Agudah*' was founded by the greatest of the Jewish Sages of the prior generation in 5672 [1912] in Katowice, but it did not carry out any branched activities in Poland. It was more urgent to get a top level unification of World Orthodoxy, or a preparation for later Agudah activity, and there was not a sense of a strong need to get organized in the province, because also the national and worldwide organizations were not active, [with their ideas] deeply buried in the minds of a few adherents, because of the despotic Czarist rule, where every visible activity (apart from pure religion) was prohibited and forbidden.

With the outbreak of The First World War, all the institutional order of the old way of life fell apart, especially in the year 1915, when the Russian forces were driven out by the German-Austrian armies, Jewish life emerged from its highly confined container, and began to organize itself on modern foundations, each in their own ambit, with the effort to spread its ideals and principles. The leaders of 'Haredi' Jewry felt the danger that the new life posed for the observant Jew, and especially for the younger generation, and therefore began to organize themselves under the banner of '*Agudat HaOrtodoksim,*' and later settled on the name '*Agudat Shlomei Emunei Yisrael.*' However, because the Lublin Province was occupied by the Austrians, and administered by them under the name of 'Small Poland,' where they had complete hegemony, and 'Great Poland,' with Warsaw at its head, was controlled by Germany, and despite the fact that they were tied down on the battlefield, nevertheless, there existed a formal border between these two powers, with a formal passport requirement and all the strict border rules. It is because of this, that the entire Lublin area, with Tomaszow included, was torn away from the head of Polish Jewry, from the capitol city of Warsaw. And, literally, there was no relationship that existed between the two, and this strongly dampened and attenuated the established party activities. Also because of the woes brought on by the war itself, a cessation of activities occurred.

It was first in the year 1918, after The First World War, with the establishment of the newly liberated and independent Poland, all the Jewish movements underwent a revival. And it was at this time, that the notorious pogroms began to fall on the heads of the Jews, from the so called Hallerists. The high water mark of these pogroms was reached in the neighboring city of Lemberg, where the Ukrainian followers of [Semyon] Petlura in partnership with the Polish Hallerists, carried out the terrifying pogrom. All of these occurrences strongly influenced Jewish youth. That part from the nationalist camp saw the only salvation and way out through the adoption and development of 'Zionism,' and those from the Marxist-Socialist camp saw the only solution in the refrain 'Workers of the World Unite!' and in class war. Both together threw themselves with a youthful impetus and enthusiasm upon the perpetually observant Jewish populace, in order to draw them and their followers into their party headquarters. They cast a special eye upon the observant youth, and tore hunks from them with the solution and goal of: 'In order to attain the new, it is necessary to tear down and destroy the old.' In the Jewish streets, one began to hear solutions such as: 'A death blow to Orthodoxy! Down with clericalism! Free yourselves from enslavement to the Torah! Take your destiny into your own hands! Break down the Orthodox fortresses! Free the young from the old phantasm! Religion is the opiate of the masses! ' And similar appetizing pronouncements from the party headquarters. And, with the help of libraries, presentations, and elections, the observant, unaffiliated and mild-mannered youth were drawn in, and led away from the good way.

In that time, men of Torah, who were God-fearing, Hasidim, men of action, with responsibility for the community at large, gathered and deliberated this newly created situation, and the great danger that the fiery tongues of the party ideologies and activities might, God forbid, bring down all of Orthodoxy. The writer of these lines was among the participants. During the time of the *Counting of the Omer*, in 5679 [1919] the new, independent Orthodox organization, called '*Shlomei Emunei Yisrael*,' was fortunately established in Tomaszow, at the head of which stood, R' David Weitzman, R' Mikhl Yuda Lehrer, R' Ary' Heller, R' Mikhl Yuda Flag, R' Meir Klarman, R' Yitzhak ben Reuven Gartler, R' Yekhezkiel Lehrer, R' David Peril, and myself. As for myself, there was nothing too difficult to do, in order to disseminate the *Agudah* concept. First, we organized public study lessons, we began to distribute the Orthodox Jewish press in Warsaw, visited with the parents of children to clarify the danger of belonging to the new organizations, calling for gatherings of young people to explain to them the *Agudah* standpoint about life.

The liberated party officials sensed the strength of the opposition, which had begun to get organized, and attempted with all methods to prevent the establishment of the *Agudah*. The writer of these lines became the target of all their arrows, attempts at undermining, and talebearing, and suffered no little from abuse and embarrassments for my energy-driven work and soul-based commitment. The 'birth pangs' of the *Agudah* were very intense, but, with God's help, and with literally superhuman energies, it was given to us to establish the *Agudah* as a living factor in the community life of the Tomaszow congregation. Not only did it retard the spread of an alien spirit in observant homes, but it also became a great social and political force that all the other parties had to reckon with.

From time-to-time, we were visited by *Agudah* lecturers such as te Rabbi of Felcow, Koyler Rabbi R' Klein, Eliezer Gershon Friedensohn, Yuda Leib Orlian, etc.

The *Agudah* immediately, at the outset, saw that the core of its activities must be the 'Babes of the House,' and it immediately began by taking over supervision of 'Private *Melamdim*,' examining children, etc. However, when this stormy period was over, these activities slackened a bit. Most of all, a principal deficiency lay in that at the head of the party stood people from one branch of *Hasidism*, (The *Ger Hasidim*), and the fact that *Mizrahi* organized a communal school, called '*Torah VoDa'ath*, had a bad impact, in which secular studies took place along with religious studies, and those who did not want to send their children to Mizrahi, were compelled to send them to the public school, named *Szkola Powszechna*, or not to provide any secular elementary education at all, which not every father was prepared to agree to. The question was very urgent, and demanding, and a number of attempts were made to organize one independent '*Heder*' with secular studies, but without success. Various pitfalls and difficulties were encountered and it was thought that this was lost forever. In the end, thanks to heavenly oversight, the local Cieszanow-Sanz *Hasidim* in Tomaszow invited the famous *Gaon* and *Tzaddik*, R' Ary' Leibusz Rubin זצללה"ה, the Bet Din Senior of Cieszanow, son of the daughter of the Holy *Gaon*, and Diaspora Leader the author of '*Divrei Chaim*' of Sanz, and may he be remembered in Eden, son-in-law of the Holy *Gaon* author of *Divrei Simcha* of Cieszanow, an alert and scholarly Jewish man, full of fire, a holy flame, with just the right Sanz ardor with good manner and deportment, a man of grace with the power to attract, a man of responsibility and concern of the general welfare.[86]

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[86] From the ***Cieszanow Memorial Book***, we learn that Rabbi R' Aryeh [Leibusz] Rubin ז"ל, was the Chief Rabbi of Cieszanow, the son-in-law of the righteous Rabbi and Head of Cieszanow, R' Simcha Issachar of the Halberstam family, זצ"ל. He is described as 'a personality full of grace, a phenomenal Torah scholar, alert, and whoever came in contact with him became bound up with him with all the elements of his soul. This righteous man, the son of a righteous man, was one of

The entirety of Orthodoxy, from all manner of *Hasidim*, to the common masses, simple folk, are swept up by his enchanting personality. From hosting *Tischen*, and fervent worship, he especially electrifies the young people, and brings a reinvigoration, and a spiritual elevation is sensed by the participants in the Bet HaMedrash. Even the secular Jews are drawn to him with honor and respect. It is given to the Rabbi of Cieszanow to create a tight personal circle, who like veteran loyal soldiers, are prepared to carry out every order of his, in a disciplined fashion, and in him, the *Agudah* truly acquired a pillar of steel, even if, officially, he was not a member of the *Agudah*.

The '*Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael*' prospered especially well [under him], which became a fortress of Yiddishkeit in the entire vicinity, and in the end, with newly established powers, with the full energetic and spiritual influence of the Rabbi of Cieszanow זצ"ל, the *Agudah 'Heder'* named '*Yesodei HaTorah*,' was established. In the year 5683 [1923], a full-time school was opened with 140 students from beginning Pentateuch study up to higher studies, *Gemara* with *Tosafot* and Commentaries, as well as compulsory secular studies for at least a half hour a day. I was given the responsibility of being the Principal of the *Heder*, to which, as well-known in the entire city, I gave my best energies, heart and mind, and our work was crowned with success. The students advanced to heights in their education, and excelled in manners and decorum. In the entire province, whoever wanted to give their child a well-regarded education, sent them to the *Agudah Heder*, to the degree, that the number of students reached 223 children. In the Heder, we rose from one level to the next, and gave great visibility to the *Agudah*, such that the *Agudah* became the largest political party in our city, and at the first municipal elections, the *Agudah*, own its own claimed 5 members elected as *Dozors* (members of the municipal council). At the completion of the cycle of study for a tractate of the Talmud, resulting from the daily study program [sic: *Daf Yomi*], a public 'completion ceremony' is arranged, where the Rabbis of the *Agudah* appear together with the learners. And on some occasions, the Rabbi of Cieszanow זצ"ל also participates, whose ardent words, and words of encouragement provide a lasting inspiration for further energetic work, for strengthening the faith, the dissemination of Torah, and Fear of God.

Once, a joint *Siyyum* was arranged between the *Agudah Heder* and the learners of the *Daf Yomi*. The highest class of '*Yesodei HaTorah*' had completed the study of the Tractate *Baba Kama*, and the *Daf Yomi*, [the Tractate] *Pesakhim*. In this connection a general examination of the best of the students was arranged, who had memorized thirty sides of the *Gemara* with *Tosafot* from the Tractate *Baba Kama*, in the original language. The outstanding students of that time were: Gershon Brand. Elimelekh Heller, Jonah Singer, Mordechai Szpul, הי"ד, and, separated for ling life, Rabbi Sholom Yekhezkiel Rubin, an others. the last also read the final portion of the Tractate. The people were just taken by the depth of knowledge and familiarity that the young people possessed. R' Shmuel Lubert, ע"ה an elderly Jewish man, who was a Torah scholar, cried out of joy, and because of this, danced with the young children.

It is these kinds of festivities and parties that ignited the fire of Torah in Jewish hearts, and the Tomaszow Agudah was the lighthouse and guiding beam for the Torah-conscious Jewry of Tomaszow, and its vicinity. It was in this manner, that our poor, laboring brethren of Tomaszow and its vicinity spread Torah-based Yiddishkeit May their memory burn brightly forever.

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the greats, with a big soul, a treasure trove of goodness, and full of sensible and direct sayings, which lit things up like the rays of the sun. He was the master of rich spiritual vigor, full of joy and gladdening of the soul.'

The Agudah Movement

By Sh. Licht

The *Agudah* was active in all the political and social branches of the city. It participated in elections for the Sejm and the Senate, municipal leadership, and the Jewish leadership, merchant's guild, and the small retailers union. Its representatives were active to provide assistance to the Jewish populace on all fronts. It was especially outstanding in its work to strengthen the faith on the educational front. It placed its principal emphasis on educating a new, enlightened and proud Jewish youth.

Among its leadership and, active Agudah members, were:

R' Yekhezkiel and Mikhl Yuda Lehrer, R' Mikhl Yuda Pflug, David Schwindler, Mikhl Shafran, Abraham Yekhezkiel Biederman, Neta Heller, Yitzhak Gartler, Yitzhak Meir Gartler, R' David Peril, Pinchas Szparer, R' Alter Stahl and R' David Gartler.

Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael

Page 256: *The Leaders of* Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael *in Tomaszow*

From the Right: *Leib'l Mermelstein (Chairman), Joseph Friedlander, (Vice-Chairman), Leib'l Lehrer (Secretary)*

At the time of the establishment of the Agudah movement, the young people were led by: Yekhezkiel'eh Putter, Hirsch Leib Putter, Eizik Heller, Moshe Morgenstern, Israel Leib Citrin, Yitzhak Gartler, Abraham Bergstein, and others. But they were all of the old type, young men of the *shtibl*, who did not place much attention on modern organizational methods.

It was the second instance of a fresh generation that exhibited more initiative, with organizational skills, such as Leib'l Mermelstein, Leib'l Lehrer, Joseph Friedlander, Yeshay' Heller, Mordechai Banzer and Sinai Stender.

The fresher generation of young people demonstrated even more alertness and *Agudah*-related activity, those who had been entirely educated on the lap of the ideal off the Agudah movement, such as the men, Rabbi Meir Rubin, Yitzhak Meir Pflug, Baruch Oder, Baruch Akst, Gershon Brand, Melech Heller, Chaim Yehoshua Biederman, Jonah Singer, Abraham Singer, Ben Zion Schneider, Hirsch and Asher Reis, Yehoshua Goldstein, Yehoshua Niedergang, Leib'l Wermuth, Shimon Tanenbaum, Yaakov Moshe Tepler, and Mendl Pflug.

Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael

Page 257: *Leadership of the* Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael

Standing from the Right: *Asher Reis, Yaakov Eliezer ben R' David Gartler, Leib'l Wermuth, Peretz ben R' Sholom Singer, Simcha Rubin, Fishl Szparer, Israel Moshe Biederman, Fyvel Fersht, Shlomo Goldstein, Meir Wolf ben R' David Ofen, and Yitzhak Meir ben R' Baruch Youngman.*

Seated: The spiritual leaders Chaim Yehoshua Biederman, Rabbi Y. Rubin and David Yud'l Szur.

The last of the organization were the *Perakhim* [sic: Flowers], who were a vanguard and a reservoir that brought fresh resources and the cohorts of the young in order to remind the leaders of the *Perakhim*, Yud'l Szur and Yaakov Poncer.

Poalei Agudat Yisrael

Formally, a branch of Poalei Agudat Yisrael also existed, but they did not carry out any special activities. These were young shtibl boys who worked for a couple of hours during the day, bu this is not what caused them to be organized as 'workers.' It was only as a result of a difference of opinion with the other young men, did they want to become independent with their own seal and a president....the leaders were Shlomo Gartler and Shmuel Szparer.

The *Agudah*, and its youth organizations, were active in raising money for the *Agudah* institutions, such as, *Keren HaYishuv*, *Keren HaTorah*, *Yeshiva Khakhmei Lublin*, etc., and raising money in general for the genteel poor, that came from faraway places. However, the crown of their endeavors was education, such as arranging lessons and learning, ideological debates, and festive *Siyyum* events for the *Daf Yomi*, in which each *Siyyum* injected liveliness and refreshment, but the crowning work was the *Agudah Heder*.

Heder Yodei HaTorah

Because of the pressure to learn the language of the country, an Agudah Heder was organized that included secular studies [for] two hours a day, recognized by the government.

The first principal was R' Yitzhak Meir Gartler, a very energetic man, and a great pedagogue. Afterwards, R' Abraham Yekhezkiel Biederman was the principal, and to the end, R' Chaim Untzig.

Apart from the previously mentioned Agudah activists, the following were members of the Heder Committee: Mikhl Reis, Hertz Feldsehn, Leib'l Rabinovich, Baruch Goldstein, etc.

Beth Yaakov

Page 258: *The Beth Yaakov Teachers with two pupils: Berenblatt and Singer.*

The Beth Yaakov School was created by the committee of Agudat Yisrael and apart from R' Abraham Yekhezkiel Biederman, the Beth Yaakov School was directed by Yaakov Herman, Yaakov Mordechai Guthartz and Yisroel'ki Pfeiffer.

A Monument to Unforgettable Friends

By Isaac Krass
Nahariya

Page 260: ***At the Top Stand the Leaders of*** **Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael**
(The Date Shown is: 12 Sivan 5693, or June 6, 1933)

From the Right [Top]: *Yitzhak Meir Pflug, Rabbi Meir Rubin and Mordechai Ganzer*
The next row of the Perakhim, from the Right: *Shlomo ben R' David Gartler, Mendl ben R' Neta Heller, Chaim Yehoshua Biederman, Ben Zion Schneider, Shmuel Szparer, Yaakov Pancer, Yud'l Szur, Ber'l Schwindler, and Greenbaum.*
Third Row: *Sinai ben R' Joseph Shapiro, Taubenblatt, Moshe ben R' Lipa Maltz, Yud'l ben R' Zalman Brand, and Leib'l Fersht.*
Sitting: *Mordechai ben R' David Schwindler, Wolf Feil, Shimon Tanenbaum, Shmuel Kaufman, Herschel Szpritzer, Yitzhak Meir Youngman, and Moshe Strasberg.*
Last Row by the Sign: *Natan ben R' Shlomo Akst, Moshe ben R' Neta Heller, and David ben R' Ary' Heller.*

I feel a sacred obligation to place my Heder and Shtibl comrades in an eternal memorial, who additionally were the crown and mirror of Orthodox [Jewish] youth, and tragically, were all killed by the Germans.

Israel Pearl

My closest friend, his father was R' David Pearl ה"ע, who was an educated young man, a Jewish man of insight, and on top of all this an ardent *Ger* Hasid. On the Sabbath, he would study a bit from *Sfat Emet* with us, or add an incisive word from the *Khidushei HaRI"M*, which sharpened out intellect, but who, tragically, died at a very young age. Yisroel'ki took over the fatherly burdens and led his father's house and provided for his mother and the orphans. He himself was married in Kamenka Star, and lived in Tomaszow until its destruction.

Mordechai Ganzer

His father, R' Hirsch Yisroel'keh's sat day and night in the Cieszanow Shtibl and studied [continuously]. Mott'l was an only son. I studied together with him, but he also had a talent for organization, and indeed, was one of the principal directors of *Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael.* He was married in Hrubieszow, and remained to live there. There too, he did much to imbue the religious youth with life.

Yitzhak Meir Pflug

His father, R' Mikhl Yuda ה"ע, was one of the respected people of the city. He was a scholarly Jew, a Hasid, and a man of means. Yitzhak Meir was his oldest son. We studied together in the Cieszanow *shtibl.* He was also one of the top young men who led the *Agudah.* He was a commercial type, and even as a young man, he conducted transactions in wood, and was successful. He was married in Bilgoraj. Later, he came back and settled in Tomaszow, where he was again active in the community, especially with *Agudah* institutions.

Sinai Stender

A child of the common masses, his father emigrated to America, his mother, Bracha, gave a considerable amount of attention to her Sinai'leh to assure that he grow up being a scholar. And, indeed, he grew up in that spirit, studying in the Cieszanow *shtibl*, however, his principal activity was the *Agudah*. He was committed to its ideal with his entire soul, and literally sacrificed himself for it. Every letter and request from the central [office] was like law to him. He was one of what used to be called party-fanatics. At every activity that had contact with the Agudah, he was the first, and no work was too difficult for him. He got married in Lubicz. His parents asked him to come to America, but because of difficulties made for him at the consulate in Warsaw, he was left in the hands of the Germans.

Leib'l Lehrer

His father, R' Yekhezkiel Lehrer, was one of the important *balebatim*. [He was] a *Ger Hasid*, who loved a difficult passage in Ibn Ezra, a smart man, who was used in Rabbinical courts. Leib'l was his beloved, was very gifted with a good head, a good by nature. He was a brilliant young man with a very refined character. He had a great many talents. Apart from scholarship, he played the violin, and was among the few young men who were economically independent. He carried on substantial forestry-related businesses, and was successful. He had an open hand. He was especially active on behalf of the *Agudah* in the Cieszanow *shtibl*. He was married in Krasnystow and remained living there.

Leib'l Mermelstein

His father, R' Yerakhmiel HaKohen Mermelstein הו"ד was from the Kielce *Hasidim*, a very quiet and respected Jew, a leather merchant, who took no part in any community activity, but simply carried on a decent and beautiful Jewish life, and participated in a scheduled lesson of learning every day. When Leib'l was yet a young Heder lad, the Rabbi of Cieszanow drew himself into his father's house. The *Rebbe* had a great amount of influence on Leib'l, and Leib'l became one of the greatest of his adherents. Leib'l became a great God-fearing man, who rigorously followed set rules, and prayed with great conviction and ardor. Leib'l grew in his capacity for scholarship and Hasidism from year to year, and he becomes the role model of the Cieszanow *shtibl*. When he got older, and was one of the best of the young scholarly men in the city, he would hold lessons for the younger boys. In general, he was a good soul, the very essence of goodness itself. Leib'l would provision, all the respected Jews who would come from the outside world, with money, food and lodging. Leib'l was the Chairman of the *Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael*. He did not have much in the way of organizational skills. (In fact, the organization was run by the Vice-Chairman, Joseph Friedlander, today in America., incidentally the Secretary of this Book Committee). It was only his enchanting personality theat elicited respect and consideration. He was married in Rawa Ruska, and remained there.

* * *

It is with all these young people that I spent my most beautiful and best years. All of us worked and warmed ourselves by the great light from the great and Holy Rabbi of Cieszanow, Rabbi Gaon, the Tzaddik R' Ary' Leibusz Rubin זצ"ל, which gave purpose to our lives, educating our souls and instilling them with piety. We spent our Sabbath and Festival Days at his *Tisch*, and his explanations of the Torah gave us courage, his songs and praise created the greatest spiritual joy for us, and raised our spirits. His secular discussions overflowed with wisdom, his love for each and every Jew, and to us in particular, invigorated and refreshed

us. His encouraging words, and words of comfort healed broken hearts. Every broken heart and heavy spirit found solace in him, and a lifting of the burden, and a joy and happiness reigned over everyone that was with him, or in his presence, which made life easier. And it was in precisely this kind of a place, that we were raised, and we were influenced by his worthy attributes and good deeds, and tragically, in our sinful way, we lost all of them in a tragic fashion ה"ש. Honor their memory!



David Yud'l Shur, ה"יד

By A. Freund

Page 263: ***The Leaders of* Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael**

Right: Yaakov Fantzer, ה"יד *Left: David Yehuda ben R' Abraham Shur* ה"יד

Abraham Blekher's son, a child of the common folk that from his earliest youth was draw to *Hasidism.* While still only a child of five, he becomes a steady visitor to the Cieszanow Rabbi, and does not miss a single *Tisch.* He is raised under his influence, and when he completes the various *Heder* studies, he begins to study at the Cieszanow *shtibl.* However, simultaneous with his advancement in study, an organizational talent develops in him, and he becomes the leader of the '*Perakhim,*' group in *Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael.* He was a fully-talented speaker and earned a great deal of credit for the development of the '*Perakhim*' organization. He was also the Secretary of the Beth Jacob School.

At the time of the German bombardment, on that bloody Thursday, he was wounded by a piece of shrapnel in the foot, and this confined him to bed, and he did not have the possibility to flee. He remained in Tomaszow, and participated in the fate of all the Jews there.

The Agudah Boycott

By Sh. L.

Because the *Agudah* consisted mostly of an element drawn from the Hasidic *balebatim,* it was thought that they were not good for anything except studying in the *shtibl,* arranging for parties celebrating the *Siyyum* of tractates studied by the *Daf Yomi,* and conducting Hasidic Yahrzeits with *Melaveh Malkehs.* Therefore, when it came to elections, whether local or of a national character, they controlled the election strategy just as well as other parties, even when it was necessary to employ force with strength.... In the first years of the elected community organs, during the tenure of Lejzor Lederkremmer, when he was the President, when they did not want to permit a certain point of view to be aired, and the *Agudah* at that time had a sum total of five *Dozors* against seven, the *Agudah* youth sabotaged the electrical lighting, began a tumult, to the extent that the meeting had to be stopped.

The united party of '*Keren HaYesod*' with Mizrahi at its head, invited Rabbi Kowalski of Wloclawek to Tomaszow, who was a member of the Polish senate. He was a great political and rabbinical personality, and it was announced that Rabbi Kowalski will speak at five o'clock in the Great Synagogue.

The *Agudah* did not want him to speak, since this would only strengthen Zionism in the city. At that time it was the Sabbath on which the New Month was blessed, for the month of Elul. The *Agudah* youth developed a plan not to permit Rabbi Kowalski to speak, seeing that the new month of Elul was being blessed, and accordingly it is necessary to do an act of repentance. Because of this, it is expected t arrive in the synagogue at two o'clock to recite Psalms, Naturally, this plan was kept strictly secret, in order that the synagogue remain open.

When the Zionist groups, with the *Mizrahi* at their head, began to arrive at the synagogue, and encountered the unexpected guests, seemingly new Psalm reciters at the synagogue, they immediately understood what this meant, but they kept silent. After all, how long does it take to recite Psalms?

Rabbi Kowalski entered the synagogue, and they are still reciting Psalms. When the finished, and began anew to recite the Psalms from the beginning, a tumult erupted, and the young Zionists from all of the groups fell upon the *Agudah* youth with blows. However, [the *Agudah* youth] held their ground, made a human chain around the lectern, and again went on to recite the Psalms, until the police arrived and drove the entire assembly out, and locked up the synagogue, and Rabbi Kowalski did not have the opportunity to speak. As revenge, when the *Agudah* instructor Eliezer Gershon Friedensohn from Lodz wanted to hold an *Agudah* lecture in the Great Bet HaMedrash, he was prevented from doing so by Zionist youth from all ranks, and he had to leave the *Bima*. He gave his presentation in the Kielce *shtibl*.

Party competition injected life and refreshment among the young people.

The Leftist Movement in Tomaszow

By Leah Friedlander

In the time of the Austrian occupation, political movements began to spread in all directions on the Polish as well as the Jewish street. In Tomaszow, the Zionist movement came to life, in all of its manifestations, and afterwards, also the *Bund*.

After the liberation of Poland, which fell out a year after the October Revolution in Russia, echoes of a communist movement began being heard. Quietly, it was already being discussed that so-and-so was a communist. It is difficult to know exactly when they initiated their party activities.

Around the end of the summer of 1920, when the Bolsheviks stood near Tomaszow, and one needed to be very circumspect, and agent of the communist party appeared among a group of deserters who were hiding out, and organized a municipal movement, which was to begin functioning immediately after the Soviet military marched in. This is what was relayed secretly from mouth to ear. Nearly nothing materialized from this plan, because apart from the scouting party that once made an appearance during the day on a Saturday, the Russian army was not seen to take possession of the city. Rather, it was at that time that their reverse march began to the border, which had been put in place in accordance with the peace treaty then agreed to between Poland and the Bolsheviks.

In the early years of the twenties, the existence of a communist movement, in Tomaszow and its vicinity, was already discussed with certainty. And in the later twenties, after the Pilsudski regime set itself on a more swinish way and began to compromise the national minorities, the communist ideal began to spread more and more among the latter. The existence of their underground apparatus was no longer a secret to anyone. Arrests and trials directed against communists became an often occurrence in the city. The tallied votes for their list for Sejm elections, even though small in number, also bore witness to a party apparatus that functioned, because no open election campaigning was allowed to be conducted. In the beginning of the thirties, their influence was more evident among the peasants of the eastern villages of the district, which were mostly occupied by Ukrainians. This was during the period of pacification. The Polish regime set itself

a goal to 'Polonize' the Ukrainian peasants, to bring them under the wing of the Roman Catholic faith. To this end, it employed a variety of tyrannical means, confiscating churches, and the like. The reaction of the Ukrainians was to fall under the influence of the communists. The same happened in the city, where the pulse of political activity beat along the Jewish street. The state-sponsored anti-Semitism, that began to push the Jews out of their economic positions in stages, naturally sowed seeds of enmity to the existing regime. Jewish youth, saw themselves having an uncertain future, because all gates of government initiative were closed to them, and Jewish labor and commerce fell under the heavy yoke of taxes, imposed deliberately on them to asphyxiate them. In addition to this, was the derisory relationship of the organs of the authorities towards Jewish interests — caused its heart to be opened wider and wider to communist propaganda, which held out ready-made solutions to all of these invited problems. Here you have a huge neighboring country, where there was no unemployment , without anti-Semitism, etc., etc. Young people took these solutions very seriously. The communist party apparatus very skillfully utilized all these antipathies towards the regime whether on the part of the Ukrainians, or on the part of the Jews. It established a so-called unaffiliated party among the Ukrainians, called '*Serlab*,' and the same among the Jews, called 'The General Jewish Labor Party,' Abbreviated as *AYAP*.[87] Through these two parties, communist propaganda obtained free access to the abused minority masses, through their periodicals, journals, and variety of gatherings. In precisely this literature, the government was sharply attacked for the wrongs against minorities. The direction naturally was, in not a clear form, pro-Soviet. The previously mentioned two parties were legal for a certain period of time, but the government kept a watchful eye on them.

The AYAP opened in Tomaszow in the summer of 1933, and its principal activity was to throw filth and dirt on all the other Jewish parties, and in passing to glorify the wondrous deeds of the Soviet Union. On the night following Simchat Torah, in that same year, an emissary of the party, Mr. Sigmund Stein, stood up in front of a small gathering of listeners in the Tomaszow '*Volkshaus*' giving a lecture dedicated to the 'Betrayal of the workers by the '*Bund.*'' Its existence in Tomaszow did not last very long. The ugly visage of communism showed itself too brazenly, and it appears that very few wanted to be associated with it.

In dealing with the activities and growth of the communist party among Jewish youth in Tomaszow, I have deliberately drawn a parallel with their successes among the Ukrainian populace, in order to underscore the essential reason for this which is: the brutal relationship of the organs of Polish authority to the national minorities. The complaints of the anti-Semites, that communism had prospered in the Jewish street, which, incidentally, was far from the truth, as we will soon see, can be attributed solely to them. Along with their inhuman dealings towards their Jewish fellow citizens, which threw specific parts of Jewish youth into the direction of communist-engendered poverty. And when we will come to know exactly what the extent of growth of the forces of the communist party was on the Jewish street, we will test their equivalence to the forces of all the other Jewish parties who were in constant struggle with them, and their strength will be found not far from the cipher, 'zero.' While it is possible to speak of some influence on specific parts of Jewish youth, their influence on the mature generation was much less marked. At elections, where a voter could not be less than 21 years of age, their slate drew several tens of votes, of which a part came from Ukrainian voters in the city. The outcry of the anti-Semites that the Jewish street is controlled by communists was not only exaggerated, but entirely unfounded.

The communist brouhaha in the city didn't last very long, and slowly, they lost their hold, even on the young. In the last years before the war, one heard no activities on their part at all.

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87 From the Yiddish *Algemeine Yiddishe Arbeits Partei.*

The party came back from the dead only first when the Red Army marched into Tomaszow on the Eve of *Sukkot* 1939 [sic: September 27]. It then took over the civil administration on the city, under the direction of the military authority. And paying no mind to the fact that the majority of the city dwellers were Jewish, it still didn't consider giving the position of Burgomaster to a Jew. The position was taken by the Christian, Zhebrun.

Their authority held sway for two weeks, until the Red Army pulled back from the city, in favor of their allies – the Germans. The entire party apparatus, together with the army, evacuated to Rawa Ruska.

Of all the members of the party, not a single member remains to this day. A few of them were reached by Hitler's tyrannical hand, who put an end to their young lives. The remainder were spread over various parts of the world, where they look with longing and sadness back at their again stormy past. With longing: to a time when sweet dreams swam before their eyes. Dreams of a world, elevated, free of wrongdoing and oppression. With sadness – that they had squandered so much of their energy, soul and life for a struggle that, with such intense bloodiness, showed itself to be an empty dream.

Now we will place a monument to our city that was cut down, with its people and institutions. Let us, with warm sympathy also recall the young Jewish boys and girls who with the purest dedication and commitment of their souls, fought for an ideal in which they believed laid the solution for all mankind.

The Jewish Youth in the City Tomaszow Lubelski

By Pinchas Ehrlich
Buenos Aires

Page 275: *The Municipal Gymnasium*

Page 276: ***The General Zionist HeHalutz***
Standing, from the Right: *Pinia Eilbaum, Feiga Rofman, Reizl Meldung (Mahlerman) Mott'l Singer, Pesach Klehrman, Zippora Stern, Rivka Eisenszpiz, Chay' Meldung.*
Sitting, from the Right: *Rachel Shtruzler, Mindl Kraut, Feiga Shpeikhler, a comrade from the Kibbutz, Reiz'keh Zucker, a comrade from the Kibbutz, Sima Nickelsburg, Henya Herbstman.*
Sitting on the Bottom, Right: *Henya, the Sofer's [daughter], Leibusz Cohn, Chana Turess.*
Sent to us by Moshe Friedlander, Netanya, ISRAEL

Page 277: *The HaPoel Sport Club*

Page 280: *Division A of HaShomer HaTza'ir*

Page 283: *An Untitled Picture of Three Young Girls*

The defining character traits, and profile of Tomaszow youth, born in the years 1916-17-18 – the Zionist youth movement, the progeny of defined processes, and of actual need – from which Tomaszow suckled its spiritual and intellectual nourishment – the *Yavneh* School – *'Szkola Powszecna'* – the municipal Polish Gymnasium – *HeHalutz* – *HaPoel* – '*Betar* and *Menorah*,' '*HaShomer HaTza'ir*, and *Shomria*, *'Maccabi' 'HaPoel HaMizrahi'* and '*HaShomer HaDati*,' '*Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael*,' '*Bund* and SKP' martyred youth – martyrdom and heroism.

It causes the heart to bleed, and the hand to tremble, when one simply sets down the title of this work, 'The Jewish Youth in the City of Tomaszow Lubelski,' especially when I know that this companion endeavor in the Yizkor Book has to serve as a monument to the dear Tomaszow young people, the largest part of which were brought to their end by all manner of bizarre deaths by the bestial hand of Hitler, with the help of his allied Polish partners in murder, who themselves, have no small part in the terrifying extermination of the best of Polish Jewry – its youth.

The youth that was born in 1916,1917 and 1918, on the eve of the end of The First World War, in my hometown of Tomaszow Lubelski, is well-known to me. Therefore, I wish to underscore a number of character traits, the genuineness and loyalty of that youth, that it was given to me to act out the role of a comrade, principal and director in the Zionist youth and sport movements, and it is my deeper wish that, God forbid, I not err, and not overreact (out of sentiment) and not underrate, and I also offer a prayer that I be granted the proper skill in providing a correct assessment of this variegated cohort of young people, which concentrated itself into a variety of groups and circles, in a variety of pioneering and non-pioneering youth movements, and who have remained etched into my memory, and about whom I am permitted now to shed a tear and to lay a modest memorial on their unknown place of burial.

In Jewish life, this was a epoch of youth movements. If we are speaking of the Zionist movement, into which the larger percentage of young people were organized, we must underscore that the Zionist youth movement in a set measure, was the child of specific processes and actual needs. The need of the people and its desire for redemption gave birth to the youth movement. The youth revolted against the Diaspora, it strived to achieve a new and independent way of life, and it brought forth the fateful transformation: We do not have to forget that the members of BILU[88] were also young people and that the Second and Third *Aliyah* brought enthusiastic, effervescent, aggressive and stormy young people, with an unbounded commitment to their ideal. The tens of thousands of *Halutzim* that came after them in the years of the twenties and thirties , later put forth their handiwork with enthusiasm and zealousness, and thanks to their commitment of soul, the foundation for the renewed Jewish State was put down.

I am acquainted with tens of young people from Tomaszow, and I have met with many of them in my two visits to Israel in 1951 and 1961, who armed with the pioneering ideal, committed themselves to the work of building up [the country], and to the builders, of what afterwards became the Land of Israel. And today, they live among that fortunate part of the Israeli populace which has fused itself to the new Israeli reality, some in the city, others on a *moshav*, and yet others on a *kibbutz*.

– From whence did that youth draw its spiritual suckling, and pioneering inspirations, and in general, its entirely deeper awareness and higher intelligence than the [regular] youth of Tomaszow, whose larger percentage now lives in the Land of Israel, and others in the well-rooted Jewish *yishuv* in North America, and in the new Jewish suburbs of South America, especially Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay – from where did it come?

Here, we must start at the very beginning. Here, we come to the chapter called 'The *Yavneh* School' (Formerly called the *Torah VoDa'ath* School). Despite the fact that yours truly, just like others of my friends, rebelled ideologically against the first essentials and principles of the ideological direction and course of the *Mizrahi Yavneh* School, I must recognize and with a feeling of gratitude, that the *Yavneh* School planted in us values, armed us with Jewish knowledge, and nurtured and developed a Jewish persona in us.

Despite the fact that we lived in an atmosphere of total *Yiddishkeit*, in full-blooded Jewish homes, with a Jewish way of life, with Jewish content, it was necessary to develop in us children and original sense of independence, and an awareness of Jewish lore, and this was achieved through the [study of] *Tanakh*, Talmud, Jewish faith, and the spiritual and moral values of Jewry, apart from the secular studies such as the natural sciences, mathematics, physics, chemistry, the Polish language, and other studies which were taught at the *Yavneh* School. I recall having mastered enough Hebrew to acquire the right key with which, a great portion of my friends today, could open the gates of the Hebrew literature. It seems to me that our very broad acquaintance with the *Tanakh*, made a deep impression on us children, and shined forth from our childlike souls. Knowledge of the Land of Israel occupied a very important place in the *Yavneh* School. To this day,

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88 The acronym of the Hebrew phrase, ***Bet Yaakov Lekhu V'Neylka*** [Let the House of Jacob go forth and walk (Isaiah 2:5)]. This was an organization founded in Russia in 1882, after the outbreak of the pogroms at that time. Although the BILU movement, failed completely its vision of Jewish cooperative farms was carried out very successfully a few decades later by the *kibbutz* and *moshav* movements. Ever since, the BILU dream of Jews living and supporting themselves in their own homeland has been regarded as one of the important forerunners of the international Zionist movement which Theodor Herzl organized fifteen years later.

I hide and strenuously keep safe the first picture album that was given to me. Already at that time, I saw the wonder of the construction of the treasures of the future of the Land of Israel. Who among us can forget the modest (but for us children a treasure) purses with the *Tu B'Shevat* fruits from the Land of Israel.

Hundreds of Jewish children, who imagined themselves as the future youth, were educated at the *Yavneh* School. The school worked its influence on us, such that the historical tie to the Land of Israel would become embodied in us, and so that later on, we would become the advocates, and leaders in the various youth movements enumerated above.

It is worth mentioning that there even was an attempt to found a *Tarbut* School in our city. I, personally, was involved with this organization, and if my memory does not mislead me, I developed an understanding with my former teacher, Joel Kaufman (he was a teacher in the *Yavneh* School, and also a bookkeeper, but I do not know his fate). We even already had a seal, and had interested a group of people, however, due to the fact that I was so intensely involved as the head of the *HaShomer HaTza'ir* Chapter, and my preparing myself to emigrate to Argentina in 1935, the process of organization stretched out for a long time. Before I emigrated to Argentina, I left the seal and the documented organization plans with the teacher Kaufman. It appears that the *Tarbut* School was never established.

This said, the *Yavneh* School was the important force that revealed the great light that resides in the Jewish heritage, and that planted a respect for the substance of a Jewish way of life into our young children's hearts, that deepens our understanding of the Hebrew language and literature, (it was not necessary to study Yiddish – everyone spoke Yiddish), and for us revealed (even if by means of older pedagogic methods), the eternal value and vision of the Jewish prophets and indirectly drew us closer to the work of rejuvenation and the Land of The Patriarchs.

Not all of the children were educated at the Yavneh School. A rather large percentage of children, I think because of poverty, because of not being able to afford tuition, attended the Tomaszow Polish *Volksschule* (*Szkola Powszecna*). It also happened that before the time of my religious education, I attended the 7th grade of the *Powszecna* School. The Tomaszow Polish *Volksschule* was located in a very suitable building. It made an impression on us, the classrooms, the laboratories, the work halls where one studied carpentry, the modern furniture, the painted walls, and the extraordinary cleanliness, exactly the opposite of the *Yavneh* School, which always found itself in rented homes, not appropriate for a school. The *Powszecna* School was literally in the woods, outside of the city, far from the tumult and hubbub of the *shtetl*. The teachers in the school were certainly certified. The teachers in the *Yavneh* School were in large part autodidactic. By contrast, I recall that the teachers in the *Powszecna* School, the school whose striving was yet to 'Polonize' the Jewish minority, and the impact of the teachers in consonance with their objective, was a negative on us children. It was not because we were Jewish children, and because of some predisposition did not want to accept their instruction and education, but rather because their orientation was not a clear one. They did not understand, and did not find the way to awaken in us student the drive and understanding for education. Like generations before us, we learned under compulsion, and out of fear of physical punishment. It was rare that a teacher was beloved by us, the same with Jews and Christians. We recall teachers who slept and snored through lectures. We dragged yet another Christian teacher, out of the mud one night, totally drunk. The shop teacher (carpentry) and the teacher of our class, would, every now and then say: *chorob na moich zydkow* (to hell with my little Jews).

Those teachers were weak in the force and commitment to education. The various pedagogical methods of education were alien to them in general. They had the teaching program before them, not taking into account

the kind of children, with a student's mentality, with their skill in absorption, their physical frailty, their lack of focus, and did not adapt themselves to the character of the children, to their age. The teacher had only one objective: to get through his lesson plan by all means....

We recall a sympathetic teacher only rarely. To this, we have to add the pestilential anti-Semitic ambience that reigned in the school, which almost had a Jewish majority. I cannot erase those anti-Semitic representations, and mocking of Jews [that took place] from my thoughts, in front of a majority of Jewish students, before the Christmas holiday, when a teacher, in the shop chased after one of us Jewish boys with a saw, and injured the student with the saw nearly cutting off his hand.

And so, we, the Jewish youth of Tomaszow in the country of Poland grew up in the same way as Jewish generations did for hundreds of years, with a justifiable enmity towards our own country, which conducted a policy of discrimination towards Jewry, and against Jewish youth. Accordingly, we young people had to manifest extraordinary stubbornness and nationalistic self-worth, and this, perhaps, was a stronger reason for the organization of a Jewish school movement of our own, which started out in Poland as a small brook, and grew into a wide river.
The municipal Polish Gymnasium was a great attractive force. Classes, graduation, university, a sort of enchanting net. And I can recall the envy that was elicited among us towards the couple of Jewish Gymnasium students, [envy towards] their uniforms, and in general to their opportunity to study at the Gymnasium, in the modern, literally luxurious building. Only those children with means could aspire to stud at the Gymnasium. This, Gymnasium youth, already spoke only in Polish, they also attended class on the Sabbath (in the *Powszecna* School the Jewish children did not attend on the Sabbath).

This 'Gymnasium Group; held itself apart from the rest of the young people, and did not come to the youth organizations, simply waiting for the good fortune of graduation.

It was not a little that the small number of students at the Gymnasium had to withstand from their Christian comrades. However, they swallowed their tears, and studied on. A number of the students made quite meaningful careers. A portion of those who survived Hitler's hell, 'smoking embers rescued from the fire,' met up with one another in the Land of Israel. From others, news was received that they became prominent personalities in North America, and many of them shared in the bitter fate of the entirety of Jewish youth in Poland...

As previously mentioned, the largest portion of Tomaszow [Jewish] youth was in the *Halutz* youth movement, and with all, without exception regarding political persuasion, from *Betar,* which sang 'From Dan to Beersheba, and from Gilead to the Sea,' to the *HeHalutz* and *HaShomer HaTza'ir* movements, whose solution was in Brenner's [poem] '*Af Al Pi Kheyn,*' swimming against the tide, yet, all sang 'The Chain Has Not Yet Been Broken,' that stretches from generation to generation. This was a song of the highest spiritual accord, from these young people, which even among the minimally aware, was instinctively rooted in Jewish history. And those that were more aware, who understood the concept of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and had a deep-seated belief that only the dark earth and Jewish territory can save the Jewish world. The Jerusalem on Earth must be a foreboding of the Heavenly Jerusalem. It is necessary to recall the *HeHalutz* [organization] here, which united the ardor and joy of the religious, and almost Hasidic Tomaszow, with the creative impetus and faith of the pioneering youth.

As I remember it, *HeHalutz* was the first, largest, and most visible youth movement in the city, which attracted the best of the youth into its ranks. This was a cohort of the young that was several years older than

my generation. I recall that we looking up to them as if they were an higher intellect.

HeHalutz had [within it] the sport club, *HaPoel,* where I happened to have the opportunity, for a while to be the secretary. This sport club had visibility in the city, because of its serious standing with the non-Jewish sport clubs. As another plus, it is worth recollecting: the young people of the 'lower classes' were drawn into *HaPoel,* from the side streets of Tomaszow. For the sake of the truth, this was a segment of the youth with no awareness, and whose capacity wee as draggers. A bit at a time, it was possible to mature these young people, by organizing them into programmed discussions, in which I did not participate in a minor degree.

The second youth organization to be established, in chronological order, was *Betar* (*Brit Trumpeldor*), by the revisionist movement '*Brit HaTzaHa"R.*'

Betar was established as a movement in the conventional mode. It is possible that the attractive insignia that teased the soul, induced people to join. Something here had the smell of a different discipline, with military marches an 'glory.' The Land of Israel was ringed by Arabs, the greatest enemies of the Jews, and it is only with the sword that the land will be able to be liberated, so we will have a Land of Israel of our own. 'In blood and Fire Judah fell, and in blood and fire Judah will rise.' And why fight for a little Land of Israel, why not for a large Land of Israel on both sides of the Jordan? This ideology appealed to, and captured the hearts of, a large part of the youth.

The emotionally laden articles in the revisionist organ '*Die Welt,*' from the head of *Betar*, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, were discussed and interpreted: The Land of Israel on both sides of the Jordan, almost three times the size of Belgium and it would encompass a population of over twelve million Jews. A large army must be created to protect and secure the life of this new, large country. The revisionist party was opposed to class warfare, and therefore it was for one class of Jews, all united. Therefore it needed to fight the left-wing Histadrut which divided the people, creating a working class, and carries out strikes. Strikes were a transgression, because they disrupt the building of the nation. We are all socialists. We are in agreement with the just socialist ideal, but this is a matter for later. When we will have a land of our own, we will later on fight to implement socialism in the new Land of Israel, – so argued the enthusiastic young people, who displayed their new ideology and belief with marches, and demonstrations with insignias, over the streets of Tomaszow,

A severe crisis, resulting from the murder of Chaim Arlozorov and the Stavsky Trial added to the ranks of *Betar.* That same *Betar* youth began to take an interest in reading interpretive material about the initiatives and ways of the Betar ideology, and after long and serious discussions, a mass exodus began from the *Betar* movement.

At that time, a group arrived from the *HaShomer HaTza'ir* movement and 'Kibbutznik' boys and girls appeared in the streets with axes and saws. *HaShomer HaTza'ir* opened a training center in Tomaszow.

The disoriented and confused young people, that had received their first enthusiastic Zionist education in *Betar*, and left that movement disappointed, became the first seed, the core of the first *HaShomer HaTza'ir* chapter in Tomaszow.

The intelligent young men and women who provided the training, found *HaShomer HaTza'ir* on the principles of preparation [sic: training]. And just as it had bubbled, resounded and frothed with young people, before in the Betar chapter, it bubbled in the newly created chapter of *HaShomer HaTza'ir.* The young people are being educated in the spirit of Zionist pioneering activity. The training center serves as a living

example, preparing its members to 'Fulfilment' to implement the Zionist ideal not with solutions and demonstrations, but with deeds.

The young people become imbued through and through with exceptional fervor, and with personal pioneering preparedness. Also, a form of preparation for training begins, to which many are eager to travel.

The *HaShomer HaTza'ir* movement did not have full legality in the entirety of Poland, but only in specific parts of the country. There were cities where *HaShomer HaTza'ir* needed to operate under a sport club, '*Shomria.*' And such was the case also in Tomaszow. We had to find direct and indirect ways to exist legally, but the police already found a way to shut down the local.

I recall that we had organized a Trumpeldor Academy. The secret police came and drove off the large assembly of young and old that had gathered, and arrested the person who was leading the event, and shut down the local. I, the minor, was then the head of the local, and as a result, among those arrested.

At a second opportunity, I traveled as an emissary to Laszczow in order to organize a chapter for *HaShomer HaTza'ir*, and there the police arrested me as well, and sent me back to Tomaszow. At that time, I was still a minor. The ideological battle among the youth movement in Poland was great, and it was spoken on both sides that the other movement had informed on us.

Also, *Betar* had a sport club, called '*Menorah.*' The activity was a considerably reduced one, and with the reduction in the group of the young people, this sport group was nearly dissolved.

For a small amount of time, a sport club called '*Maccabi*' existed. In the interest of the truth, I cannot remember any special activity that is worth recalling. I do not remember which cohort of young people rallied around '*Maccabi.*'

A very limited number of young people realized their outlet through '*HaShomer HaDati.*' and in reality, they drew their reserve from the one big and important school, *Yavneh.* But, somehow, this reserve dissipated, and the chapter dried out. On one side, the young revolted, going off to other youth movements, and from the other side, the small coterie of loyalists who remained, grouped themselves around '*HaPoel HaMizrahi*' which had the *Mizrahi* spirit.

When we would encounter a reduced number of young people from '*HaShomer HaDati,*' their difference from other young people consisted of the fact that they wore Jewish caps. Only boys would show up on the central Lvov street, in contrast with the other movements, where boys and girls would stroll about together. These young people were very sympathetic, self-effacing in their gait, when they would stroll by on a Sabbath street with languorous tranquility and elicited respect for themselves. They were the proud sons of the stiff-necked, who were ready to live proudly and die for their Jewishness, and for the permanence of all Israel.

I recollect the young people of the *Agudat Yisrael* party that called themselves '*Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael,*' as if in a dream. It might be that their number, as a proportion of the entire Tomaszow youth was not small. But we did not see them any longer. We did not encounter them. They were concentrated in the *shtiblakh* that were very closely allied ideologically. Those that based their self-actualization on the Jewish religious ethic, that God is their source, the objective of every moral striving, that one need only fulfill the commandment, 'and thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might,' and

that our love for Him makes us spiritually happy. This love is a logical necessity for those young people, but in order that such love not be fruitless, they were instructed in their community *shtibl* way of life, alongside a page of the *Gemara*, and in their discussions, which were carried on according to their take on the world in relation to their Jewish religious integrity.
The *Bund* as well, the deeply rooted culture party in Tomaszow, also had a youth group with the acronym SKP.

The economic struggle of the small labor party in Tomaszow, thanks to the *Bund*, becomes a school for education for the political activity of the workers, and awakens a striving in them to educate themselves. Because of this, the *Bund* had the biggest library in the city.

The economic strikes become a political school for the workers of the city, and the cultural ascent comes together with the growth that arises from the conflict between them.

As a legacy, the Bundist political organization took over the tradition of celebrating the First of May. This celebration was thought of as a measurement tool with which one measured the growth and increase in the working masses.

We recall, on one side, the festive air of the First of May [celebrations] in the street, and from the other side, the fear-laden atmosphere that reigned because of demonstrations, police intervention, arrests and beatings with the leadership of the authorities. I especially remember the youth leaders of the Bund, during the First of May demonstrations. Buttoning the red flowers, running with the red flag, their solutions: Freedom to strike, Freedom of speech and press, Higher wages, Eight hour workdays, etc.

Understand that it was the working class youth that was attracted to the Bundist youth organization, SKP. [These were] the children of various tradespeople. Thanks tot he large Bundist Yiddish library, the young people had a place where to get together, and the opportunity to educate themselves in the Yiddish language.

During the nice summer days, we, the young people of all walks of life, and from various ideologies, would gather together in the dense forests around the city. The vigorous singing of a poor, but happy and joyous youth would echo from all corners of the forest, which went, with hand locked on shoulder, went freely, without care, and filled the forest with the joy of young people, as only young people can do, who are happy and full of energy.

The May strolls (*Mayovkas*) can especially not be forgotten. We got up with the rising sun, and long rows of young people stretched into the forests. Almost every Sabbath, at the beginning, I had the satisfaction of giving talks about Zionist history, utopian socialism, and with another smaller group, reading chapters from Professor Klausner's *Jesus Christ*. Who could at that time conceive, that the thousand-year old Jewish fortress in Poland would be excised by its roots. Who will be able to document the martyrdom of the Jewish children in Poland for the coming generations? How can we forget in these pioneers, from all walks of life, who under the most severe conditions, went on with their training, their life as pioneers, and represented the most significant resistance force of Jewish Poland, and played the principal role in confronting the German beast?

How can we forget the observant young people who suffered so much, and who carried God's name with such merit. Under the staccato fo German gunfire, their '*Shema Yisrael!*' penetrated the heavens, and sent a shudder through their torturers. One is forbidden to utter even a halfway critical word against those who

were forced [by circumstance], and put on a crucifix around their neck, and who quietly uttered a prayer on a Sunday, before their extermination by Hitler.

How can we forget the Jewish daughters of *HeHalutz, HaShomer HaTza'ir, Betar, Bund*, who went in the way of nameless martyrs of the crusades...

Has there ever been a sacrifice
Higher or more holy?
Has it happened that someone died
Nobler, in a more terrifying way? (A. Liesin 'The Nameless')

All of them, these, the pursued, the driven, the murdered, the tortured, the cut down, they – these – the young people who have been described, they deserve the foremost place in the pantheon of martyrs of the days of Hitler and his accomplices, may their names be erased.

Remember! Let us remember these young people of martyrdom and heroism, who all went to their death together. Let all of their names be alight from generation to generation.

The Yavneh School

By Aryeh Arbesfeld

Page 287: *The Teaching Panel at the* Yavneh *School*

Page 289: *A Group Picture of the Yavneh School*

It is my desire to summarize the history of my educational institution which was the one that instilled in me from its spirit, and which left its stamp on the conduct of education in our city of Tomaszow.

Until the year 1915, our city was under the rule of the Russian Czar, who suppressed all freedom and advance with a brutal hand. And it was with the help of a number of 'respectable' Jews who were informers that they controlled the Jewish street. They kept us under a surveillance of 'seven eyes' so that God forbid, not a ray of enlightenment might penetrate. There was a instance, when there was a desire to establish a library, and they advised the *Nachalnik*,[89] and explained to him what was needed, and he promptly forbade the establishment of the library. Especially, –these 'respectable folk,' – fought against the Hebrew language. They argued that Zionism represented nothing short of apostasy, and the Hebrew language is the path that leads to Zionism. The young generation would educate itself in secret rooms, in which one room served as a residence, and a kitchen for the family of the Rabbi, and a location to educate children. The more venerable of the Zionists, who lived underground for this entire period, out of fear of the regime, constantly dreamt of a modern school, although they were without means to change the situation.

In the year 1915, when the Russian Army turned back and retreated, and our city went over under Austrian rule, matter decidedly changed. Austrian rule brought a bit of liberty and democracy, autocratic rule was broken. Organizations according to their particular persuasions began to take form. General Zionist institutions were established, the *Mizrahi, Tze'irei Tzion*, etc. Young people began to stream towards the various groups. A national initiative was started, with a Zionist emphasis, donations were collected for *Keren Kayemet*, etc.

The first undertaking that the members of *Mizrahi* set for themselves above all else was to establish a modern Hebrew School, that apart from general studies, would be able to inculcate the children with the principles of Judaism from its inception up to our own day. To bring back the Hebrew language to life in their mouths, and to prepare them so they could join the ranks of those wanting to bring the Zionist concept to reality.

In the year 1918, the friends, Ch. Lehrer, Z. Kawenczuk, Y. Lakhar, A. Hochman, D. Y. Szparer, to be separated for wishes of long life, along with A. Lederkremmer, ה"י, M. Ratzimer ה"י, W. Lederkremmer ה"י, and others, gathered to establish a school named '*Mizrahi*,' They rented two rooms at the home of one of the *balebatim*, and invited Mr. Gottleib in the capacity of a teacher of Hebrew and began classes. Chaim Joseph Lehrer, a young bachelor of about 20 years of age, full of zest, youth and idealism, educated in *Bet HaMedrash*, which had filled his being with the new Hebrew literature, influenced by the literature that proposed the Zionist ideal and the realization of Zionism, saw the vista of his life, and took upon himself the direction of the school. He committed himself with his entire heart and soul to the development of the school, and his labors bore fruit.

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89 The Police Constable

Before the school began to get organized in earnest, it was in the summer of 1918, and a fire broke out in the home of F. Baum, and it spread quickly and speedily and consumed about 80 percent of the Jewish homes, among them the home that housed the school. They rented two rooms from A. Eidelsberg, upstairs, and the condition of the residents of the citizenry was very bad, because everyone was worried about putting a roof over their own heads, and tuition was not paid on time. The school closed for lack of income.

In the meantime, the resident population bestirred itself, and began to rebuild their ruins, and it was at this time that Mr. Hirsch Winder arrived and proposed that if he would be paid a sum of ten thousand crowns, he will allocate three rooms from his home, and will dedicate them to the school.

At that same time, Rabbi Graubard was in our town, the Rabbi of the city of Stabrow, who had traveled here on request of the central office in Warsaw to organize the *Mizrahi*. He energized the members of the *Mizrahi* to confront this issue, and also proposed that his son would serve as a Hebrew teacher. Under his oversight, the required sum was collected: Yaakov Lederkremmer donated 1000 crowns, Mordechai Ratzimer donated 500 crowns, and the remaining members donated lesser amounts. The deal was sealed with Mr. Winder, and the school was opened. The following were invited to teach: R' Benjamin Tepler, Graubard, N. D. Glass, and Heinrich Edelstein. The students began to flow into the school because the parents for some time, clamored for such a modern Hebrew school.

However, Mr. Graubard, who was a young man well enlightened in secular and Hebrew studies, importantly deep, but was very weak in modern didactic methods, and the great hopes that had been pinned on him, that he will be the organizer and securer of the school, because of this, were disappointed.

At a meeting of the committee, it was decided to send D. Y. Szparer to Warsaw,. In order to invite a teacher more suited to this undertaking. After the passage of some time, Mr. Huberman was sent at the behest of the central office in Warsaw. This man was weak physically, but strong in spirit, a master of experience in his approach to the instruction of the child, and he understood the soul of a child, and understood the child's temperament, committed with heart and soul to his work. He was assisted by Yeshayahu Firger, who was just a beginner in teaching, but who by nature had a good instinct for pedagogy, and under his oversight the number of pupils reached close to one hundred.

The members of the *Mizrahi* hoped that the school will do famously, and will continue to go up and up, and just at that time, the rage of the Bolshevik-Polish War fell upon them.

When the Germans and Austrians were vanquished by the [European] Allies and America. President Wilson publicized the well-known terms, that the Polish nation headed by Marshall Pilsudski was established. At the same time, the Bolsheviks invaded Poland for purposes of reaching Western Europe. The Polish regime went to battle against them, in order to interdict their invasion. The government began to draft the young into military service for war. The burden of the draft fell on all of Poland, except for Eastern Galician that had previously been appended to Poland. With this, everyone who tried to avoid the draft, deserted to Eastern Galician. When Mr. Ch. Y. Lehrer was called up to serve, he called Mr. Huberman and advised him: It is undoubtedly known to you that I will be deserting to Galician out of fear of the army. In this, I take off all responsibility that I have to you, and if it is in your will to remain and keep the school going, may a blessing come to you, and if not, the permission is in your hand to leave our city. Mr. Huberman, who had sunk much energy into the development of the school, and saw the blessings of his effort, was pained to the heart to leave it during these days of duress, and decided to remain. What this Jewish man suffered through in those days is difficult to describe. All the people who worked for the school were spread out and away, the young

parents who had been drafted into the army, or deserted to Galician did not pay tuition. He had no one to turn to pour out the aggravation in his heart. In the year 1930, I ran into him during my graduation studies in Warsaw, that we completed together, and he complained to me about those days, as being the most difficult days of his life. After a short while went by, Mr. Ch. Y. Lehrer returned home, and the first thing he did was collect a sum of money for Mr. Huberman. And so, he forgot those days of anxiety, and approached his sacred duty with renewed energy, and the school returned to its normal path and continued to make progress and develop.

Hen the Poles succeeded in drive off the Russians, and signed a peace treaty with them, national life began to organize themselves. A legal government arose that was formed as a result of elections to the Sejm in Warsaw. In each and every city, legal governments arose, Polish schools were opened, and the education ministry looked after the dissemination of Polish culture, among the Jewish citizens as well. The independent Jewish school was like thorns in their eyes, and the educational ministry began to assault the Jewish school. They did not rest of keep still until they could find a fatal flaw: since the children are so thoroughly involved with their studies, and that is injurious to their health, it would be necessary to close it. The school was closed.

Ch. Y. Lehrer and his comrades did not say 'We give up.' After many strenuous efforts, they received permission to open a new school, named *'Torah VoDa'ath.'* They organized an educational committee to maintain oversight regarding the conduct of instruction, consisting of the following: Ch. Y. Lehrer, Joseph Lakhar, D. Y. Szparer, separated for long life, and Sh. Zilberman ל"ז. Students began to flow to the school, and their numbers reached 150, approximately. Three rooms were too tight to hold them, so they rented additional rooms in the neighborhood, and the school reached six grades. More graduate teachers were invited from outside the local area, who were replaced over time.

I will cite those teachers in the school, who came from our town, during the time of its existence: R' Benjamin Tepler, Shmuel Blei, Meir Klarman, Nahum Dov Glass, Yeshayahu Firger, Joel Kaufman, Heinrich Edelstein, Ephraim Schuldiner, Lipa Goldman, and to be separated for long life, David Shapiro, and Aryeh Arbesfeld.

When the school began to develop, and from time to time, many issues would arise that required special effort, and Ch. Y. Lehrer could not commit himself except to the school, because national and public life expanded, and the work on behalf of Zionism demanded its own heroic amount of effort, to educate the youth to Zionism and pioneering, as well as the local institutions, Mr. Ch. Y. Lehrer took part in all of these, and his will could be felt in every place, his common sense, wisdom and force. Because of this, he looked for an individual that he could depend on to lead the school in the spirit of its founders. And this man was found. It was my brother Yaakov, ל"ז.

In the year 1925, they proposed to my brother ל"ז, that he assume the leadership of the school. In accepting the leadership of the school, my brother committed himself to the school with his entire soul. Additionally, every flame in his soul, the ardor of a *Hasid* and his organizational talent, were dedicated to the school. He attended to it day and night, to its welfare, and securing its basis. There was nothing of value unless it was of use to the school. He expended large amounts of money, and with this, he put the school committee into debts of thousands of guldens, in order to put the school in a condition that would be suitable to the formation of the soul of a Jewish child.

The classrooms, spread over different houses placed a burden on the conduct of instruction. And, in addition,

the rooms involved were not suitable as school classrooms. With this, it was decided to find an appropriate structure for the school. And in this regard, Mr. Adler (Lettar) proposed that he will have a skeleton of two stories, with a large parcel surrounding it, on the Krasnobrod *Gasse*, which he will lease to the committee, on the condition that they will finish it, and make it suitable for use as a school. The school committee accepted his proposal. They borrowed 2000 gulden from the banks, and from private individuals, and finished the building. According to the conditions of our city, this was a vary suitable school building, spacious rooms, well lit, and attractive. Surrounding it, was a parcel that was large enough for play. In the passage of time, the committee borrowed additional funds, and with it, added structures, and opened a kindergarten under the direction of a graduate head of kindergarten.

This building sunk the committee into a level of debt from under which they were unable to get out. They managed like sharp merchants, They would borrow from the *Gemilut Hasadim* to pay the banks, and then borrow from the banks to retire their debt with the *Gemilut Hasadim*, heaven forbid, returning yet again. With the outbreak of The Second World War in 1939, the committee debts were close to three thousand gulden.

Approximately in 1926, a *Mizrahi* center for schools was established in Warsaw by the name '*Yavneh.*' At that time, the school became a branch of this central organization, and assumed the name, '*Yavneh.*'

The path of development of the school was not a bed of roses. Opponents arose on the left and the right. The *Hasidim* saw in it an abandonment of the traditional received lore, 'to begin teaching reading to a child without previously teaching the *aleph-bet*, is plain madness.' To begin teaching the Torah from Genesis and not Leviticus, this is a rejection of explicit *Midrash*: 'Let them come pure, and engage in that which is pure.' Matters reached the point, that once, when the Rebbe of Radzyn visited our town, he assembled the important people of the town, and demanded that they take their children out of the school. And the *Hasidim* that followed him feared going against the word of their '*Tzaddikim*,' and withdrew their children from the school. I do not wish to enumerate here the names of those people who contested and damaged the school, seeing that many of them are found here with us in The Land of Israel, and enjoy recognition for their work on behalf of the school. Also, members of the *Bund*, who fought against Zionism, and the Hebrew language, attempted to stand in the way of the steps of the school. When the municipal council ruled in favor of an assessment to support the school, the three *Bund* members of the council voted against the subsidy, arguing that a Hebrew school is opposed to the national interest of the Jews, in accordance with their views. And in connection with receiving a standing subsidy from the city and the Jewish community, the school was in a constant struggle for its existence. For, in order to maintain the school on the sort of high cultural plane desired, required large sums of money, that were simply impossible to cover from tuition alone. However, from time to time, some financial support was received, especially when Ch. Y. Lehrer was selected as the Chair of the committee and the community, however the kill didn't satisfy the lion, and as I described above, the committee was immersed in debt, and had to cover these with loans.

The school fulfilled the promise of those who founded it. The spirit of fundamental Judaism hovered over all conduct of study. The air between its walls was redolent with the light of the Land of Israel. The children suckled from the roots of heroism in the history of our people, that are soaked in blood and tears, and prepared themselves out of yearning to join the pioneers that were building The Land. I can recall how the *Keren Kayemet* would connect the children of the Diaspora with the children living in the Land of Israel, in exchange of correspondence, and occasionally, when a letter would be received frm one of the children in Ein-Hador, Kfar Yekhezkiel, etc., and we would read it publicly, how their eyes would sparkle in longing for the Land of Israel, as was said by R' Yehuda HaLevi: I am in the West, but my heart is in the East.

Its influence was also very great outside of the walls of the school. Those who were active in Zionism, and who worked through all ways to instill the Zionist concept among the masses, and here on a celebration day, or a national holiday, when the children of the school would appear with the national flag in their hands, and a Hebrew song on their lips, they worked especially hard to disseminate the Zionist ideal more than the several talented speakers who strove on behalf of the many. I can recall one occasion, when I was strolling with the children in the street, and they were chattering among themselves in Hebrew, and a lady said: 'Aryeh, listen to what I will tell you, if the children of Israel speak the holy tongue among themselves, it is a sign that our redemption is near.'

It is worth underscoring, a matter that constantly puzzled me, how many young men, the disciples of the *Bet HaMedrash*, to whom modern didactic methods were unknown, and the miraculous books of pedagogues were not available to them, and despite this, they succeeded, relying on their own energies, to devise a curriculum of study, that lacks nothing in comparison to any curriculum here in our Land. Apparently, the natural instinct and the national impetus they had, was sufficient to show them the way.

In enveloping the terrible tragedy that befell us in the terrifying *Shoah*, with our souls, let us elevate the memory of this miniature Temple that was destroyed, and is no more.

The Leaders of Mizrahi

By Ch. Y. Lehrer

Page 295: ***The Founders of*** **Mizrahi**

Sitting from the Right: `Sholom Zilberman, Eliezer Lederkremmer, Mordechai Blank, and Abraham Hochman

Standing: Mordechai Ratzimer, Chaim Joseph Lehrer, and Yuda Goldman

Page 298: ***The Departure of Bezalel Bizinsky to Israel***

Sitting from the Right: Nahum Ratzimer, Nahum Glass, Bezalel Bizinsky, and Yaakov Arbesfeld.

Standing from the Right: Simcha Hauled, Shmuel Hanarow, Shmuel Goldstein, and Joseph Singer

The institution of the *Mizrahi* had a large share the development of national life, and the Zionist movement in our city, after The First World War. In that regard, I wish to put up a memorial to my comrades הי"ד who, thanks to them, the *Mizrahi* institution rose, from the day of its establishment, to the day that the hand of *The Abrogator* by the Nazis, ימ"ש fell on them, to stand at the head of communal life in our city, and to be among those who did [substantive] deeds in all branches of the national rebirth and in the religious spirit

First and Foremost, R' Eliezer Lederkremmer

He was the scion of a well-branched family whose reputation extended beyond the limits of the city. The beginning of his community work was initiated many years before The First [World] War. Apart from his Jewish education, which he received in his childhood like all those of that generation, in Torah and Talmud, in the *Heder*, he also completed general studies, and knew the Polish and Russian languages, and on their

strength and his general secular capabilities, it provided him with the capacity, that in the days of the Czar, he was one of the leaders of the community, and one of its most aggressive activists, who did everything within his power to improve he religious life of the community, and he was always at odds with those who felt that all things new were forbidden to them. In his capacity as the Chair of the community during The First War, he was taken by the forces of the Czarist general Radko Dmitrov at the time of their retreat in 1915 – as a hostage, and in this manner ended up at that time in the middle of Russia with his only daughter, and he remained there until after the Bolshevik Revolution which then provided him with the opportunity to return home. Immediately upon his return, he joined the *Mizrahi* movement, in which he found a broadened field for his endeavors, and he assumed the leadership, and up to The Second World War, served as its Honorary President. At the first Conference of Polish Jewry after Poland was liberated, that was called by Mr. Greenbaum, he was unanimously selected as our city's representative to the Conference. With the establishment of the first community in accordance with the prevailing law of the land of Poland in 1924, he was elected as the Chair of the community, and stood at its head for several years. However, with the change in the political situation in Poland, after Pilsudski's revolt, and especially because of the many disputes in the community itself that disrupted normal work, he left public life, but remained interested in the work of the *Mizrahi* to his last day.

It is proper to take note of his sons, all of which stood at the head of the national rebirth: His firstborn son, R' Yaakov הי"ד, like his father, received a broadly based education. With the establishment of Mizrahi and the school, he was among the founders, and thanks to his financial support, we were able to open the school. And in the first years, he was among the most aggressive of the activists. His house was the mount to which all turned, Rabbis, *Hasidim*, intelligentsia, simple folk, all entered his home. His wife, Esther הי"ד was his partner in all charitable matters, and their house was open to every encumbered soul. His second son, Ary' Leib'l was one of the activists in the Mizrahi, and all of his spare hours were dedicated to the movement. His son Yitzhak הי"ד was one of the general heads of the Zionists.

R' Sholom Zilberman, הי"ד

The grandson of the Rabbi of Bilgoraj, R' Yaakov Mordechai Zilberman זצ"ל who was called the Genius of Macew, this Rabbi was one of the great Rabbinic personalities of Poland before the First World War. His love for the people of Israel, for the Torah of Israel, and all the saints of Israel, exceeded all bounds. He was educated on the lap of his grandfather, and with the establishment of *Mizrahi*, R' Sholom placed himself at its head, and he, with is understanding and good common sense, helped a great deal in disseminating the *Mizrahi* ideal among the ranks of the *Hasidim*. At all meetings and gatherings, in which he participated in almost all, everyone paid attention to what he had to say, his advice, and his ideas were always the compelling ones. He strove for his entire life to make *aliyah* to The Land, and in this regard, he sent his four sons, separated for long life, to The Land, but to our sorrow he himself never did. With the entry of the Nazis ימ"ש he left the city and crossed to the Russian side of the border. However, with the outbreak of the German-Russian war, the Nazis got him in the territory of Wolhynia.

R' Benjamin Tepler, הי"ד

R' Benjamin was a remarkable individual. He was a *Ger Hasid*, who was a scholar and made a living from this, as a teacher of Talmud with commentaries. Apart from his knowledge of the Talmud which was extensive, he was outstandingly fluent in secular matters, such as history, geography, and astronomy. It is superfluous to say that he was thoroughly familiar with *Tanakh* and the Hebrew language. But who would

have guessed that in the inner reached of this dear man could be found a boundless love for The Land of Israel, the rebirth of the people of Israel in its homeland. And I recall that during the time of The First World War, with the departure of the Czar's soldiers from Congress Poland – under whose rule the Zionist movement was illegal – at which time it was captured by the Germans and Austrians, the Zionist movement began to emerge from the underground. Those were the glory days of the movement. Each and every city established Zionist chapters of all persuasion. As can be understood, this did not skip over our city of Tomaszow. And when I approached a number of my comrades to establish a *Mizrahi* [chapter] in our city, most of whom were *Hasidim*, to whom the name '*Mizrahi*' was not even known, I looked for an individual who was mature, who would be able to influence them, that is to say, the Hasidic men who themselves were of more advanced years. At that time – I do not remember anymore who it was – one of my friends approached me and whispered in my ear to approach R' Benjamin Tepler, as he was an ardent lover of Zion. I knew who R' Benjamin was, I had on a number of other occasions, an opportunity to met him at the Yeshiva that had been established in Tomaszow before the war, in which he was one of the teachers, but except for this, had no relationship to him. Age was also a factor, since he was older than I by many years. I struggled with myself for several days, until I got up my courage, and then approached him to propose that he assume the responsibility of being one of the founders of *Mizrahi*. And how I was awed that he received me with such courtesy, and promised to do whatever was in his power. This, despite the fact that he himself did not believe that we would have much influence. He immediately went to work, and was one of the Jewish people who helped me to lay the foundation of the *Mizrahi* in our city. At the first committee meeting of the *Mizrahi*, he was elected as the Secretary, which position he discharge responsibly. With the establishment of the first *Mizrahi* school, he was appointed as a Talmud teacher. And he fulfilled this appointment with dedication for several years. At the second meeting of Mizrahi that took place immediately after Poland was liberated in the year 5679 [1919], he was elected, along with R' Yaakov Lederkremmer as officers. For a variety of reasons, he distanced himself from *Mizrahi* work after that, however, in his inner core, he continued to be an ardent lover of Zion, and every bit of good news gladdened his heart, and the opposite as well, and bad news, such as the Events [Hebron Riots] of 5689 [1929], the Fesfield decrees, caused him very great heartache. I wish to designate R' Benjamin as a raconteur. As a phenomenal expert on Jewish history, he loved to tell about some event or another, and it was a pleasure to listen to him, and how he communicated. It was not important what the subject was, whether it was the Dreyfus Affair, the dispute of R' Yaakov Emden and R' Jonathan [Eibeshutz] of Prague, and the like. It is worth recalling that he dedicated all his life to teaching simple folk in his spare time, whether *Mishna*, or *Agadot*, all free of charge.

R' Mordechai Ratzimer, ה"יד

From the day that *Mizrahi* was established, he dedicated his entire might and soul to it, and up to his last day, he was one of the most dedicated of the activists who worked for it. Of him, it can be said, that *Mizrahi* was his second home. He dedicated all of his free time to *Mizrahi*. Many times, when he returned from travel – his business was outside of the city – before he even went home, he stopped off at the *Mizrahi* to get a report. As I have already recalled, he dedicated himself to the movement, not only with his soul, but with the core of his energy to the extent that his working time permitted it. Every time that he returned from travel, and entered the school, the first question he had was whether or not their needed money, and when did they not have this need? His single desire was to make *aliyah* and build up The Land. In this regard, in 1924, he partnered in the acquisition of the land where Afula was built, together with other members of *Mizrahi*, but in the end, his situation worsened, and he could not realize his desire. Despite his difficult situation, he did not sell the parcel of land.

R' Mordechai Blank הי"ד

He was one of the first of the founders of Mizrahi, going back to 1917 at the time of the Austrian occupation, and he placed himself at the head of the work, and took an active part in all the endeavors of the Zionist movement. He was the first proponent of *Keren Kayemet L'Israel* in *Mizrahi*, but because of his difficult circumstances, which worsened considerably in the last days, especially his family situation, he was compelled to become one of the passive members, which aggravated him a great deal.

R' Pinchas Brass, הי"ד

One of the first of the founders of *Mizrahi*, and until his last day, he was a member of the committee, despite the fact that his time was scarce, because his livelihood came from being a baker, which occupied him both day and night, but despite this, he found a way to dedicate adequate time to the movement, and there practically was not a meeting of the committee in which he did not participate. He always had clear ideas, and in all questions, helped arrive at a conclusion.

R' Nahum Dov Glas , הי"ד

While he was yet young in days, he became attached to the Zionist concept, and because of this, he began to learn the Hebrew Language, on the strength that t that time, meaning before The First World War, this was a pipe dream. As can be understood, that with the founding of *Mizrahi,* he entered it at the top among its leaders. And with the founding of the school in 1918, at the time of the Austrian occupation, he was appointed to the position of Teacher of Hebrew [language] and *Tanakh*, and he dedicated himself to this work with his entire energy. But even with all this work, he did not neglect the remainder of the Zionist work of the *Mizrahi.* There was not a single undertaking of the *Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael* or the *Keren HaYesod*, and others, in which he did not take a leading part. And with his departure from the city to assume the position of teacher in Bilgoraj, *Mizrahi* lost a major force of aggressiveness and action. In the last of times, he was a teacher in Bichow, and it appears that there, he fell victim to the Nazis ימ"ש.

And finally, the most beloved and last, R' Yaakov Arbesfeld , הי"ד

One of the icons of public life in the city of Tomaszow, in the two final decades before the Holocaust. [He was] the organizer of the *Mizrahi* movement, and the center of the '*Yavneh*' School. He was born to his father, R' Yitzhak, set apart for long life, who resides with us in the Land [of Israel]. His father, at that time was one of the zealous *Belz Hasidim*, and one of the great opponents of the Zionist movement. He received his education just as did the other boys of his age, in a *Heder*, and in a Yeshiva, which took place before The First War, and his entry into the *Mizrahi* movement was a great surprise to us. I recall my transgressions today, by noting that it was on one of the evenings of the year 5681 [1921], when the students of the '*Yavneh*' School, then called '*Mizrahi*' organized a presentation at the school, which a that time was located in the home of R' Zvi Winder. And lo, in come those who were driven to see the presentation, and among them, the yong, skinny Yaakov. I knew him as the son of the zealot R' Yitzhak, since their home was across the way form the school, and at that time, I did not see in him as those who might be among those who would come to *Mizrahi,* despite the fact that the movement had been in existence for several years, and had already put down roots in the life of the city. I thought that he had come as an informer, in order that, on the morrow, he would be able to tell everything that he had seen in the *shtibl* of the *Belz Hasidim*, naturally with

distortions. I wanted to say to a number of the organizers that he be thrown outside, but one – I don't remember which one it was – whispered in my ear, that this young fellow is one of us. As you can understand, from that time on, I began to relate to him in a different manner. Weeks did not go by, and Yaakov entered the *Mizrahi* institution in a very impressive manner, however immediately with his arrival to us, not only to see, but to be seen, he entered into the Eastern Wall of the movement. He came immediately with his clear and focused mind. It appears that his ideas had crystallized within him quite a while before this, at the time when he was still among the 'hidden ones.' With his entry, he put himself at the head of '*Tze'irei Mizrahi*,' that rounded up the religious young people that were attracted to Zionism, and there was not an undertaking having to do with the young people for which he was not the living spirit. With the expansion of the 'Yavneh' School, the School Committee placed him in the position of Secretary, and Administrative Principal which positions he held until the end of the school which was destroyed with the invasion of the Nazis ימ"ש. Thanks to his aggressiveness, and particularly because of his total commitment, the school was able to survive, despite all of the difficulties that stood in its way, and particularly the difficult financial situation, but rather it expanded, and improved in all ways, to make itself into a recognized educational institution, not only by the Jewish community, but also by the examining institutions, whose [peering] eyes were always at their backs.

In his capacity as Secretary of the *Mizrahi* institution, all the work that involved connection with the many branches that evolved, fell on him, and he conducted it with great skill. It is permitted to say that no Zionist undertaking went on without his participation, and in which his influence could not be recognized – the influence of Mizrahi. He participate in almost all the national conclaves of the *Mizrahi*, and *Torah V'Avodah*. In the book of correspondence of Rabbi Nissenbaum זי"ע, that has recently been published, his picture can be found showing that he participated in a national *Mizrahi* convention. At the last municipal council meeting, he was selected to be a member of the council along with Leib'l Lederkremmer. And it was with great skill and tact that he guarded the interests of the Jews, notwithstanding the aura of anti-Semitism that suffused Poland in the final years before the War. He had influence on the direction of the city [government] and the Head of the city took his views seriously into account. Because of his circumstances of health, he did not want to leave the city to wander off into Russia, but the essential thought that he communicated to me, at the time he took leave of me, is that he sees no possibility of making aliyah to The Land of Israel from Russia, something that he doted on all of his days, and because of this, he remained together with the remainder of my friends that I recalled above. – May The Lord Take Vengeance on Their Behalf.

The Yeshiva of Novardok[90]

By Joseph Friedlander

In the first years of the 20's, when the Bolshevik authorities intensified their pursuit of Jewish religious institutions, the Yeshiva of Novardok which at that time had a network of its branches spread among many cities and towns in the Ukraine, Byelorussia, and partly also in the Russian heartland, transferred itself to Poland. This was accomplished in an illegal manner, by surreptitiously traveling during dark nights, in order not to be detected by the Russian border guards.

Arriving in Poland, the Yeshiva set itself a goal of establishing Yeshivas in the cities and towns of the nation. To accomplish this purpose, it established four central yeshivas: In Bialystok, in Warsaw, in Miedzyrzecz, and in Siemiatycze.

On an early morning after *Sukkot*, a turnout of an entire Yeshiva suddenly appeared in the *Hasidic Bet HaMedrash* in Tomaszow, which consisted of the Headmaster, a principal, two lesson directors, and about two tens of young men. Following the behest of its Bialystok central [school], the Ludomir [branch] had sent them to Tomaszow to establish a Novardok Yeshiva.

Despite the fact that, some time before this, a Novardok delegation, headed by the Ludomir Yeshiva Headmaster Rabbi R' Schraga Maggid ז"ל הי"ד, having petitioned in Tomaszow, and paved the way by the fact that a gathering was held in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, and a committee was created to take on and organize the Yeshiva, nevertheless, the appearance of the Yeshiva elicited a sensation in the city. People ran and stared in wonderment at the young men in their short jackets milling about the *Bet HaMedrash*, back and forth, during their study hour, and in loud intonation, rehearsing words and sayings from the books of tradition, without stop. Their mid-week praying was especially attractive, with a drawn-out keening tone of imploring, which could move a stone. Masses of listeners would assemble to their weekly evening service.

What impact did this event have in the field of education of the religious body of the city?

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[90] The Novardok Yeshiva in Novardok, then Lithuania, was one of the biggest and most important yeshivas in pre-World War II Europe, and a powerful force within the *Mussar* movement. The Yeshiva was established in 1896, together with a *Kollel* for married men, under the direction of Rabbi Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, an alumnus of the Kovno *Kollel* and pupil of Rabbi Israel Salanter. In the footsteps of his mentor, he was a staunch advocate of the *Mussar* approach. He was known as the *der Alter fun Novardok*, a Yiddish term meaning "the Elder of Novardok".

The Yeshiva opened with ten students. A few months later there were already fifty. A year after the yeshiva's establishment, great criticism was levelled at the study and practice of *Mussar*, and the opponents of that philosophy sought to close the Yeshiva. They didn't succeed. By 1899, the Yeshiva had swelled to 200 pupils.

After the Bolshevik takeover of Russia, *der Alter* ordered his students to cross the border into Poland. Many of the students were shot in the attempt; others were sent to Siberian prison camps, but six hundred made it across the border. The Novardok Yeshiva was re-established in Bialystok under the leadership of *der Alter's* son-in-law, Rabbi Abraham Yoffen, and it soon became the center of an entire movement. Following the doctrine of 'springs flowing outward,' in a few years Novardok established yeshivas all over the region, in major cities such as Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa Kherson, Nizhny Novgorod, Rostov-on-Don, Zhitomir, Berdichev, Tsaritsyn, Saratov, Plogid, Chernigov, Pinsk, Mogilev, Kamieniec-Podolski, Nikolaev, Balti and Of.

In order to provide a clear answer to this. We must first see what the state of Torah study looked like at that time.

If, up to the First World War, only the old-style *Heder* existed, and after completing *Heder* studies at the age of 12-13, boys by and large continued their studies in a variety of Hasidic *shtiblakh*, the situation changed fundamentally during the war, and afterwards.

With the disappearance of the Russian-Austrian border in the vicinity of the town, the latter obtained proximate access to the railroad at the Belzec station. This opened a wide portal to for [the town] to the surrounding world. If, for example, it was necessary to travel to the nearest station by oxcart, in Razowiec, which was a trek of several days, and was therefore an undertaking limited to few individuals, the city now came to life, having a rail station under their very nose after the war. And the populace took advantage of using these generous paths often, and in large numbers. Tomaszow was no longer a far-off little town, somewhere in a dank corner. Also, the yung people began to feel themselves confined by the walls of the *Bet HaMedrash*, and begins to travel out to the cities of the more liberated world, bringing back with them the inspiration for a rejuvenated activity in community issues. All manner of political parties also arrive in the city, and each organizes a youth division of its own. The entirety of community life is modernized. All the Hasidic *shtiblakh*, where the young people used to sit and study are emptied of this cohort. An exception to this is the *shtibl* of R' Yehoshua'leh, where a few young people who do not allow themselves to be swept up by the stream of modernization, find their place there, among the volumes of the *Gemara*, and other Holy Writ. In this way, R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl* remains as the single center for Torah [study] in the entire city. However, study there is conducted in the old style, on an individual basis. Each person studies alone, without a system, and without any oversight for the rather young boys, whether one actually learns, or one simply idles away the entire day, accomplishing nothing. This type of a learning situation can, naturally, have no attractive power with young people.

Most of the Jews of the city longed for the times of the not-too-distant past, when the sound of Torah [study] could be heard coming from all of the houses of study. However, they felt themselves helpless in this respect. Accordingly, the plan of the [Novardok] delegation, to organize a Yeshiva in the city, was therefore very much in line with what this community felt in its heart.

It was in the fall of 1925 when the Yeshiva was opened. The town committee, led by R' David Weitzman הי"ד and R' Mikhl Yuda Pflug הי"ד (of the rest that I remember, there were R' Moshe Weissleder ע"ה R' Yud'l Wagner and R' Gershon Rothenberg הי"ד) diligently threw themselves into the work of organization. Immediately on the first day, secure lodging was set up for the several tens of boys, as well as 'days' [e.g. for donated meals] to eat at the homes of various *balebatim*. The *Belz Hasidim* turned over their *shtibl* for studies during the first winter.

Already from the first days, the tables of the Belz shtibl were fully occupied with boys of various ages. The dulcet tones of their *Gemara* study, echoed back far and wide around more than half the city.

Children begin to appear, first one at a time, and then in groups, also from cities and towns around Tomaszow, such as: Krasnobrod, Jozefów, Tarnogrod, Szczebrzeszyn, Izbica, Komarow, Laszczow, etc. and also little towns in the Wolhynian region. And, let it be recollected here, to the credit of the Jews of Tomaszow, who, generally lived lives that were poor, and nevertheless, received these pupils from unfamiliar places with grace, not permitting one of these, approximately 100 in number, be without a place to sleep or a day in which to eat.

The students were divided into three study groups with a study group leader for each, and a group, 'kibbutz' of boys before whom the Headmaster would give a 'discourse' and a casuistic lecture from time-to-time.

The order of study was such that the students studied a page of the Gemara approximately each day, and in the evening, would review this together under the oversight of the study group head. Twice daily – for an hour each time – the study of the tradition from '*Mesilat Yesharim*' of from '*dem Alten's,*' brochures, '*Madregat HaAdam.*' (that is how they referred to the founder of the Novardok Yeshivas R' Joseph Yud'l Hurwitz ז"ל)

Every Sabbath at dusk, the Headmaster would give a discourse in matters of tradition on themes related to the portion of the week. The Sabbath dusks of the month of Elul were dedicated to themes of repentance and were called discourses of awakening.

Peripheral listeners would come to all of these discourses, and to the 'awakening' the women also came to listen, standing outside near the open windows, listening, not infrequently with teary eyes. They would celebrate the Festivals in a rather elevated manner, especially Hanukkah and Purim, wit song and dance, and original Novardok songs with an addendum of expositions on tradition, that would attract great masses of onlookers. All of this gave them great visibility in the entire Jewish surrounding, and brought inspiration for respecting the Torah and Jewish tradition.

After being in Tomaszow for less than a half year, the Yeshiva moved itself to Chmielnik. The reason for this is not known to me.

For the short time of its existence in Tomaszow, the Yeshiva did a great deal for the study of Torah. It plowed up a barren field, and made it bear fruit again. It provided an impetus for a meaningful part of the young people to follow the strict rules of the *Halakha.*

In leaving the city, the Yeshiva took along a specific number of its students with itself. Others continued their studies in R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*, and also in the Sanz *shtibl.*

And if Tomaszow stood out as a city with a large cohort of Torah-loyal young people, unique in the area, this very Novardok period had its part in this [result], not underestimating, in this way, the heartfelt love and commitment to Torah study, by the largest part of the Tomaszow Jewish populace.

Bread for the Poor

Page 305 ***The Leadership of 'Lekhem Aniyim' (Bet Lekhem)***

From the Right: *Moshe'li Fankever, Shmuel Hirsch Henyet (Hammer),Shlomo Knopf, Yekhezkiel Lehrer, Moshe Freund, Yaakov Szerer, Nathan Greenwald, Eli' Drimmler, Abraham'li Goldschmid, Nahum Zucker (Shammes), and Moshe Nachman Shlomo'leh's.*

Sitting: *Chaim Yehoshua Biederman, and Ephraim Hirschfeld*

Page 307: *Friday, prior to the distribution of the bread and* Challahs *to the needy or their messengers.*

By Jonah Feldsehn

Tomaszow, despite the fact that it was not a well-to-do city, where Jews worked very hard to make a living, and sadly, it can be said that most barely made ends meet under duress, nevertheless, the Tomaszow Jews did much in the way of charity, and if not in an organized way, and not with a quantitative plan, and certainly not with the tools of a graduate social worker.... but full of heart and taste. The 'Bread for the Poor' organization was an exception to this, even though it too operated without a charter and elected officers, but full of heart and real commitment, with genuine brotherly sentiments, simplicity and charity, with maternal attention and paternal dedication and loyalty, organized and operated by the unforgettable Nahum Shammes and his wife, the Charitable Woman, Sarah'leh ה"ד with the assistance of the simple, full-hearted common people who volunteered for this sacred purpose.

Objective of the Organization

The name of the organization '*Lekhem Aniyim,*' fully reflected the purpose and substance of its activity: Bread for the Poor. Its purpose was to provide for the poor and those who were alone, who did not have bread or flour for *Challah* for the Sabbath. The truth is, that it lasted for half a week. The organization started out small and modestly, but thanks to their diligent and decent work, and also, unfortunately due to the need and the poverty of the Jewish populace, which became greater and worse from year to year, especially in the few years before the outbreak of the war. Because of the economic pressure and boycott actions, the Jewish populace became severely impoverished, and each week brought new recipients for '*L"A,*" to the point that the distribution reached close to 400 recipients out of a population of close to 1500 Jewish families.

Sources of Income

Nahum Shammes, with Sarah'leh along with the help of their committee, the sweet-hearted Jews, organized themselves into 'parties,' who visited all the Tomaszow Jews without exception, simply not omitting a single Jewish house. The solution of the '*Lekhem Aniyim*' committee was '*either one takes, or one gives,*' such that each Jew who had already made preparations for the Sabbath had already taken part in the '*Lekhem Aniyim*' campaign. The donations, by and large, consisted of natural baked goods, meaning, a *Challah*, a roll, a round bread, a bun, and these same products, in the main were all home-baked, meaning that the lady of the house usually had done the baking in the home oven. A portion made a special order with the baker to set aside a couple of *Challahs* for '*Lekhem Aniyim,*' at the same time they put in their own order. Others made weekly

monetary contributions, such that every Jewish resident took part with donations to '*Lekhem Aniyim,*' each one in accordance with their means.

Also, once a year, a Sabbath was set aside in each of the *shtiblakh* and houses of study to do fund-raising for '*Lekhem Aniyim.*' Many worshipers were especially called to the Torah, and each made a donation [at the time of their *aliyah*] to '*Lekhem Aniyim.*' The Tomaszow *landsleit* in New York would send in a large contribution every year, on behalf of the Tomaszow-Lubelski Society.

Distributing the Products

In the presence of a few of the committee members, at the home of Nahum Shammes, on Friday at about noon, the *Challahs* and the bread were distributed. There were three categories of the needy, and consequently three types of divisions:

1. The family men and others who had accepted the shame of their poverty, and made peace with their lot that they have to live off handouts, who came on their own volition to demand their portion, and many times haggled over it.

2. Those who were ashamed to come and take *challah* publicly, and for these, the portion was send with a child, accompanied by a committee member.

3. Impoverished people who were deeply in debt, respectable *balebatim* who had fallen from their positions, they hungered and were ashamed to disclose their circumstances, and did not want to accept such critical gifts. For these, it was necessary to find ways by means of a variety of stratagems and deceptions, to have *challah* delivered to them, or money with which to buy *Challahs.* Sometimes it had to take place by the intermediation of several emissaries, so that all traces of the origin would be completely wiped away, because, under no circumstances, could they make peace with the fate that had to be receiving '*Lekhem Aniyim.*'

Each of these alternatives of doing the charitable thing was done with such heart and wisdom, charity and brotherhood, that the institution received the fullest recognition and trust from all Tomaszow Jews. May their memory be for a blessing.

What led to the establishment of the '*Lekhem Aniyim*?' On a certain Friday night, when the men went off to the Friday evening Sabbath service, a woman visited her neighbor, who was considered to be a person with means on the city. The table has a full Sabbath appearance, with candles and a *challah* cover on the *Challahs.* As it happens, a breeze from the window blew the *challah* cover off, and two bricks were revealed in place of two *challahs.* The woman burst into tears out of shame.

Taharat Israel

By Sh. Licht

This Organization was founded in the year 5680, 5681 [1920, 1921]

Page 309: Facsimile of message to Jewish women concerning the ritual requirements for family purity.

This was quite an active institution which had as its objective to permit all Jewish daughters, without financial means, to maintain [the laws of] family purity.

In the first place, this became a problem of releasing the poor womenfolk from paying any fee for service, or to give a discount in proportion to their financial capacity, in such a manner that money not become a barrier to the observation of family purity. In the second place, their objective was to improve and make more beautiful, the inner orientation and service so that they not be a deterrent even for the modern younger woman.

Regrettably, their struggle with the second problem was without solution, because, regrettably, the steam-bath and *mikva* were very primitive. Despite this, they approached everything in accordance with their means, as far a possible, to improve and beautify [the facilities], buying new bathing vessels (of metal) and in a large measure, provided good service. The most important *balebatim* in the city undertook to serve on this committee, Ephraim Ruv Presses, Pinchas Goldstein, Lipa Honigsfeld and Neta Heller.

The income was derived from a monthly fee from all the Jews of the city with means, and regular income from the *mikva* and the baths, which the Rabbis and the special committee had created, and later this was taken over by the Jewish community. A special levy was placed on the total for the construction of the bath-*mikva* construction, in accordance with the most modern style, with special chambers and baths.

The world became more modern, and it demanded bathing facilities that exhibited all the requirements of modern hygiene. And, indeed, this is what was created. A new mikva was constructed, with rooms and a new bath. Also, it had become necessary to speak about and explain about the principal basis represented by family purity in Judaism, in word and in writing. And thanks to this, this mitzvah was observed by almost 9% of Jewish women.

The Economic Structure of Our Community

By Vova Neu & Baylah Kreitzer

As a Bit of a Foreword

Page 312: *The Market Halls*

To eternally memorialize the sacred lives of the Jews of Tomaszow, so cruelly cut down, the purpose that the Yizkor Book serves, there would be a seriously large lacuna, if we did not write about their means of livelihood.

Apart from the commercial or professional aspect of the livelihoods that the Jews pursued, they also had a political and psychological dimension to them.

One of the objectives that the Poles set for themselves to attain, was to make Poland *Judenrein.*

Polish anti-Semitism, which always simmered just beneath the boiling point, and spewed forth ant-Semitic venom, has suddenly acquired a new motto, a national motif: to make more room for Poles and to get rid of Jews. They undertook to carry out this mission with their fullest ardor. To attain that objective, they made use of the means of destroying the Jewish means of livelihood.

This solution also followed the dictum: 'No manner of pogroms, just hit the Jews in the pocketbook.'

The spear point of this campaign was placed entirely against the Jewish merchant and storekeeper. On that sector where most of the Jewish populace was [economically] concentrated. This area of endeavor had yet another characteristic and it was here that the Poles were able to generously exploit and attain significant results in their malevolent plans. The pressure on the small storekeeper was especially great. The weaker and more impoverished he was, the easier it would be to disenfranchise him.

The Jew, no matter how weak and helpless, but possessed of a strong will to live, employed all means, utilized every legal stratagem to protect themselves again these angry forces.

The struggle was laden with doubt, mean-spirited, but hopeless. One's skin was not meant to play against the sheep, but rather circumvent it.

The Jewish circumstances in Tomaszow, as in all of Poland in general, can be likened to that of a ship, which the threatening waters drenched and put under. Large part of the Jewish populace became unemployed, and without a means of sustenance, with on today, and no tomorrow. A small sliver still stuck out, with frail connection – the higher, the more tenuous – which still was able to enjoy some material benefits.

For a variety of reasons, this ship, over the course of time, should have gone even further down. The Poles, however, had no time or patience, and stormed at it from all sides, in order to hasten its total sinking.

In telling about Jewish means of making a living, one inevitably must unroll the bloody scroll of assault and suffering.

We provide, in a condensed form, a bit of a picture of the economic structure of the Tomaszow Jews.

We do not encompass all of the branches, but only the larger part of the most important ones.

In proportion, Tomaszow was a small town. As is the case in a small town, everything is open [sic: known]. Everyone knew everyone else, and everyone else's business. You either accomplished this by seeing it, or hearing about it. And now, even though quite a bit of time has passed since then. All these things seem as if they happened yesterday.

Stores

the economic function of the store is – intermediation. The product, article or creation that the storekeeper presents, are for the use of the buyer who has no access to the primary producer. In the worst case, the buyer, in some instances, must add additional value before finally making use [of the product].

The articles had been subjected to all of the fundamental processes and was in the same state as when the storekeepers bought merchandise, and this is how they sell it.

The intermediation character of the stores was utilized by the Poles to illustrate that the Jews were 'unproductive parasites' and are living of someone else's productivity. A consequence of this, was that it was literally a *mitzvah* to assault the Jews.

The irony of this mean-spirited designation lay in the fact that the Jewish storekeeper's groschen was soaked through and through in sweat and blood.

In an environment where there was a dearth of money, and consumed by ruinous competition, the Jewish storekeeper was forced to put in long hours and hard labor in order to extract a pittance of *groschen.*

All this does not even take into account the chicanery and assaults on the part of the Polish authorities, who did everything possible to constrain the Jewish storekeeper more and more, until they left the Jew without the ability to even breathe.

On the other side, this did not deter the Polish government and the Polish community to agitate for, and encourage Poles to open stores and warehouses. In this manner, they gave the *stragan* the importance and placed the stragan and the retail store at such a high and central point, just as if it provided the key to solving all the problems. This is how the circumstances presented themselves, and under which the Jewish storekeeper had to work.

This is a short illumination of the atmosphere, which the Poles created around the Jewish storekeeper, and in so doing, also about the technical and economic side of the stores in Tomaszow.

Stores divide themselves into two types: into a wholesale and retail store.

We had two wholesale businesses in our city: one was of iron work, the other was of colonial merchandise. The iron work store was of a wholesale character not so much because of its trade with stores, but rather because iron work was sold to private buyers, even in larger quantities. For example: for the building or renovation of houses. The colonial business was wholesale through and through; these were goods presented

for stores and very little dedicated to the retail trade.

These two businesses carried on their trade on a scale that far, far exceeded the proportions of our city. They would have been considered substantial businesses even in larger cities. Skill, adeptness, high energy, and diligence were all responsible for their success. Thereby, it is worth remarking that in both businesses, it was women who played the principal role. The men in the colonial business especially were exceptional in their mercantile skills.

Thanks to these mercantile skills, the colonial store was able to stand up to the competition that the Poles put up against it.

The Poles did everything, that was possible, to achieve their goal of making Poland *Judenrein.*

The Spoldzielnia

Side by side with the open, hostile and brutal handling towards the Jews, the Poles employed a more cunning and refined method. The method consisted of setting up economic positions and by means of propaganda, and pressure, force the peasants and others to buy from the Poles. It was in this fashion that they sought to draw off the water from the Jewish river so that the fish there would therefore have to die.

For this purpose, a co-operative was placed in our city. This was a large wholesale undertaking of colonial goods.

The founders and participants were the local Polish gentry – the nobles. You can understand that this syndicate benefitted from tax abatements, and had open credits at the Polish bank.

Despite the strong agitation and anti-Jewish propaganda, it was a fact, that the Polish storekeepers – even those that were helped to become storekeepers by the anti-Semitic organizations, and in many instances also, brought them in from the outside – preferred to deal with the Jewish colonial business. As one can imagine, the more skilled handling, and the soft and helpful reception was more quickly attractive than the bureaucratic insults and rigid, and similar relationship.

The vital business and wide revenue streams at the wholesale businesses was, however, often shot through with the black clouds of blood sucking, aggravation and fear. Such moments were brought upon the Jews by the 'Flying Brigade."

The 'Lotna Brygada' (The Flying Brigade)

That is what the government organization was called whose mission was to assure that the books of a business should be in order. The staff of the brigade had the right to demand the books for audit at any time, whether by day or by night. In connection to the Jews, the brigade did not limit itself only to its mission. All the efforts of the brigade staff were, first and foremost, directed – to find violations of the law.

What encouraged them, in this endeavor, was their suspicion that the Jews did not record everything, and make combinations. This suspicion was supported by the fact that the Polish regime demanded everything

for itself, leaving for the merchant a meager dried out residue for his energy and work, if there was any earnings. (In connection with a Polish merchant, they got through, and made abatements. In the case of a Jewish merchant, the full amount of the law was levied).

And apart from this, the Jewish merchant had to grease everybody's palm, who had any sort of authority. Otherwise, the merchant was trapped, not being able to move.

The Tricks of the Flying Brigade

In order to proceed with certainty, the brigade people made use of a method that was reminiscent of the cleaning of *Chametz*. In order not to recite a blessing in vain, the Jew provides small bits of the *Chametz* [in advance]. They, too, provided for 'bits of *Chametz*.' They did this in the following manner: before the *Lotna* staff went to audit the books, they would, on a specific day – especially on a market day, Thursday – station themselves in front of their selected business, and stopped everyone that came out of there, asking them what they had purchased, how much they had paid, etc. They would write all of this down, also noting the time. In passing, it is worth noting that the peasants, and the gentile customers provided all of this information, despite the fact that they could have not done this, and knew the purpose of the interrogation. Most of the Christian customers were satisfied at such an opportunity to cause a Jew such grief. It was rare to find one, that didn't want any part of such pressure.

Having such data in their possession, they permitted themselves to inflict a visit on the Jew, or on a noisy market day, or in the middle of the night, and demand the books.

The most minute and innocent discrepancy could bring the result of an embargo against all of the merchandise until a legal decision was taken, and placing the owner in the shadow of a heavy monetary fine, and sometimes it smelled of '*Bereza Kartuzka*.' Under the best of circumstances, it cost money and blood.

One can imagine the dark and frightful experience that the Jew had to go through, when these dark guests in the form of Brigade Officials appeared. Such visits were not a rarity.

Retail Stores

The larger part of the Jews of Tomaszow Lubelski attempted to derive its sustenance from running a store. This phenomenon did not have its justification in the great economic possibilities that the field portended, but was the result of negative reasons. There was nothing else to turn to, since 'all sources of livelihood were stopped up,' – as Chaim Nachman Bialik ז"ל said. However, the desire to live was there, and it was necessary to eat. The one area that did not require much money, and also did not require any special skill, was store keeping. Foremost, it came with the fact that they were raised in and practiced in their father's store. And the one who had a bit of money – especially newlyweds – tried their luck at a store. Thereby, everyone believed that this would be their lucky ticket. However, the lucky ticket rarely was drawn. The rest had to lose, but that loss was accompanied by physical and psychological suffering. In an economic sense – in the hindsight of making a living – there was a great difference between the sectors.

Cut Goods – Fashion and Leather – Shoe Businesses

Most successful in the Tomaszow proportion, were those sectors of the industrial articles, such as cut goods, fashion, leather, shoes and others. The outlet for these very articles fell upon the general populace, whether in the city or outside in the villages. The cut goods sector took the largest share. The general program that continued to develop with the passage of the years, advanced the utility of cut goods. Even in the villages, they began to take on this dress. Because of these reasons, the cut goods sector could be composed of a larger number of storekeepers, that those sectors producing the other industrial articles. Accordingly, the cut goods sector was successful for a specific number of its merchants. The heads of the sector, which numbered only a pair, were substantially wealthy. Also, those of the middle rank, were not badly situated. The advantageous character of the sector broke down when it came to the point of the small stores with too little merchandise. It especially had a connection to the fair-day merchants, who, on fair days, would lay out their merchandise under the open sky on stands.

On the somber plain of the generally difficult plight, a formidable confetti business stood, virtually without competition. Its outlet was quite substantial. Its clients consisted of people from the general populace that had means. In addition, business was conducted in a quiet way: without noise or upset. This business placed the owner in the ranks of the wealthiest men of the city. And what of the other sectors of industrial products? They were not so successful as cut goods. The number of storekeepers, which each of the sectors carries, was in proportion a small one. Also, the people of means in these sectors, their wealth consisted of more a broad sort of income, in the Tomaszow style, that was true of the truly wealthy.

Food Stores and Confectionaries

The food and colonial stores were found on a lower level (Food and colonial produce went together). The outlet for these items came almost exclusively from the Jewish populace. In addition to this, the number of stores was much greater than demanded by the needs.

Apart from food stores, there were also businesses of other types that had to do with food, but they dealt only with the momentary need for food and drink. And the buyer, who was a patron, made use of his purchase right on the spot. The following businesses belonged to this category: restaurants, saloons, soda water kiosks, and confectionaries. This referenced group added nothing and took nothing away from the general picture of the stores. Their colors were neither lighter nor darker, and in general, blended into the general surroundings. Despite this, a couple of specific properties and details of this group illuminate and put the general Jewish life into better relief.

Hotels and Restaurants

There were three restaurants in Tomaszow. Each of the three was a part of a hotel, that each of the given restaurants served. They did not cook meals on demand. Eating times were designated. The Jewish populace in Tomaszow, in general, was not in a position to indulge a midday meal in a restaurant, no matter how hungry or busy one was. And apart from this, the city was small, an therefore, one always found one's self near home. The restaurants served only out of town guests, who were lodging in that hotel.

One restaurant might, on occasion, prepare a couple of unscheduled midday meals. The buyers of such meals might be whichever of the wagon drivers or porters who because of their livelihood were compelled night

and day to be on the street. They would occasionally buy such a meal simply to warm themselves up or cheer themselves up.

Saloons

There were four saloons that Jews serviced. Apart from our concession, which was in our mother's ע"ה name, the rest of the concessions belonged to Poles, and the Jews leased them.

The saloon keepers, at one time, had their own concessions. Poland itself, after the liberation, gave them these concessions, and this was their livelihood for years. But with the times, Poland took away the concessions from the Jews, and gave them to Poles. Despite the fact that they attempted to do so, they did not take our concession away from us. We had great protection, and were in possession of documents that our family had earned great revenues for Poland in the *Powstanies* (the Rebellions). Despite this, when our mother v"g died, three months before the last war, the Polish regime immediately hastened to take away the concession.

A concession of one's own had a drawback: the Polish regime levied high taxes on the concessions. And it was only through combinations that one could get something out for one's self. The saloon keepers with the leased concessions could do this, in the instance when something might happen, the Poles, who were the owners, would see to it that nothing would come of it. The Polish government managed to get along with gentiles. There would be an entirely different outcome if the concession were a Jewish one.

Apart from the saloon keepers with concessions, there were also about five or six beer halls without the right to sell strong spirits. A few of these latter [beer halls] had their own concessions. The rest had been beer halls on an ongoing basis. They sold whiskey on the sly. Their customers were 'salt of the earth' peasants, who felt as if they were in their own home in the beer hall. They would leave the items that they bought with the Jew, or brought things from home, and in general, took advantage of great conveniences. This kept them tied to the Jew and also provided a guarantee against being informed on to the authorities.

Soda Stands and Confectioneries

There was not a large number of soda water kiosks, which were spread around the city. Part of them belonged to the soda water factories and served as distribution channels through which more soda water could be sold. The others were independently owned kiosks, from which the owners attempted to make a living. The profit margin consisted of *groschen*. In addition to soda water, the following was also sold from these kiosks: a light snack, a sweet or salted appetizer, and ices (in the summer). A business of this sort did not demand a great deal of capital. The principal investment was physical labor. The central source of income was during the summer, and especially on hot days, when the public cooled off with soda water and ices. By contrast, income in the winter fell completely down. Despite this, the people who operated the kiosks were not free of work. They had to prepare themselves for summer, and this was not light work.

Lighter points in this branch of the soda water kiosks were the three confectionaries. These three were managed on a broader scale, had a larger selection of a variety of sweet goods, and also imported fruits. You can understand that they brought in a larger income than the soda water kiosks.

The Bitter Circumstances of the Storekeepers

In addition to the heavy burden of making a living, fate also dealt to the storekeepers to the fullest intensity, the anti-Semitic pressure, and the need to be on the most demanding rank to be assaulted by the extermination policies towards the Jews.

The reason for this 'good fortune,' lay in the character of the strategy in relationship to the Jews. In their activity to make Poland *Judenrein*, the Poles implemented a strategy of 'striking the enemy on the weaker and easier side.' The stores in the best case expressed these two conditions: on the one side, the stores were like food on the plate, that can be accessed at every time and minute, when the nobleman only wanted to. On the other side, the stores – in a large majority – barely gurgled along: in an economic sense, they were like dead limbs – standing on a difficult plane – and even with very slight stresses, could cause them to be toppled.

The Relationship of the Polish Authorities to the Jewish Storekeeper

The Polish people, through its government, applied its entire energy and effort to uproot the weak storekeeper from his position. The government let loose every pauper that it had that would be useful for this purpose. It made use of its administrative arm, which created decrees, constraints, and set on commissions, such as sanitation and others, who, like bloodthirsty insects, bit the storekeeper -- imposing fines. In this connection, the local authorities were not restrained in the sacred work to stifle the Jewish storekeeper.

The Tax Authority (Urzad Skarbowy)

The strongest arm, however, that excelled in its capacity to break Jewish lives, was '*The Tax Authority.*' The Tax Authority enveloped the Jewish storekeeper in a net of taxation, making the net, each time, more thick.

The Tax Authority did this by computing high taxes, raising the storekeeper's assessment and levy so high, that he could not even imagine it in his dream.

The storekeeper attempted to demonstrate with factual evidence that the calculation had no basis in fact, but this helped in only rare instances.

Against the just complaints from the Jews, the Tax Authority would refer to a report that it had in its possession. This was a report that had been compiled by the Tax Authority staff, that the office would often send to inspect the Jewish incomes and bring back information.

The way the inspections were conducted, and the way the data was then used by the Tax Authority as a basis for their tax computation – demonstrated an act of despicable cynicism and conniving gruesomeness, which is worth mentioning here. But first, a few words about the officials themselves.

The Tax Authority Staff

In order to provide work for the quarter and bits of intelligent Poles, especially the young, the Polish government filled all of its offices with an excess number of these same types. The Tax Authority offices

were especially over-staffed with people of this category. These people had nothing to do, the only work that they had was to amuse themselves.

It was this bunch that the Tax Authority sent to inspect the Jewish stores and to bring back reports. These people would wander around among the stores, until they perceived buyers in a given place of business. When the storekeeper was in the middle of haggling, they would make an entrance.

Seeing them cause the hands and feet of the storekeeper to begin trembling. He knew the purpose of their visit, and what he could expect. They, again, in a cynical manner, with a tone of a so-called friend, and 'sweet' words, advised the storekeeper to only take his customers into account and to serve them. In the meantime, they went about making a record of everything that he sold, and how long it lasted.

When the Jew would come to complain about the baseless taxes, he was shown the report. From it, a calculation was made, that according to this information, he, in the course of a certain amount of time, earned so much and so much. And if one calculated together in accordance with this proportion, the hours of the day, that the store was open – the tax is actually very, very low. In this way, the victim was even further incited. The storekeeper struggled with his entire might. He used every means that he had to help him, though for the time being, holding back the iron and pitiless hand that stalked after his few zlotys, on which his, and his household's life hung.

In many instances, the money was borrowed money. In this, it is necessary to also take into account that however longer was his position, it helped the Jewish storekeeper that in Poland, one was not morally responsible for a tax obligation -- there was no threat of arrest. One was only responsible with what one possessed. And this responsibility extended to everything up to leaving you with something to cover your bare skin. Anything, more than this, could be confiscated. (In relation to the Jews, the Polish government actually behaved like this, and used this right without any consideration).

Jewish Combinations Against Tax Shakedown

Thanks to the fact that tax obligations did not incur arrest, when the storekeeper saw that they were not giving any consideration to his substantive complaints, and the Tax Authority simply wants to rip off his possessions, he transferred ownership of his business and merchandise to a sympathetic stranger, and made that party the owner.

This was possible before the Tax Authority had marked the merchandise to cover the tax obligation. In the instance that the merchandise was already marked, the storekeeper was responsible, under penalty of heavy fines, for the loss of even the most minute item. However, if the Jew hurried, he could then breathe a bit easier for a space of time. In the area of these sorts of combinations, situations were created, that were it not for their tragic nature, would have been quite comic. Jews with beards and side locks and great Hasidim lived, as it were with lovers, Instead of wives, they had mistresses.

Such situations came about, when because of the pressure of the Tax Authority, the storekeeper would transfer everything to his wife, and through an civil divorce, made her into a stranger to him. You understand, that this divorce was civil only, and not done in accordance with Jewish law.

When the Tax Authority would come in the middle of the night to audit if the husband and wife were separated, and found the woman in the house, the man would reply that she was his mistress. The [tax] bunch

would amuse themselves with questioning the Jew, such as, how does it come to be that an observant Jew should have a mistress, and other questions of the sort.

In general, the Poles laughed and made sport of the Jewish combinations, and of 'mistresses.' They laughed because they knew they controlled the situation, and at any time, they could yank the cord, and close the opening. They also did it such that the new owner was liable for the taxes with which the former owner had been charged

When the Jew Finally Laughed Sadly

There were also instances when the Jews laughed and the Poles – didn't. But the laughing was not without pain. I am reminded of an instance when a Jew that had been stripped, who had been left with wet hands, smoked up cooked food and a couple of broken pots, an executor from the Tax Authority arrived to write up his assets for his one remaining tax liability. With a serious face, the Jew took down a can from a corner, and turned it upside down, and asked the executor to sit down. Thereby, he carried over a broken stool as a table, where he could lay down his notebook to write. The Pole didn't feel quite at home, and quickly left. The Jew laughed again. Such incidents with a variety of content were not few. This was the single act of vengeance that Jews could exact from their enemies the Poles.

The Jewish Quandary

Every year, a certain number of Jews were thrown out of their economic positions remaining without a way to make a living, and unemployed, without a present or a future. The path to this point went through a Hell of emotional and physical suffering.

It is different if you have nothing, but also different if you have a little bit of something, and it is on that something that one's own life and the life of one's kin depends, and an unbounded force actively attempts to tear it away. The frightening pictures that are drawn, the dark denouement, that is put forward, when the enemy is going to attain his, led to experiences that could drive people crazy. The fear and trembling, not to lose the 'something,' was like dynamite planted underneath you, that tears living pieces of flesh from the body. It was not rare that it occurred when people could no longer stand the pressure, the Jew either fell in battle, or took his own life.

The Jewish storekeepers and merchants in Poland, especially the small ones in the smaller towns, like Tomaszow, felt like they were taken into a whirlpool, from which they would never again emerge.

Out of frustration, a part wanted that a change should come along, regardless of what it might be, so long as it was a change. They believed that as tarred and burned skeletons, every change would stop the burning a bit. Regrettably the change came: the Germans occupied Poland, with our city in the middle. But instead of putting a stop to the fire, may their names and memories be erased, they made the flames more intense, and entirely incinerated the burned skeletons.

Today, Tomaszow is *Judenrein.*

The Jewish Craftsmen

Tomaszow Lubelski was known by its geographical situation – it was encircled by forests – and the sizeable number of shoemakers and barrel makers. Barrel manufacture was purely a gentile trade, while shoemaking was a mixed trade, in which both Jews and gentiles participated in large numbers.

Tomaszow [also] had purely Jewish crafts, such as tailoring, watchmaking; purely gentile trades such as barrel making, black smithing, and mixed trades such as shoemaking and painting.

In passing it is worth taking note of the fact that many of the gentiles in the mixed trades learned their trade from Jews. They first worked as apprentices, and afterwards became independent. The opposite case did not exist.

Each trade separately – whether purely Jewish or in partnership – did not consist of a large number of Jewish craftsmen. The exception was tailoring and shoemaking. These crafts has a proportionally larger number of Jews.

In general, one can say, that 'work' was no 'boon,' in our city. Despite the fact that the Jewish hand manual tradesmen worked hard, and long hours, (if there was any work to be had) from very early until late in the evening, with only a short recess – the work only paid them back very stingily. This was true even for the really good craftsmen. Their good situation was distinguished by the fact that they lived in a bit of a more decent house by the prevailing Tomaszow standards, dressed a bit better, and ate. Others among them, with more limited skills, would, from time to time have no bread with which to sate themselves. They suffered hunger. Because of the very meager pay for their work, the number of Jewish manual tradesmen did not grow. In some of the trades, the numbers actually shrunk. The grown up children in such families sought something else to learn, or traveled off to the larger cities to find their fortune.

The following two reasons can be enumerated as responsible for the unsatisfactory state of the manual trades:

Reason Number 1: Work had no sort of value. Such an attitude towards work was based on the 'philosophy' that the worker does not invest any capital and assumes no risk; the work does not cost the worker any money. He obtains the work without charge. This is the way people thought, and this is the way the workers themselves thought. Reason Number 2: The revenues on which the workers depended, that was around them, the sources, from which they should have been able to draw, were dry. The consequence of this was, that even though the number of manual trades people in the various trades was not large, despite this, the supply was greater than the demand. And as the economic law tells us, when supply exceeds demand. The price of what is being offered — falls.

The Social Improvement!

The unsatisfactory plight of work did not remain in one place. Specific developments which the times brought along, brought an improvement in the relationship to labor.

The eight-hour day, medical benefits, and other social improvements for the workers, that the P. P. S. pushed through in the Polish Sejm – on one side, and from the other side, the agitation of the Jewish labor parties, such as *Poalei-Tzion*, *Halutzim*, *Bund*, and Jewish professional unions – all of these helped to raise the value of labor.

In this connection, the manual trade union that was established in our city had its role in this matter as well.

The Bank of the Manual Tradespeople

In hindsight, the bank that was founded by the manual trades was especially important. By providing the tradesman with low interest loans, it made that trades person more able to utilize this facility in worse times.

The bank had other sources of income for enabling a part of the workers to ply their trade on a commercial basis. More about that later. The good tradesmen with independent workplaces were the first to benefit from this improvement. In many instances, they were in better situations than well-situated storekeepers. The pressure of taxes was not as great on them, as was the case with storekeepers.

Poland directed the entire force of taxes onto storekeepers, where the majority of Jews were concentrated. In relation to manual trades, where a smaller proportion of Jews were engaged, the taxes were a bit milder. Then, by not having any goods on display, to which the Tax Authority could easily get access through its executors, this cause them a great deal of blood to be drained, and stormy incidents, to which the storekeeper was exposed. Also, the help that worked there had it better than before. They benefitted from the eight- hour day, and were provided with small social benefits, which in some small measure, made their plight a bit more secure, the important thing being that they had work. The tailors who were not good, for example, had to work for a few groschen for the second-class goods merchants; the mediocre shoemakers had to be satisfied with repair work; the not so skilled among the carpenters had to go running around from house to house to find some bit of work. This also was the general situation for those of limited skill in other trades as well.

Tailors

Page 326: 'The Little Doctor,' Akizrner-Latshazh at work

In the matter of employment, the tailors occupied first place. They exceeded all the other trades with a greater share throughout the year, and with a greater number of people employed. A large part of those in a better situation of employment obtained this from the general progress which was brought on by a desire to clothe one's self, even in the ordinary classes of the gentile populace. An important place in the tailoring trade was occupied by a ladies garment factory, in our town, which was conducted on a fairly broad plain, by Tomaszow standards, with the largest number of employees, among which there were also Polish girls, learning the trade. Apart from this large one, there were two other ladies garment operations. These latter ones serviced only the rural population, for whom the sewing was simple and not complicated. The larger operation sewed following the directions in journals, and served those who sought style.

The operation gave the owner the opportunity to life a good life and placed him among the ranks of the well-situated.

The local anti-Semites attempted to assault the needle trades. Their first attempt was directed at trying to bring down the tailors for ladies, especially the biggest of them. To accomplish this, these anti-Semites imported a superior Polish ladies tailor from the outside, with apprentices. They opened an operation for him, and helped him with everything that could be done. You can understand that this did nothing for the Jewish tailors. The one obstacle that prevented the Poles from achieving their goal – was the quality of the Jewish work. The Jew was a far superior craftsman to the Pole. Those who wanted their garment to be sewn better went to the Jew, but the augury for the future was serious.

Shoemakers

Part of the craftsmen linked their work with pre-production. This was especially true of the shoemaking trade. Certain shoemakers, instead of waiting until people would come for a fitting, worked in front of the marketplace. Borrowing money from the trade people's bank, or taking raw materials on credit from the leather maker – they produced their product for the general buyer and brought their products to the market day fair.

Glaziers

Two glaziers and a hatmaker worked on a more business-like basis.

The glaziers primarily committed themselves to work on bigger jobs for larger sums, as, for example, on new houses, offices, and institutions, of when a window pane was of a better quality. They rarely did single, or ordinary windows. They brought the goods directly from the foundry. You can appreciate that by buying on the one hand in larger quantities, it came out cheaper for them. The other glaziers actually bought the glass they needed from them. These two were counted among the people with means.

Hat Makers

The hat maker employed several workers in his operation, and worked not only for the [general] buyer at the marketplace, but he also had clients among the small merchants from the surrounding towns.

The hat maker too, was counted among those people with means, in our town.

The High Level of Jewish Work

In connection with craftsmanship: In our town, there were Jewish craftsmen that stood on the highest rung of their craft. They never attended any schools, not even having attended a university, they were, nonetheless, blessed with an inner light, that shined through all the mystique of their chosen craft. Our town had Jewish tailors, whose garments that they created were not only good and comfortable, but seemed as if they had grown right along with the wearer; there were Jewish shoemakers, in whose hands the shoe or slipper was not only roomy and comfortable, but even the appearance of the foot was transformed. The unsightly was made to look beautiful; we had Jewish carpenters who when they installed a door or a window frame, it was not simply installed, but fit into its place like a limb into a body. Our city had Jewish artisans of the kitchen and oven that they made, and graced the house like beautiful pieces of furniture and functioned as it was nature's own handiwork and not something made by man; we had Jewish bakers, whose bread was suffused with taste, savor, better than cake. One could eat it with gusto even when sated. Polish nobles would travel for tens of kilometers to have that bread on their tables. Tomaszow had table turners, with whom engineers and architects would consult in developing a plan and listened to their opinion, as if they were measuring strides.

This is not any kind of exaggeration, but rather a fact. The high class nature of the Jewish craftsmen was an obstacle t the anti-Jewish boycott agitations which the Poles carried out intensively in our city. It was a fact that the Poles who stood at the head of the Anti-Jewish boycott movement – they, themselves, employed Jewish craftsmen. As the economic law says: when one buys something for money, it is not sentiment that decides, only the quality and the price of the item that we buy decides.

The Spiritual and Religious State of the Jewish Worker

Apart from a professional side, the lives of the craftsmen in our city also had a moral and religious side to it. This was especially true of the one-time craftsman who was a 'double house' type (a small *shtibl* under the same roof with a *Bet HaMedrash* was called a 'double house.' These craftsmen had their minyan there.), to which the painting side belonged:

As was the case in other walks of life, in the Jewish community, among the ranks of the Jewish craftsmen there were those who distinguished themselves in their humanitarian impulses. Except in their case, without the polish of education, and in the range of work-worn hands peeling, sunburned faces, from sun and wind, these impulses had a grace that comes with sincerity. Not being spinners of money, these people, nevertheless, had golden souls, adorned with the fullest ardor to the requirement of others, their need and misfortune.

The same can be said for their wives, who in no way were second to the full-hearted generosity of their men.

Concerning the Religious Side

The religious life of the Jewish craftsmen was wrapped in a prayer shawl of simple but deep faith.

The Sabbaths and Festivals did not have the drama that distinguished the Hasidic and educated homes. But the Sabbath and Festivals were a period of healing for their exhausted extremities, a balm to their endless weariness, and a joy and hope for their soul. The worn out body, and soul bedeviled with worry awaited the holy days with an extraordinary longing.

The intonation of Gemara study, which was rarely heard in their homes, met up with th sorrowful melody of the recitation of Psalms. Whether alone, or in group prayer, the sound of the Psalms let itself be heard on the Sabbath and Festivals, during the day, after a nap, in the Great Synagogue, where these loyal Jews would gather, mostly craftsmen, and recited the Psalms as a congregation. It was on the verses of the Psalms that these simple Jews would load their fervent beseeching, their suffering and woes, and send them to the Throne of Glory.

Sabbath at the Time of 'Shaleh-shudes'

In the shadow-filled Gorn-*shtibl*, which was located on the west side of the synagogue, a part of those who recited the Psalms clamored in a Sabbath festivity by conducting a '*Shaleh-shudes*,' and singing songs. The Sabbath was moving on, and the pressure of the regular week, with all of its woes and difficulties, swam before the eyes. A unease, and a palpable longing enveloped the mood. The Jews attempted to draw out the Sabbath a bit further, with song. However, suddenly, someone would burst in with a lit candle and exclaim, '*Gut Vokh!*' This was a command to return to battle. Quickly, the final blessings over the food were recited, and with heavy movements, began to get one's self up from one's place. The evening prayers were recited, and the *Havdalah* service was performed. The regular week had again taken back its control.

Youth

The young people, who forsook the ways of their parents, and took up with a variety of parties and ideals, abandoned the entire spiritual baggage, and took from their home only the deep belief in a better time and a strong feeling for justice and truth.

The New Registration Laws as a Means to Excise the Jews from the Manual Trades

In that corner of Jewish life that was called work, a dim lamp burned. It was this lamp that the Poles set out to extinguish. They did this by passing a registration law. The apparent motivation for this registration law was: to place the craft on a higher plane. The real reason of this law, however, was: to obstruct the path to a craft for a Jew. And it was, indeed, for this purpose that they made use of this registration law. The Jews, who had been practicing their trade for years, and already had their own operations, such Jews without any difficulty were given a '*Karta-Rzemieslniecza*' (A craftsman's card), which constituted a permission to ply the craft. By contrast, however, when new Jews came to get such a card, even those for whom the trade was a legacy handed down for generations, and who personally had apprenticed for years in plying this craft, they required an examination. However, they made the examination so difficult – understand for Jews – that it was impossible to pass. Very, very rarely did they allow a Jew to pass. And they did this to have a greater temerity to disqualify more Jews.

In the building of labor, there was only one door open to the Jew: the door out. By contrast, the door that enabled qualified people to enter, was made smaller and smaller to the point where it was entirely shut closed.

The 'Spolka ' (Partnership)

The closest train station was eight kilometers away from our city. The service that was required – to bring people to the train and back and also to travel to the nearby villages – was provided by Jewish wagon drivers. The wagon drivers used wagons, carriages, and large boxes, tied to one or two horses.

Also for merchandise, whether brought in, or taken out, horse and wagon was used for the largest part. And the majority of those who transported merchandise from various business centers were Jewish wagon drivers. This was especially true, if the destination was far away. The wagon drivers made use of large, strong, rectangular wagons, teamed with two or three horses. They would travel out at the beginning of the week, and return at the end of the week. Their work was really hard labor. And the hard work was accompanied in the summer with stormy rains, and heat, and in the winter with snowstorms and freezing.

It was not rare that the road, just by itself, created difficulties, which demanded a large amount of physical strain and patience. On top of this, they were exposed to life-threatening dangers, traveling through forests and empty roads. With all of this, they would barely be able to get home in time for the Sabbath...

The previously mentioned difficulties were endured not only by the wagon driver, but also the splinters of Jews that traveled with him also shared in it. Horse and wagon were limited to reach only so far. When the Tomaszow merchants, by their calculation decided to buy goods in further market centers, the goods were brought to the city by the train. The Jewish wagon drivers were entirely bypassed.

Peasants from the city and surrounding area transported merchandise from the train to the city and also the transport of wood products – such as thresholds, boards and blocks. Jews were not employed in this work. The Jews could not compete with the peasants. The peasant, who had food for himself and his horse from the fields, often needed the money just to buy strong drink. Whatever he earned was sufficient. By contrast, the Jew who needed to earn enough, for himself and his horse, could not survive on such small compensation. In the last years before the war, when circumstances in the Jewish street had become dire, part of the Jewish wagon drivers began to transport wood products and goods, to and from the train. They manages to make something for themselves by carrying double loads, and in this way, ended up hauling more than the horses.

It was not only in Tomaszow, but throughout all of Poland, that the horse and wagon played a meaningful role as a means of transportation. However, with the passage of the years, the automobile began to take the place of the horse and wagon.

Private people – mostly the Jews – were responsible for the mechanization of the transportation between cities and towns. Wherever it was possibly, partnerships '*Spolkas*' were created which organized for servicing the cities, a mechanized transportation to replace the horses and wagons with freight and passenger automobiles.

By contrast to the horse and wagon, the automobile had unlimited range. It could reach every point in the country.

This attribute was attractive to the merchants, who needed to import from a distance, and export to a distance.

Apart from this, the automobile was convenient for the merchants, since it brought the goods directly to the designated place, overcoming the need for extra time and effort, which could not be avoided by using the train.

It is self-evident, that as far as possible, the merchants utilized the automobile in preference to the train. As related by Sholom Greenwald ע"ה (son of Nathan) who was a bookkeeper in the Tomaszow 'Spolka,' the automobile was the cause of large deficits in the train transport sector, which was a governmental enterprise. [Accordingly] large taxes were imposed on the automobiles. On the one hand, they placed very severe limitations on how big a load they could carry, and on the other hand, on the number of passengers. Special squadrons of government people kept watch with regard to these orders. Every transgression, against these decrees, was punishable by a very substantial monetary fine.

Most of these described limitations were of such a nature, that it was impossible to enforce them. The intent of the regulation was not to promote the general interest, but rather to place obstacles, and make the undertaking more difficult, for an enterprise that lay mostly in Jewish hands.

Jews were forced to bribe officials left and right, in order to get through these confining and heavy limitations. The Poles took it like hungry dogs.

Such bribery was only possible by permitting a certain amount of inexactitude in the books. This however, got the owner into trouble with regard to the tax laws, with the result that it placed him in immediate danger of being ruined either economically or physically.

Like a spider spinning her web, so did the Polish government weave a web of regulation to constrict, and

generally create difficulties, so that the Jewish merchant or owner, was forced to slip and fall into the trap. The government, having the power and the means, was always able to find the opportunity to yank on the string, and in one blow, squash the Jew. [That is] confiscating everything, and threatening arrest. And with this, putting on a sanctimonious face, indicating that this, sadly, is 'the law,' and then broke up laughing.

That is what the practice of the Polish government looked like, and the way they practiced in general towards the Jews. The transportation associations were no exception.

In our city, also, such an association was created. After a couple of years, the Polish government liquidated it, and in addition, wanted to put the owner in jail.

A couple of years before the war, several Jews in our city came together to establish a 'Spolka,' (Partnership), which deployed a mechanized transportation for passengers and merchandise.

The founders demonstrated great organizational skills. Despite the fact that the business was strange to them, and they didn't have the faintest idea of what it was about – despite this, the enterprise functioned like a machine. It ticked like a clock. Thanks to their skills, and thanks to the fact that the new system served the merchants, the Spolka grew in length and breadth. In a short time, a set number of freight autos was in transit with set schedules, traveling back and forth on a route from Tomaszow to Lemberg on one side, and from Tomaszow to Lublin and Warsaw – and part of the time to Lodz – on the other side. At the same time, passenger service ran three times a day to Lemberg (Lvov), twice a day, except for Saturday and Sunday, to Lublin, and every hour to Zamość – back and forth. Several times a day to the train station in Belzec, apart from that, there were also opportune short hauls for freight autos to a variety of points in the country.

The general populace also benefitted from the Spolka, providing employment partly to Jews and partly to Christians as drivers and helpers. Not counted in this, are all the Poles who had some power and could create difficulties.

The Spolkas existed for a couple of years, As I have already mentioned, this enterprise prospered and grew. On a certain day, in the middle of this prospering and growth – I do not recall if this was a year or more before the war – agents suddenly arrived from the Tax Authority, and with one iron cover, placed an order of confiscation on everything that the Spolka had and owned.

The *balebatim* who ran it were compelled to hide themselves, because, in addition to this, the regime wanted their bodies and souls.

It was in this manner that Jewish energy, Jewish initiative and intelligence, were robbed and wiped out.

A remnant is, that after the Spolka, there remained two Jews, who were minor partners and helpers. After the liquidation of the Spolka, each separately, with partners negotiated for a freight truck, and carried freight. The principal route was Tomaszow-Lemberg and back.

It is worth telling that one of these two, after the Friday, when the war broke out and spread, made a trip to Lemberg. Coming home, he brought the news that Lemberg had been bombed. Tragically, we did not have to wait long for the German bombs that 'visited' us for eight days in a row, bringing death and misfortune to a large number of Jewish victims.

Foreign Currency Traders

Poland which was lagging in heavy industry, had an overburdened defense budget and conducted its economic politics on a broad anti-Semitic front and for other reasons, suffered from a balance of trade deficit.

As a result of this unsatisfactory balance, and illegal market arose in Poland for foreign exchange, the crown of which was the green American dollar.

The driving force of this trade were the following reasons and causes: Lack of faith. The populace lost its faith in its own currency, and those, who had the means to save – instead of putting their savings in the bank to earn interest – preferred to buy dollars to preserve the worth that they had achieved. The same was done by those who sold off a significant thing, such as an inherited asset.

Some factories, whose functioning was dependent on certain chemical substances, or machine parts, which could only be procured out of the country, needed foreign currency. The only source of this was the black market.

It was not rare that either a medicine, or a vaccine, was needed that Poland did not have. In such an instance, it was also necessary to have recourse to the black market.

Where were the sources that provided the nourishment to the black market in the form of foreign currency?

The principal channel, which put up the foreign currency, was the support that kinfolk in foreign lands (mostly from America) sent to their relatives in Poland.

These relatives, either came themselves, or provided [the currency] through friends, who came to visit their relatives and bring assistance.

There were also instances when dollars, which came in from the sale of something, or from savings, and were laying inactive, coursed through the market. Such an instance occurred when a transaction of some sort took place, and there was a requirement for zlotys.

Our city was no exception in this respect, and about ten people (families) were engaged in foreign exchange business.

The buying or selling of dollars by the populace can be divided into two categories: a positive one, and a negative one. In this regard, a positive transaction can be viewed as one where dollars were purchased out of savings, and also to be covered by merchandise. And further selling: when it had to do with a business transaction. By contrast, what can be considered negative, is the sale of dollars which were received in the form of assistance, simply for bread. And buying again: when it was done in order to pay off a debt, or to be able to access a medicine.

What this meant in connection with the Jewish populace of our city: simply a small group which consisted of the head s of a couple of specific industries, transacted with the foreign exchange traders on the positive side, and in hindsight, the tailoring sector stood out in this regard. Apart from the largest firm, those who occupied a middle position, also had the means to access foreign exchange in a positive manner.

By contrast, the remaining Jewish populace, which was unemployed, without income, and lived under frightful circumstances, their access to the foreign exchange traders was all of a negative character. The large majority of them never even saw a dollar, or other foreign currency.

With regard to the foreign exchange traders themselves: they did not make out badly. For the simple reason that the business was illegal. And that which is illegal has only risks, but no expenses.

The Meat Industry

Meat butchering was the occupation of 35 families, which was a family trade with them. They provided the city with kosher and non-kosher meat (there was not a gentile butcher in the city. Because of the cheap price for meat that was declared to be *trayf* after an inspection for *kashrut*, it was not worth running a gentile butchery. It was only later, thanks to a slaughtering regulation, and also thanks to the propaganda to liberate one's self from Jewish intermediation, a small, minimally configured, Christian butchery opened).
Like the others, this industry, while small, divided itself along three principal classes: the wealthy, the middle class, and the poor.

The number of wealthy was a rather small number. It consisted of only a couple of individuals. The wealthy, however, had guests. This gave them the means to enjoy a satisfying opportunity, if such came to pass, that apart from having money, they could buy a couple of cattle from a nobleman, or a well-to-do peasant.

Such transactions stood out by their rarity, with a low price, such as was the case in the marketplace, especially when the seller needed money.

As is understood, it was only the very rich who played the principal role in this industry. Two of this group supplied the garrison, which was stationed in the city, with meat. What is easy to imagine, is that supplying meat was not based simply on the good relations for the garrison. It also depended on the fat bribes that had to be passed around all about. Having the garrison as a client, first and foremost, had the benefit of providing a way to off-load the heavy inventories of meats that were declared to be not kosher. The people from this class not infrequently made use of hired help. The help was of a transient character. There were also two of this group who employed one or two people on a steady basis.

The middle class was larger in number, that the rich, but of more limited financial means. Those that had 'guests' applied their capital for only one animal. Others, by contrast, needed to pool their funds in partnership, in order to be able to buy an animal.

The people from this group did all of the work, that was required, by themselves. Rarely did they utilize paid help. Their livelihood gave them moments of plenty and others of want: it was a festive occasion if the animal turned out to be kosher. In that instance, the father would also allow himself a bit of whiskey for the Sabbath. The mother would 'grab a little' for the children, or for herself, or really, for the house. And the opposite was true, if the animal proved to be unkosher, the state of mind was one of distress, and of being defeated.

The fact that the output of the slaughtering operation mirrored the mood of the business of these folk, can give a grasp of their financial situation.

The people in the poor class, though large in number, played a rather small role in this industry. They,

themselves, did not slaughter the animals, and if it happened that one or another of them sold meat, it was taken by others. A few sought to eke out a groschen by buying a calf in a village, or in the marketplace, and sell it to those who performed the slaughter by themselves.

This group was the one that provided the people who assisted the larger operators by servicing the live animals, and performing other functions.

This area of endeavor, just like the other Jewish means of making a living, had only a couple of individual substantive and robust offshoots – by Tomaszow standards – only a couple of positions that had a solid base. The other positions, the rest of the industry, were withering leaves. Some more so, and some less so.

In general, this branch was in sharp decline, with signs of getting smaller and shrinking.

The process of impoverishment, that engulfed the Jewish populace for a variety of reasons – whether for objective or anti-Semitic reasons -- shrunk the circle of those who could afford to buy meat, which cost a lot and was simply a luxury. And this in turn, naturally, had the consequence of reducing the possibility of making a living in this field. At the same time, the assaults made by the Poles against Jewish sources of income, did not pass the butchers by, and also destabilized their positions.

Under these circumstances, even without the intervention of outside forces, this sector went into contraction and reduction.

For the Poles, however, this was a long drawn out process, and in order to speed up the process, the instituted a slaughtering regulation. The regulation came into force in 1936.

The slaughtering regulation, which limited the number of cattle that could be slaughtered according to Jewish ritual, shrunk the extent of this source of livelihood with one blow, making it tight and difficult.

The truth is, that it did not impact the wealthy too much, but it did affect them. Because those, who derived more from this, received less; those who had little – got even less, and further, those who had only a little bit – were entirely pushed out.

The people from the poorer class attempted to get something from this denouement by means of illegal slaughter, but this didn't get very far, because kosher meat must be from a slaughter that is not distressed, meaning that the slaughter must be legal. And seeing that the Jews of Tomaszow were extremely particular with regard to kashrut, such meat simply did not sell.

The slaughtering regulation filled the Poles with a great deal of satisfaction. They were dominated by a sense of triumph, as if they had won a great war. Madame Pristerawa, who stood at the very head of the regulation initiative, became a national heroine. The Jews, however, felt that an anti-Semitic storm had severely bent the Jewish ship on its side.

The Tomaszow Porters

Whether it was the unloading of merchandise brought in, or loading of merchandise to be sent out, and also the transfer of a variety of loads from one place to another – this work was done by Jewish hands and backs. The people were called porters.

In Tomaszow, the porters were divided into two groups. One group worked exclusively with merchandise, encompassing all kinds of merchandise; the second group dealt with the various loads that happen to be available on that day.

The latter group were assisted by horse and wagon, because part of the heavy items needed to be brought to a point that was distant, and it was impossible to carry on one's person/ For the same reason, the flour merchants made use of them, in transferring flour from the mill, which stood at the edge of the city, to the food stores and bakers. They also transported loam and sand needed to erect or repair ovens and kitchens. Like beasts of burden, these Jews worked hard, and lived a meager life, but being happy paupers.

A larger number of families were involved in the first group, that loaded merchandise, than in the second group. They were united in a partnership. They only accepted those into the partnership that had a franchise as a porter, and at the same time, the partnership did not permit any outside person to break into their area. There were instances, when part of the Jews, that lost their livelihood, and having nothing else to do, attempted to become porters. The partners, however, did not allow them to do this.

Such a posture on their part was justified by the fact that if everyone was permitted to participate, no one would make anything from it.

Regarding the people in this group, it can be said that they left their mark on the profession – every one of them put himself forward, and was thought of that way by others, as a professional porter. At the same time, these people made the existence of their group felt around and about.

Their relationship to the storekeepers was such, that they made portage service was a process that merchandise must go through. All merchandise had to go through their service at set process.

For some storekeepers, such a regulation was a burden. Their stores did not function based on service, and the price they had to pay the porters was – no matter how small that price would be – a critical part of their earnings. Such storekeepers, to the extent possible, did their own portage work. The porters from the partnership, however, guarded their livelihood 24 hours a day, to detect when something would come up for them to do, and every night a different one had the watch.

What did the internal workings of the partnership look like?

Even though the external appearance of the way they practiced portage service consisted of a solid base, the relationship among them, however, inside the partnership, stood on a very high moral plane.

Each of the partners received an equal share of the earnings that the day brought in. One might contribute more, one less – the one who worked more and harder (there were among them stronger and weaker ones), and the one who worked less and easier – all received the same. When it happened that God forbid, one got sick, he received his entire share during the entire period of his illness. And when it came to work, each of them sped to work with their entire interest, as if it were for their own personal benefit. Whether they had already worked, or had not worked [that day] at all, they undertook their labor with the same enthusiasm. In this way, the strong would have no pretensions about having worked harder, and the one who had worked more, would have no pretensions about having worked more. The atmosphere among them was as if they were one family.

From the standpoint of income, the porters in the partnership had it better than the porters from the other group, despite the heavy labor only provided them with a meager living, which did not pass the low standard of living of the poor Jewish working masses in Tomaszow. Despite this, their situation was a better one than that of others. Every day brought the certainty of some earnings. It was as if it were guaranteed.

The income of these porters depended entirely on Jews. They traveled in the same boat as the Jewish merchant and storekeeper. So long as that ship was upright on the flat sea, even if the wind bent it and the waves buffeted it, they also survived. A the moment that the ship capsized, which was very near – then the porters would go down with it as well. As a matter of principle, the Polish merchants did not give Jewish porters access to work.

The life of the porters, and especially the ones in the partnership, did not consist of only one dimension, of the low form that circles about the business and natural functions. It also had a higher dimension, which was studded with the more refined undertakings, with the instruments that ignite feelings from outside influences, and create psychological situations, gestating ideas and formulating psychological postulates. It will not be superfluous to tell about part of the activities of this higher dimension among the porters, because certain specific ideas, that stuck to many of them, and psychological postulates that developed among them, had an influence on decisions in boisterous and unexpected situations, that the stormy and tragic time created, but unfortunately most of the decisions were fatal. Part of the porters, especially the ones who set the tone, were not satisfied with their profession, which provided only a meager income, and a low social position. The lot that had been dealt to them in general life, in their eyes looked like an injustice. Such a line of thought, naturally, carried with it a certain amount of resentment and pretensions. The left wing parties played a great part in inflating such feelings. These parties held up society as the culprits in the pathetic state of the poor Jewish masses. As a natural consequence, the hearts and hopes of the dissatisfied porters, right along with the other dissatisfied, were bound to left wing parties, who promised them a new social order, not only a larger part of the material assets, for the struggling masses, but also a respectable place of social importance.

Like the simple Jews that they were, they believed that life was also simple. Life is like a train: it depends on which end of the train you put the locomotive. And at each end, where the locomotive is not attached, are the cars that stand near it – the first, and the others – at the rear. The same is true of life: if the locomotive of life were only to be put near the poor, struggling masses, they will be in the front, and others – in the rear.

In the meantime, however, the dissatisfied porters were jealous of the storekeepers, and looked upon them as a higher and privileged class. It is worth noting the fact, that this attitude was not one-sided: many of the storekeepers did not envy the porters any less. Many, because of the fact, that the porters simply earned more; many for the fact that despite the fact that their work was heavy, and their lives poor, ate their bread in peace; fear and trembling in anticipation of executors did not drive off their sleep, and their Sabbath was not disrupted by difficulties that had arrived, and difficulties that could be anticipated.

These were things that many storekeepers wished to have, but did not have.

In passing, it is worth remarking that, in general, the music played as follows on the crowded Jewish street in Tomaszow: One was jealous of the next person. Everybody was missing something important, for which he had a reason to be jealous of someone else.

Life would sometimes play a trick with people, sometimes in a brutal fashion: That thing that was ardently sought after and longed for, life suddenly hands to the person right into his hand; but it delivers it on a hot

tray, and he must throw the tray and the item away, being left with a severe burn. A similar instance happened to those who lived through waiting for great fortune to come from a socialist system.

On the eve of Sukkot 1939, following the treaty with the Germans ימ"ש who occupied Tomaszow, the Russians came to us to become the rulers of our city. They arrived like an inundation. Camps of a variety of military troops and armor fell upon us like a funeral cortege. The Russians were in Tomaszow for eight days, turning over – again according to an agreement – our city back to the Nazis a"h. However, during this short time, the Russians conducted a massive recruiting initiative to get people to travel to Russia to live and work there.

Those who truly believed in this, which they had read or heard, saw in this opportunity to voyage to Russia an act as if the heaven had bent down to bring this to them, which is what they had requested. And those among them, for whom family separation or other obstacles did not stand in their way, went off happily. Among those who undertook this voyage were also some of the previously mentioned porters. Arriving there, though, and seeing the bride in her real form, the people became very disappointed. The greater the expectation, the more intense and bitter the disappointment. And those who promised themselves a great deal – utilized their first opportunity and traveled back home immediately. Tragically, they fled the rain right into the fire. The Germans ימ"ש incinerated them right along with all the rest of the Jews.

It is entirely possible, that had the people who had traveled back home, not expected so much, it could have been that they might have lived through the war, albeit under very bad circumstances. It was a fact, that a certain percentage of Polish Jews, that the war storm blew into Russia – whether accidentally or on purpose – survived the war.

The instruments, that Death put to use in Russia, were the elemental natural forces such as epidemics, hunger, cold and other misfortunes of nature. The one, who had some luck, managed to avoid the nets spread by these forces, or managed to blunder through when he fell victim to them – that was the one who managed to last to the end of the war. It was otherwise in Poland. There, people – Germans and Poles – were the agents of death. They saw to it that no one would wriggle out of their hands.

As has already been mentioned, only a few of the porters from the partnership group had their sentiments on the side of the left-wing parties. The rest consisted of simple and poor Jews. They envied, and desired to taste that which in their eyes seemed to bring good fortune and honor. At the same time, in giving themselves an accounting, they saw that there were worse levels to occupy.

In order to assure that conditions not worsen, God forbid, and only improve, most of this group on the Sabbath and Festivals, were among those who participated in communal recitation of the Psalms in the Great Synagogue.

These same Jews, right along with other decent and pious Tomaszow Jews, did not want to believe that people could be worse than beasts And would kill other human beings purely to satisfy their sadistic lust for killing and torturing. This bloody truth, tragically, they would come to learn with their own lives, which the brutes cut down through cremation or other frightful means. The brutes – the Germans with the Poles – carried out this bloody butchery with glee, cutting sown the God-fearing and the righteous. Mat God avenge their innocent blood.

Livelihoods

By A. H.
Wroclaw

Ber'leh Katriel's

The day grows, getting lighter,
The sun spreads its magic power,
High, up high the sparrow hawk flies ---
The Spring is in its full force...

The streets fill
With the din of people,
A variety of classes
Differing in their gait.

Jews in *kapotes* hurry,
Their caps turned to the side,
The eyes search fro a couple of zlotys –
The yoke of making a living is oppressive...

Among them also steps,
The wise, lean and stern,
Arbiter, 'Ber'leh Katriel's'
The real estate broker.

If there is any place in town,
To rent out a residence,
Ber'leh makes his move
And begins to communicate it about town.

He does not hurry, he knows his worth,
Everyone must acknowledge him
He will find a buyer,
Even if he is under the ground.

And if, in town, preparations begin
For a *Din-Torah*,
Both opposing sides
Request that he be the arbitrator.

His words – become renown
A tongue like a spear
It is plain pleasure to listen to
'Ber'leh Katriel's'...

On the Marketplace

And they also rank in importance,
Gently going step by step
The doers of good and Yeshiva headmasters,
The entire cream of the city.

Children hurry off to *Heder*,
With large strides,
And the older ones – already mature males,
Go to the secular schools.

To the gymnasium in uniform,
Unobservant trash,
Who take pride in 'studying'
And violate the Sabbath.

And wise guys in caps,
Uncultured working class youth,
Who mock the pious
And sing songs of freedom.

And also Jewish women with cages
With kerchiefs on their heads,
They carry on, babble and warm themselves
With fire-pots.

Everything draws one to the marketplace,
The son, right along with his father,
It is, after all, Thursday, business;
There will be haggling.

Peasants arrive in masses,
With fully laden wagons
They occupy all of the streets
From the halls up to the Synagogue....

And it hums like a beehive,
One shouting down another,
One voice reverberates like a bell,
That drowns out everyone else.

'*Hamai, Hamai, Hamai Wybieraj*'
Socks, safety pins, suspenders, stockings!
'*Hamai, Wybieraj, dla baby raj*'[91]
Pins, beads, and bracelets…

Near an outlet with finished goods,
A peasant stands, trying on a jacket,
His stomach is too big – what can you do,
Just a bit is missing, a fragment, a bit.

The Jew takes him in hand forcefully
And squeezes him – like a rotten apple,
He presses his stomach in with his knee
And buttons up the button.

Prima! – He slaps him on the back,
And opens that response talk --?
The peasant doesn't stop to think
And counts out a couple of groschen for him….

Voices intermingle one with another
Man and horse, Jew and Christian ---
Apples! – Plump bananas!
'Today for money, tomorrow for free'…

A whole kilo for a tenner!
'Come over here Ber, the driver!
'Plump chickens, ducks roosters!
Fifty groschen a kilo – Ladies!

'Kvass-apples, gold-dates!
It literally melts in your mouth –
'And the voices demand, beseech
With anger and crying.

And suddenly screams break out,
And a robust argument is underway,
And the curses fall about,
Like potatoes from a sack.

And one is rewarded with dark imprecations
With nails and teeth in the sight of the enemy,
Two Jewish women are dragging a peasant by his legs
They are killing each other over a customer there.

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91 The peddler is hawking his wares, calling for the passers-by to 'choose' (*wybieraj*) and that it is a 'heaven for a woman' (*dla baby raj*)

Two porters, really solid characters
Also begin to get involved—
'Your father's father's father should get diseased,
Going back to Adam, the first man.

Until Max the guard arrives,
Shouting out in Yiddish –
'Say it yourself, this isn't nice!
'Jews, go your way!

An immediately how quiet and still it gets,
People quickly move away,
Only the horses whinny
And the dogs bark angrily.

Hilkeh'leh

A little old man, a bit green,
With gray, flat eyes,
Among cages full of chickens,
Hilkeh stands with the Hilkeh business.

Shrunken, scrawny and small,
The wind plays with his beard,
He no longer has any teeth in his mouth,
He can barely utter a word.

Despite this, he does a world of business,
With roosters, chicken – without end,
He has yet to be found short
Of a real good, plump fowl.

He does not shout, he cannot shout,
He's too old for that,
He won't be telling tales for much longer,
It is so dear and – so what?

He holds a rooster in his hand,
And feels him like one should,
It costs a zloty – with a ton
He says – quietly and sharply.

And from 'Hilkeh' you can get
Chickens – and a large turkey,
And also baby chicks – like wings
Barely out of the eggs.

And also Roosters from Kalekutsk,
With red combs – fire!
And also chickens -- thin as stick,
But are egg layers.

If you want ducks, geese, turkeys,
Which will simply gladden your heart,
Small ones, large ones – like a ram
Red, yellow, white and black.

You will get it all from him
He has the goods aplenty
He is always very busy –
He has buyers without end.

'Hilkeh' sits among them all
Like a king upon his throne
He eats a roll with savor
Holding a rooster in his hand…

Deaf Moshe and the Pony

And here appears,
With a scraggly beard,
Dragging himself along, step by step,
'Deaf Moshe' and his pony.

He keeps his pony pretty decently,
And his poverty keeps growing larger –
He tries to condition it away from
Eating to much.

And the customers joke –
In horse lore – a great specimen
He is raising it on fasting
So it will get closer to its end…

Every day a kilo less,
Instead of oats – plain hay
Despite the fact he is getting leaner, thinner,
Still he drags along so-so.

Practically weaned him entirely of eating
A 'Hey' in the Siddur and 'Oy!
It has completely forgotten
The taste of oats, and hay and straw.

Until one time when it stood unmoving
It didn't want to go anymore, that's it –
Suddenly! -- he doesn't know from what
It lays down and dies.

He doesn't react too strongly to this,
He doesn't even scratch himself,
He runs over to the horse merchant
And buys himself a fresh 'cat.'

And so he drags himself, thank God,
The sun shines on his bit of a beard,
In the crowded market turmoil
With his half-dead pony…

This was Tomaszow

By Sh. Leibowitz

Tomaszow, which lay in the area between Warsaw and Lemberg, had, as its principal thoroughfare, which we called a *'szosai'* (a paved road) which cut through the length from Tomaszow. On the north side, it was called the Zamość *Gasse,* which started from the house of Yehoshua Bergenbaum, a grain merchant, and from the south, it was called the Lemberg Gasse, or as the Jews called it, the Kiri Szosai. It was on this street that all the municipal and district offices were concentrated, which ended with the building of the Starosta. In the [decade of] the 30's the settlement developed and became built up all the way to Blonder's factory.

In the center of the town was the marketplace, or as it was called, the '*Rynek,*' a very large four sided area, which was built up with houses which in the front were businesses (stores), together with dwelling space. From the east, the Fatretzer *Gasse* was cut out, or as it was once called the Szkoler *Gasse*, which stretched to Sznury.

To the west went the Krasnobrod *Gasse,* which stretched to Rebbe Nachman's yard, and was later built out up to Rogozno, from the edge of the marketplace on the northeast, ran Starozamojska, which led to the cemetery; and from the southeast, was the Koscielna *Gasse*, which was entirely occupied by Jews. From the south west corner, was the Synagogue *Gasse*, which led to the Praga and Wola the most densely occupied poor Jewish neighborhood. Ulica Tadeusza Kosciuszki street stretched away to the west, which went as far as Baretsky's forest. Among the principal streets a labyrinth of side streets could be found, which was densely occupied by Jews. The Christians mostly lived on the outskirts of the city, and in the '*Parcela.*'

The Commercial Center

Despite the fact that a large number of wood products and grain merchants could be found, whose commerce was not tied down to the marketplace, nevertheless, the principal commerce was tied into the marketplace, which apart from the stores around the marketplace, and the side streets, four rows of stores were built in the middle of the marketplace about 150 years prior by the Jews, in which each block contained 50 stores. After Poland's establishment [as an independent nation], when the Jewish population grew larger, and there was no other means of making a living beside trade, the Jews constructed an additional four rows of new businesses which was called the 'Halles.' Ninety-nine percent of these businesses belonged to Jews, with the principal earnings coming on the market day, in which the travelers to the villages would also set up stands, but the competition was very great, and very little was earned. With the rise of the gentile 'Spoldzielnias' and the economic boycott, and the screwing up of taxes especially aimed at Jews, many Jews were ruined, and didn't have enough wherewithal to make it through the day.

Craftsmen; Free Occupations

After the First [World] War, the Jewish community brought in Dr. Shulman, the first Jewish doctor. Before the Second [World] War, three doctors were already living in town, apart from the Jewish lawyer, Mandeltort from Zamość and Nick from Lemberg.

In Tomaszow, the so-called corner scribes were still in existence who wrote applications in the *Sand* and the Magistrate, or *Urzad Skarbowy*. They were Abraham Steinworcel (*der Nagid*) and Itcheh Mekhalis.

There were also two Jewish dentists: Eliezer Dornfeld, Secretary in the Magistrate, and Peltik Lederkremmer in the Tax office.

The Magistrate

Despite the fact that the majority of the population was Jewish, the authorities never permitted a Jewish *Burmistrz* to be elected. Since the establishment of Poland, the Burgomasters were Krzyzanowski, an old drunkard, Ligowski, a very energetic man, he had all the streets in the city paved, Dr. Jablonski, and the last was a Colonel Emeritus, Jan Minar, from the AZAN Camp. Jews were represented in the elections for the office of councilman.

In the period between the world wars, Avigdor Eidelsberg, Lejzor Lederkremmer, Yaakov Lederkremmer, Shmuel Shiflinger and Henry Edelstein served in this capacity.

The Way of Living

It was in keeping with the times. Up to the First [World] War, people were called by their father's or mother's name. After the First War, more by their family name, but part of the families had a collective surnames had been handed down from generation to generation. It is interesting that among the original family names one could find such names as Schwindler, Schmutz, Totengraber. The family nicknames were *'Tsapes, Kozakn, Flei, Bmenokis, Zalupeh's, Nitz, Kaserchikeh's'*, etc.

Religious Life

The older generation was entirely one hundred percent observant, and in general it was religious Jewry that put its stamp on the city. Not a single business was open on the Sabbath (apart from the hairdresser). When the market day fell on a Festival holiday, even the peasants didn't come to town, because all the places of business were closed.

Houses of Worship

The Synagogue, 2) The Great *Bet HaMedrash*, or as it was called, the 'Plain' Bet HaMedrash, 3) The Second House, where the simple folk congregated, 4) The Belz *shtibl*, 5) R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*, 6) The *Bet HaMedrash* of the Hasidim, where the Kotzk worshiped, 7) The Chelm *shtibl*, 8) R' Nachman's *shtibl*, 9) The Kielce *shtibl*, 10) The Sanz-Cieszanow *shtibl*, 11) The Ger *shtibl*, 12) The Radzyn *shtibl*, 13) The Husyatin *shtibl* 14) The Trisk *shtibl*, 15) The Mizrahi Minyan, 16) The Agudah Minyan, 17) The Zionist Minyan.

Rabbis and Yeshiva Headmasters between the Two World Wars

Rabbi Yerakhmiel Weinberg (The *Rebbe* of Krylov), Rabbi Ary' Leibusz Rubin (The Rabbi of Cieszanow), Rabbi Meir Abraham Frischerman (The director of Law), Rabbi Mordechai Shukh (Novardok Yeshiva), Rabbi Sholom Yekhezkiel Rubin (*Netzakh Yisrael*).

Ritual Slaughterers

R' Mordechai Joseph Baum, R' Yaakov Schneider, R' Sholom Tarim, R' Wolf Ber Luszczanowsky Kaufman (The Shokhet of Zditicz), R' Baruch Sega"l Hurwitz.

Mohels

It was considered an honor to perform this task, for which they did not receive remuneration, but did to discharge the mitzvah.

R' Yaakov Schneider, a slaughterer and inspector, R' Yekhezkiel Lehrer, R' Pinchas Goldstein, and R' Baruch Hurwitz, slaughterer and inspector.

The Shamashim

Moshe Leasers, Elazar Shammes (The Synagogue), Nahum Zucker (The Great *Bet HaMedrash*), Abraham Reinman, Yitzhak Stern, Yaakov Prager, the *Gabbai* of the Rabbi of Cieszanow, who was also led services.

Educational Institutions

Page 354: The Tomaszow Rabbis in the year 5691 [1931] gathering Maot Hittim.

From the right: R' Ary' Leibusz Rubin k"z (The Cieszanow Rabbi), and Rabbi Yerakhmiel Mordechai Weinberg k"z (Rabbi of Krylov).

Talmud Torah, where the poorer class was concentrated.

Mizrahi Heder, 'Yavneh,' where the [children of] the modern and Zionist sympathetic parents were.

Agudah Heder, Yesodei HaTorah, where [the children of] the Hasidic and ultra-orthodox parents were concentrated.

Bet Yaakov (orthodox girls' school).

Apart from these, there were very many private tutors.

Elementary: 1) Abraham Shimon Hochman, Bezalel Kellner, Lejzor Zalman Schnur.
Beginner's Gemara: Pinchas Korngold, Zalman Bezhis Weltsher, Nachmi' Beinwohl, David Ofen, Meir Laneil, Mendl Laneil.
Gemara with *Tosafot*: Aharon Untzig, Simcha'li Herzog, Benjamin Tepler, Meir Klarman.

When the higher Heder classes were completed, the young lads went to study in the Cieszanow *shtibl*, [or] Rabbi Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*. The Novardok Yeshiva, Bet Joseph, was located in the city for a short time, and the last to be organized was the Yeshiva *Netzakh Yisrael*, under the direction of the brother Rabbis Meir and Yekhezkiel Rubin, and a part of the young lads traveled to study in Yeshivas in faraway places.

Secular Studies

The majority of Jewish youth did not attend the general school because they studies in the Agudah-Mizrahi *Heders,* or in the case of the very ultra-orthodox, who as a matter of principle, didn't want to send their children to the *Szkola.* They received their secular education from the private tutor Joel Handelsman (Badkhan) and Yaakov Szerer. Both were known in the city as teachers that taught the Holy Tongue, Yiddish, Polish, writing and arithmetic.

The lads who studied in a *shtibl,* but wanted to know Polish, applied themselves assiduously under Shevakh Wolkowsky's brief.

Despite the fact that there was a gymnasium in the city, only a small percentage of the Jewish children who completed the *Powszecna Szkola* proposed to continue their studies in the intermediate school, because of poverty, religious observance, and anti-Semitic limitations that were placed on Jewish children.

Philanthropic and Charitable Institutions

Apart from the Jewish congregation and the Hevra Kadisha, which oldest founded institutions, there existed: 1) A *Gemilut Hasadim* Bank, *2)Lekhem Aniyim*, 3) *Linat HaTzedek*, 4) A Women's Aid Society, 5) A local school of the stocking factory,6) Family Purity Committee, 7) The Rabbi Meir *Baal HaNess* Charity.

However, it is worth remarking that because of the prevailing way of life, most of these charities were conducted as a result of private initiatives, on a single basis, and not organized. Also, each *shtibl* had its own assistance committee. To help their own people.

Productive and Economic Institutions

The Jewish *Volksbank*, the Merchants Society which was established in the period of 'Grabski's Wagon,' and led by Moshe Baretsky, a manual trades union, a small business society.

Leisure Amusements of the Young

In the summer, young people would swim in Balan's river, not far from the slaughterhouse (a legend circulated in the city that the river must claim a victim every year). Also, one would go to get fresh air in Baretsky's forest, which was also called Siwa Dolina.

In the city, there was one cinema in *Dom Ludowy*, and one private cinema belonging to Mr. Galecki on the Lvov Street.

This is in addition to the events that were available to each person in his own [political] party.

Political Parties

Agudat Yisrael, Tze 'irei Agudat Yisrael, Poalei Agudat Yisrael, Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael. Mizrahi, Tse 'irei Mizrahi, Torah V'Avodah B'nai Akiva. General Zionists, *Tse 'irei Zion, Poalei Tzion* on the Right, *HaShomer, HeHalutz, Bund, Zukunft, Freiheit*, Zionists, Revisionists, *Betar, Brit Khayil.*

Emigration

Up to the First World War, the poor populace emigrated to America, and the large majority of them traveled only for a couple of years to make a few dollars and then return. After The First World War, when the gates of America were locked, the young people emigrated to the Land of Israel, and to South American countries.

Attributes of our City

By Sholom Licht

Page 359: *At a Wedding Reception*

From the Right: *Abraham Singer, Yekhezkiel Heller, Rabbi Sholom Yekhezkiel Rubin, Yerakhmiel Steinberg (the Groom) and Rabbi Meir Rubin.*
Standing: *Peretz Singer*

Page 365: *A Complaint from [deleted]*[92]

With God's help
[In Hebrew]
To be publicized by R' Mendl Weissleder, how R' XXX was called to a Torah court, approximately four or five weeks ago, and did not comply, and after arriving, and officially received a personal subpoena that he should present himself, and after which he was sent for three times, and [still] did not present himself, and afterward he has a need to defend himself, permission is granted to R' Mendl Weissleder, to fine R' XXX with all manner of fines that he can levy against him, this being published, with God's help on the fifth day of [the portion] Tazria 25th of Adar II 5798 here in Tomaszow, signed by Meir Abraham Frishman the Teacher of Justice of this location.

Let the Community See This, and Judge!

[In Yiddish]
As it is well-known according to law, a defendant who deliberately avoids trial may not be counted to a minyan, and quite obviously is not eligible to lead prayer services.

I inquire further, wether a community may discharge its obligation to have the Shofar blown on Rosh Hashana by such an individual.

Let the Heavens Hear!

Mendl Weissleder

The original is in my possession, and I can show it to anyone who would like to see it.

D. Z.

Page 367: *Jews listen to a fine orator in the Bet HaMedrash*

From Right to Left: *Shlomo Knopf, Nahum Zucker (Shammes), Mendl Sykevich and Yekhezkiel Reisenfeld.*

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Were I to desire and summarize the principal characteristics of our city, I would say the following:

The *Synagogue* was our beauty and our splendor, our pride and our brilliance, [it was] the greatness of the Jewish residents, and in it, we had something that we could take pride and elevate ourselves. It was among the very few synagogues in Poland with its beautiful artistic architecture, age and history.

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92 *Editorial remark*: The name of the defendant had been deleted by us for understandable reasons.

The *Great Bet HaMedrash*, the gathering point of the city, were all municipal and private issues were aired out, either privately, or in public.

The *Hasidic shtiblakh*, the living nerve of the city.

The *organizations,* the nest of the awakening and roiling young people.

The *Cieszanow Rebbe*, the strengthening of faith, joy and spiritual refreshment.

With the Rabbis, control over ritual life of the Jewish community.

The Shamashim, the implementation organ of the Torah-based regime of the Rabbis and the congregation.

Despite this, there is a desire to refresh one's memory, to extract additional facts in order to memorialize the way of life of our home city, where our cradles stood, and we brought our various dreams and striving to fruition, where our forbears raised generations of faithful Jews, who, under the most difficult circumstances, clamored with their last shred of energy to adhere to those sacred principles that we received at Mount Sinai. The city, that was a link in that great golden chain which was called 'Polish Jewry.' [It was] the heart and mind of the Jewish people, the great reservoir of life, the spiritual pool from which all countries all over the Diaspora, and with the Land of Israel at its head, drew their ethnic and spiritual force, it was such a fruitful community, which was so gruesomely and murderously cut down in an Amalek-like fashion.

It is, therefore, worth memorializing at greater length, and in greater detail their way of life, customs and practices, which will be for our own benefit and perhaps serve in some small way, to inspire our children, whom we must raise as faithful heirs and representatives of that great and highly valued Polish Jewry.

Our city was never too well off economically. There was a small number of wealthy people, and a small number of homeowners, but the majority consisted of the so-called Jews who were *balebatim*, storekeepers and the ordinary folk, which consisted of manual craftsmen and small time village traders, who worked hard for their living, and regrettably, most did not extract a decent living from doing so, and did not live in particularly comfortable dwellings. Up to 1916, there was no electric lighting, pipes were entirely unknown, water distribution was something we heard about, and one did not even dream of refrigerators and washing machines. Central heating was found in only one house in the entire city, this being *Sejmik Powiatowy*. Water was carried by a water carrier, and firewood for heating the house had to be provided by one's self, or in later times with coal. One would get up before dawn, to clean out the ashes, heat up the fireplace, getting up early in the morning and going to the *Bet HaMedrash* to recite a bit of the Psalms, or to study a chapter of the *Mishna*, *Gemara*, and to peer into a *Hasidic* text, and then to pray together with a *minyan,* and then come home.

Only then, did one take to work, opening stores, or beginning to do labor in the work places. All day long, a procession of Jews came through the stores and work places, not only the buyers, but those seeking a handout, for all manner of needs, for respectable impoverished people, who lived far away. To do this, young men went together as a team to do this. When one went home for the evening meal, a poor person was invited along to be given something to eat. As a Jew is wont to say, if there is provision for 8, then we can accommodate 9. All that is required is to add a spoon, and in many cases the guest was also invited to lodge. The children were pushed together, and a place was made. When children arrived, bunk beds were constructed. Weddings, circumcisions, signing of wedding contracts, redeeming the first born, all this was

organized n the home. A Bar Mitzvah celebration was totally unheard of. Among a small number of the young boys from the 'more well to do families' a festive repast was held for a very tight circle of relatives and friends, or simply, a whiskey toast was imbibed. The wives of the *balebatim* baked their own *Challahs*, and cakes in honor of the Sabbath, and a few even baked and entire 'baked bread' to last for the entire week. Every one of the houses of the *balebatim* had a baking oven, and every Sabbath, that was the place where *cholent* pots were placed, and on the top of the oven, tea and coffee for the Sabbath.

For a wedding, the preparation of baked goods began months in advance. Among the wealthy, a cook was hired, while among the poor, relatives helped with the preparations. The wedding canopy was set up, and the ceremony was performed on the *Schulhof,* out of doors, but in every home where a wedding was due to take place, on the Sabbath before the wedding there was a 'Prelude.' The groom was called to the Torah, and in most instances was honored with the '*Maftir*' *aliyah.* After worship there would be a *Kiddush*, and Saturday in the afternoon, a special party took place for the young men, the friends of the groom. If the groom had any acquaintance with scripture, he would deliver a short simple homily. One did not need to be an accomplished scholar to do this, because if one didn't come up with something original, one could learn what to say from a book, and in general, the groom could be certain that more than quoting the first verses from the Gemara or *Rambam* would not be possible, because the custom was to interrupt these remarks with a joyful march in order not to embarrass anyone who was not capable of doing this. Also, the girlfriends of the bride gathered around her to participate in her bidding farewell to her girlhood. Before the wedding, the groom and bride, separately, visited with Rabbis and Jews of good will to receive their blessing. On the day of the wedding they were kept apart under lock and key for the entire day, weeping, and doing repentance for the past, and prayed for a good future, especially reciting the prayer of being privileged to able to bring worthy and observant generations into the world.

A groom, who was from out of town, was anticipated, and was met on his way into the city with singing. Before the wedding ceremony, the young men would come to greet the groom, and immediately after the Rabbi came for the *badeken*, the young men departed, because it was considered shameful to tarry at the wedding ceremony, not to say the meal afterwards, unless you were among the close family. After reciting the blessing for the meal, a 'Mitzvah Dance' was performed, in which each of the fathers danced with the bride, holding opposite ends of a napkin. After the wedding, the bride had her hair cut off, and a number donned a wig, or put on a kerchief, but this custom waned over time. The escorts to the wedding canopy were largely the parents of the couple, meaning the fathers, from both sides, would escort the groom, and the two mothers would escort the bride. At the wedding of a second child, the parents did not do the escorting. At the wedding of the youngest child, the parents were adorned with a floral crown at the time of the 'Mitzvah Dance.' The groom wore a *kittl* during the wedding ceremony, and the Rabbi was the one who performed the wedding ceremony. The *Ketubah* was written by the town Cantor, or the Shammes, and for this it was necessary to pay all who officiated.. Among the very observant, the newly married couple were never called by their name, but rather 'say you,' or, 'hear you,' especially among the Rabbis who would refer to themselves as 'Rabbi' and 'Rebbetzin.'

When the Good Lord helped out, and a child was expected, people engaged in a variety of deeds to secure a good result. Holy books such as '*Raziel Mal'akh*' or '*Noam Elimelekh*' were put under the pillow of the expectant mother. If a boy was born, then the happiness was complete. Every day, the *Belfer* would come to read the *Shema* with the little children at evening, on Friday night, a male, before the circumcision, on a weekday evening, and then the circumcision itself, with a party. The Hasidim were especially rigorous in their observance of this protocol. Being a *Mohel* was considered to be a calling of high honor, and therefore did not command compensation. In the end, the people who performed the role of a *Mohel* were: R' Yaakov

Schneider the *Shokhet*, R' Yekhezkiel Lehrer, R' Baruch Horowitz, the *Shokhet*, and R' Pinchas Goldstein. Naturally, all of these men who performed circumcision followed through with oral cleansing of the cut (*Metzitza B'Peh*) without exception[93]. The honor of being the *Sandak* was usually accorded to the Rabbis or *Rebbes*.

Until the age of three, a boy's hair was not cut, and on the day of the [first] haircut, the child was wrapped in a prayer shawl, and taken to the elementary school teacher who began to study the alphabet with him. From that time forward, every day, the *Belfer* would come to the home in the morning, to recite the morning blessings with the children, and to take them to *Heder*. Up to the First World War, Jews in general, did not send their children to [secular] school at all. As private teachers, there were R' Joel Handelsman, and R' Yaakov Lehrer, Jews with beards and side locks, who taught Yiddish, Polish, Russian and Arithmetic. After the war, girls [also] went to school, and boys – only from the modern households. The boys were sent to 'Private Teachers,' or 'Talmud Torah,' or the Heder of either the *Mizrahi* or *Agudah*. Young children would go to Heder in the evening up to the portion of *Terumah*, while the older ones would go until *P'kudei*,[94] ending [the semester] with a party. At that point, those parents that wanted their children to be able to learn, and to remain observant Jews, were sent to a *shtibl* to continue their learning. Mostly, this was concentrated in the Sanz-Cieszanow *shtibl*, or R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*. That was where there was the largest collection of books in the city.

No [special] Bar Mitzvah ceremonies were carried out. When the boys got older, they began to try out *Hasidism* by attending the *Tisch* at the home of the *Rebbes*. The majority portion gathered at the local *Rebbes*, such as the Rabbi and Tzaddik R' Yehoshua'leh זצ"ל and his son, the Rabbi and Tzaddik R' Leibusz Rubin זצ"ל. Part of them traveled to Belz, and a very small part [went] to the grandsons of the Rebbe of Trisk who visited Tomaszow every year, or its vicinity. After the school period was over for the children of the common people, they took themselves to learning a craft, and the children of merchants provided assistance to their parents in the business. Only very few continued their studies in a gymnasium or a high school, and that, first after the establishment of [an independent] Poland. In contrast to this, a large portion of the modern young people joined up with the kibbutzim of the *HaShomer HaTza'ir*, until the '*Mizrahi*' awakened the new flow of national Zionist feelings among the young people. It injected pride and vitality. In a second group, a folk and social movement took form which mostly coalesced around the *Bund*. As a result, the majority of the young people ascended to new paths with new expectations in life and the Jewish future. And the newly lit fires of 'nationalism' and 'socialism' that were internalized within the various parties that were established, from the left and the right, devoured the religious youth. Everyone tore hunks from the body of Torah-dedicated Jewry. In the final years, the *Agudah* itself was compelled to open up training with '*Haluztim*' but it was already very little effective. The majority went off to the secular camps, leaving behind only the purely Torah-enlightened youth.

Community and religious life was carried out through the city *Shamashim*, meaning the two *Shamashim* of the synagogue (R' Moshe Lehrer's, R' Abraham *Shamash*, Reinman) of the great municipal *Bet HaMedrash*, R' Nahum *Shamash*, [and] from the Hasidic *shtibl*, R' Eliezer *Shamash*. Every proclamation of the local *Bet Din*, and the Rabbinical authorities was made known by way of the four *Shamashim*. They visited every

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93 This custom has fallen into disfavor in modern times with all but the very observant. Incidents have been reported where STD, such as *herpes simplex* has been communicated to the infant from the *Mohel's* mouth, in some cases resulting in the death of the infant.

94 Late January, or early February, in accordance with the Torah reading cycle.

house of worship (17 in number) gave a bang on the table, and began with the language of 'in this manner we announce and make known by the authority of the *Bet Din*, Leaders of the Community, that....' The *Shamashim* were used if t was necessary to summon someone to a religious trial, or. God forbid, if it was necessary to conduct a funeral ceremony for little children, all the necessary appurtenances to a ritual circumcision, weddings, and funerals, as well as escorting Rabbis to each function required of their position, such as *kashering* the mill, gathering charitable contributions before Passover, at community meetings, etc. They also invited people to the circumcision ceremony, or distributed written invitations to weddings. All of this was done through the *Shamashim* of the city.

It is worth noting the by-laws regarding the invitation of guests to celebrations such as weddings and circumcisions, signing nuptial agreements, as done specifically through the community *Shamash*. This has its origins going back to the by-laws of the *Va'ad Arba Aratzot*, with the intent that the sitting elder of the month should be able to control the number of people that would be invited to the celebration, because the monies available for the repast were limited, in accordance with the financial circumstances of the celebrant. And in accordance with the closeness of family relation. Even though these by-laws became inoperative, the old 'custom' nevertheless survived, that only the *Shamash* should extend such invitations.

It is interesting to note, that in th last years, in anti-Semitic Poland, the Post Office forbade the *Shamashim* from distributing the wedding invitations, using the excuse that they are making light of the Postal Service. The same was true of estate managers, who would travel to Warsaw or Lemberg, who, many times before the trip, would undergo inspection by the police to see if they were not carrying letters with them, and if a letter was found on their person, they were always fined with a larger fine.

The municipal government had its own couriers and messengers, among them a Jew, Blind Hirsch. It is interesting that he was not able to read or write Polish. He was not familiar with the Latin alphabet at all, so his children would write addresses and direction on the flip side, and it was in this way that he oriented himself as to whom he had to make the delivery. News of a general nature was publicized in the city. The *Shamashim* would make these announcements every day in the synagogue, the entire marketplace, and even many side streets. On Friday, towards evening, all four of the *Shamashim* would go about in the entire city, and sound the call for worship and the lighting of candles.

Many marriages were arranged among local residents, with approximately 30% from outside the city, but almost all of them through [professional] marriage brokers. Since the time of the First World War, when the young people became modernized, with open eyes, a larger portion already sought for their life's partner on their own. Despite all of this, the occupation of marriage broker remained a good one. In general, the custom persisted among the more important *balebatim*. The father of the bride provided a specification, meaning, such-and-such a young man, a statement, as it were, in the following form: I, the humble man, undersign, assume the obligation of paying a dowry for my daughter... such-and-such, support, of so much for so many years. Such a note was only given to a serious marriage broker, and when he came to the home of the father of the groom, this note was evidence that this was not just a fantasy on the part of the marriage broker, but a genuine assumption of responsibility where it is possible to 'talk turkey.'

In the final years, because of the economic boycott, want in sustenance, the uncertain political situation, and the harassment of Jews, in which everyone had the feeling that the ground under them was shifting, there was a drop in marriages. As a result, the number of older unmarried boys, and spinsters grew.

The older generation, meaning those of middle age and higher, were almost 95% strictly observant and orthodox, not touching their beards, wearing a long *khalat,* with a Jewish cap on their head. On the Sabbath, the Hasidim would wear a velvet cap, a jacket with a deep split as Sabbath garb. Part wore long silk jackets. Only the Rabbis would wear a *shtrymel. Hasidim* would go each day to bathe in the *mikva,* and on Fridays, almost the entire city would go. Because the steam bath was part of the *mikva,* and since no private bathing facility was not available, almost everyone came to get washed up and to bathe, also to steam out their laundry, and to be switched as well, and then, while they were there, visit the *mikva.* Especially for the poorer classes, the bath was a matter of life and death, and a means to be refreshed. Without exception, the women of the city observed the protocol of 'Family Purity.' The younger generation had modernized itself. The young people wore shorter garments with a '*maciejowka*[95]' on their heads. The older ones wore regular hats, which was considered very modern (In the early twenties, they wanted to eject all the young men from the Husyatin *shtibl* who wore such hats). Worldly young people were entirely emancipated, but despite this, there was no open violation of the Sabbath. All the stores (which were 99% managed by Jews) were closed from the time of the arrival of the Sabbath. The gentiles already knew that on the Sabbath, nothing could be procured in the city. When the market day fell on a festival holiday, it was delayed, and no peasant would come to the city. Only towards the end, did the barbers begin to work on the Sabbath, and one soda water business (candy store) [was open].

N the Sabbath, the common folk would arrive in the synagogue and the *Bet HaMedrash* to recite Psalms, and the Jews who were *balebatim* would go to the *shtibl* for study. The ardent Hasidic youth, along with the young students would spend their time at the house of the *Rebbe* of Cieszanow, who presided over a *Tisch* three times during the Sabbath, where it was lively and spirited. In general, he was the backbone and leader of the young orthodox. The modern young people spent their time in their several party offices, and some with strolling along the Kiri highway. However, in general, the city found itself under the seal of religious life.

Most of the commerce in the city consisted of dealing in wood, wheat, and flour, food businesses, tailoring and notions, ironmongers, egg merchants, jobbers, estate agents, butchers, horse traders, clothing stores, mills and factories. There were no industrial enterprises. Craftsmen worked to satisfy local needs. The second-hand merchants were the exception, who worked at resale in the city, its vicinity, and at market days.

When there was a dispute, Jews would go to the Rabbi for a Rabbinical [Torah] court. Most such Rabbinical courts were presided over by the Rebbe of Cieszanow, who was regarded as a decent and wise man, well suited to the task, and not an idler. Usually, the Rebbe, on his own, would rule. However, if the issue was particularly difficult, and the protagonists wanted facilitators, they usually engaged R' Aharon Kiezel and R' Shabs'l Kawenczuk, who were aggressive facilitators. Sometimes, the following were also engaged: R' Yehoshua Goldstein, R' Yekhezkiel Lehrer, R' Pinchas Zilbergeld, R' Mikhl Yuda Lehrer, Avigdor Eidelsberg, and to be separated for long life, R' Zusha Kawenczuk ו"נ. When a Jew refused to submit to a Rabbinical court, the Rabbi would issue a ruling which meant that the second party had the right to file a complaint in the secular court, as well as to apply a variety of moral pressures as well as boycott.

There were also people who made a living from 'sacred callings' apart from the ritual slaughterers, Rabbis, Judges, *Shamashim* and Cantors. There were also three book dealers, R' Chaim Yehoshua Licht, Yehoshua Hirsch Sofer ז"ל, and R' Moshe'leh Sofer, R' Aharon Sofer, who also did a bit of a business with *tzitzit.* R' Eliezer Gershon Teicher הי"ד was a special vendor who dealt in scholarly books. There were also seasonal merchants, 6-8 merchants who sold *Etrogim* and 20 matzo bakeries.

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95 See definition on 50, 123, 251

In almost every house among the balebatim, the necessary holy writ was found, such as the Pentateuch, Mishna, *Eyn Yaakov*, a translated Pentateuch, Supplications, several volumes of the Gemara, the *Mishna Berura*, or Rabbi SH'A. Additionally there would be a couple of Hasidic texts such as *Noam Elimelekh, Kedushat Levi, Avodat Yisrael, Ohayv Yisrael, Maor V'Shemesh*, etc. Anyone who was something of a scholar owned his own complete set of *Shas*, and however more refined a Jew he was, he owned more books, which were considered the most beautiful and most important treasure, a bauble in which one took great pride.

Town politics, along with a variety of matters, and world news got a thorough airing at the small garden by the '*Tchayneh*' (The *Ludowy*) [96]where the 'Jews with canes' where the jobbers and people who worked on commission would stand.

When an orator would come to town, or someone who was a party spokesman, he would speak in the municipal *Bet HaMedrash*, which was the approachable platform for all of the people.

Before The First World War, a substantial immigration took place to America, but for the most part, it was only the men who went alone, leaving their family behind. After that, when they had accumulated a large sum of money, they would return home to the family. Later on, after the war, when the gates to America were closed, an immigration began to Latin America, and to the and of Israel where, no evil eye intended, hundreds of families form Tomaszow reside to this day.

And despite the fact that life back home was hard and poor, there is a longing ache for it, and there is a need to constantly remind one's self about our home city, with its customs, with the full-blooded Jewish life, which tragically has now been permanently destroyed. Let us, at the very least, leave behind a bit of a record for coming generations.

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96 This appears to be a combination reading room and tea room that served as a social gathering point in the town.

Memories of a Tomaszow Scion

By Fulya Haut
Nahariya, Israel

Tomaszow Lubelski was a city full of life, with a variety of [political] parties on the left and right. During The First World War, the first Zionist organization was created in Tomaszow, led by the Reichenberg brothers and Yankl Dornfeld, and the first labor union with the worth comrades Weissberg, Schuldiner, and the writer of these lines at the head. At that time, two drama circles were created, one was Zionist, and the second Bundist. The first was led by our friend Dornfeld, and the second by the worth comrades Chaim Ikhl Horn, Schuldiner, Weissberg, Blank and the writer of these lines. Apart from this, activities were conducted by all the other Jewish organizations, such as the Agudah, Mizrahi, such that the entire shtetl pulsed with activity.

Who does not recognize the poor quarter of the city, the so-called Praga, with its craftsmen of various trades, the butchers, tall and strong, but with kind eyes, the 'Second House' where the tradespeople would worship, on Friday evening, their songs at the Third Sabbath Meal, the *shtiblakh* of the Hasidim, their praying and singing, their joy and liveliness, and in general, the sense of transcendence of the entire shtetl during Sabbaths and Festival Days.

Who does not remember the pious Pesach'l the dear Jewish man with a full heart and pleasant demeanor, and the childlike lively eyes, and the *Shammes*, of the Great Synagogue, R' Moshe Lesser's with his mournful refrain: *In To The Synagogue!*

And the second *Shammes*, the sacred martyr Nahum Zucker, with his face half flayed by the German beasts, was occupied to his last dying breath, with the slain, who lay in the streets of Tomaszow.

Honor their Sacred Memory!



Our City

By Yaakov Laneil

The power of one's hometown birthplace is great, in that it remains in the memories of an individual until his last day. There are incidents that are of sufficient importance, that occurred a rather short time ago, and yet have been forgotten, out of one's heart, as if they never happened. In contrast to this, every time someone reminds me of Tomaszow, it suddenly stands before my eyes, it and its streets, byways, its Jewish men and women, gentile men and women, and here it is! I see it in my mind's eye, spread out in the palm of my hand.

The Market

I begin at the market, because it was the center of all that transpired in the city, and as such, was also the center of Jewish life. It was called the square, but the rounded shape was very much like a loaf of bread. On its periphery were stores, stores [one after another], and in the center, a row of tables [manned] by male and

female vendors, especially women: [they would be] selling fruits and vegetables, keeping up a loud chatter with their neighbors, on all manner of subjects. The rumormongers of the entire city. Everything is known to them, and nothing escapes their cognizance. If there is a wedding in town: their faces radiate joy, they have to tell each other about all the wedding preparations going on, how many dresses the bride has, how many types of desserts have been prepared. Whether the bride is pretty or ugly, is the groom a scholarly sort, or an ignoramus. And if, God forbid, there is a funeral in town, their faces are sad. They relate the praises, or the criticism of the deceased, amidst the pained sighs, accompanying the use of the phrase '*Rachmana-Litzlan.*'[97] At once, they have great power and repertoire with blessings and curses. Their blessings are among the most prominent in the entire city, and their imprecations cannot be found even with research.

The tables of vendors a re arranged in a half circle together with awnings. These are the vendors of swine flesh. These gentiles trumpet across the square with a call like swans. They are like an alien limb grafted onto a Jewish market, and they are separated from their Jewish neighbors. Each opposite one another: The Jews: Running, shouting, sweating a lot, curing and blessing. If a woman passes by with her basket in hand, and all the women vendors call out to her, praising their wares. The Gentiles: Standing silently, each at the side of their table, the carcasses of the pigs, with the dismembered parts in earthenware containers in front of them. If a buyer comes along, they will simply look at him, tranquilly, and wait until he [the buyer] makes a selection. In general, there is no contact between the Jewish vendors and the gentiles, however, at a time of danger, each one helps the other: when vagabonds, drunks, or troublemakers fall upon the Jews to despoil their goods, the gentile vendors will rise up to help their Jewish neighbors.

In the middle of the square there are three rows of stores. In these stores anything and everything is bought and sold. A farmer, when he comes with a wagon, it is laden full with the output of his labors: geese, ducks, hens, potatoes, beans, grain and fruit. He sits on the wagon, and waits for buyers. The Jews mill around the square, going from one farmer to the next, from wagon to wagon, buying the merchandise, dispensing the money into the farmer's hands. The farmer, on receiving the money, in exchange for his produce, goes out around the square to buy his provisions: a jacket for his wife, or shoes for his daughter, satin, a covering for boots, salted fish, thread, all of this is available in the large square. The tumult is especially great on Thursdays, which is Market Day in Tomaszow. On that day, the square becomes so filled with wagons, that it is difficult to traverse it, and squeezing between the wagons, the Jews try to maintain their balance, with the ends of their garments tucked into their belts, and their boots sunk into the mud. They conduct bargaining in order to increase their profit, and it is safe to say, that from this day, the 'Market Day,' was the day on which the livelihood of each and every Jew in the city hung. During the course of the week, the Jews of Tomaszow would pray for good weather on Thursday. And if a driving rain would come during the summer, or a drop of snow in the winter, on a Thursday, many of the residents of the city were left without sustenance for the entire week.

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97 From the Aramaic, for '*May The Merciful One Save Us.*'

The Houses of Worship

Page 371: *A Jew on His Way to the Bathhouse on Friday*

Page 374: *A Group from Betar*

Standing from the Right: *Aharon Goldstein, Chaim Ehrlich, Benjamin Bluzer, and Shimshon Goldstein (sitting).*

The Great *Bet HaMedrash* is located several steps to the south of the square, and close to it, the Synagogue. Thought to be among the oldest and most beautiful in the country. This Synagogue also served as a place of sanctuary for the Jews during times of distress. During the First World War, the Jews congregated in the Synagogue during the time of the cannon bombardment by the Germans, before they captured the city. A fragment of shrapnel pierced the window and severed the leg of a girl. The entire pride of the city was invested in this Synagogue. Every tourist, or important guest who was invited to the city, was taken to the Synagogue and would stand in wonder before it and its beauty, its size, and the extent of its dimensions, and the drawings done in it with such good taste. Pictures taken [sic: taking their themes] from the *Tanakh* were drawn on its walls and ceilings, with groined cavities, showing the binding of Isaac, the signs of the Zodiac, etc. Next to the Bet HaMedrash, a large stone had been places; it marked the grave of tens of Jewish children that were murdered in the year *Ta"kh* [1648] who were buried there. Because of this stone, and the legend that I will recount, in what follows, the children of the city feared to pass by this location at night, near the Synagogue and the *Bet HaMedrash.*

A legend grew up among the children, and a person passed the Synagogue at midnight, and heard recognizable voices of people who had already died, coming from the Synagogue. When he paused a moment to listen, he heard that he was being called to come to the Torah. The man went to the Bima, and died the following day. Only several tens of meters from the Synagogue, was the prayer house of the Belz Hasidim. Immediately across form this was the bathhouse and the *mikva.* Every morning, it was possible to see the religious Jews coming out of the *mikva* trembling from the morning chill, and facing to walk past the *Bet HaMedrash*

Friday was bathing day. The bath house was constructing in the Turkish style: a large oven, fueled by wood, with waters poured on heated bricks would produce a cloud of steam that filled the bath house, furnished with benches in the form of stairs. It was on these stairs, that the Jews of the city would arrange themselves, each according to his ability to stand the heat, scraping their bodies and switching themselves, crying out in all manner of voice, from their pleasure. Not far from the bath house was the home of Zalman Schnur the *Melamed,* whose wife sold vinegar, made from old bread, and bran flour. My grandmother Zlata would tell that she remembers times when for one groschen, they would buy vinegar, add an egg, because there was a lack of small coins with which to give change.

Next to the house of Zalman Schnur was the 'courtyard' of R' Yehoshua'leh with the *shtibl* in the middle. In this courtyard, full of mystery, Rabbis and Torah scholars lived for generations with their families in poverty and want, who lever took so much as four steps from their place of study, learning the Torah day and night to fulfill the commandment, 'thou shalt study it by day and by night.' The entire courtyard and the shtibl was like a ghetto in miniature. The people of the courtyard knew of no other way, other than the path from the shtibl to their homes, and back. Two of the daughters of the courtyard were mutes. Eastward from the square was the entrance, at a slight distance to the fire house, made of wooden boards, in which the first

movies were shown in the city. Inside was the restaurant of Michaelek, a short gentile, as lithe as a cat, an officer of the fire brigade, and someone with a good dramatic sense. The sons of the *balebatim* gathered about him, and ate forbidden foods. To the south, ran the Lwowska Street; the most beautiful street in the city. Here could be found the houses of the wealthy, and that of some city officials. In the evenings, boys and girls would promenade here, and take in the redolent air.

The street was especially full on Friday and Saturday nights. The street divided itself into two different parts: the left side and the right side. On the right side, 'modern' couples would promenade. And the left side, which was shadowed in darkness, served the more rigorously observant, the ones who might ordinarily be found on the benches of the *Bet HaMedrash.*

The town. The town of Tomaszow was unique in its kind, a town with a *mezuzah* on every doorpost in which most of its cohorts spoke Yiddish. Lejzor'l the secretary, who remembered by heart all the birth dates of the residents of the city, and the Blind Hirsch, who did not know how to recognize the outlines of a letter of the alphabet, brought every notice from the town to its recipient.

Beside the town, was a public garden called the '*Kasseh Gorten,*' and it was here that couples would retire, to sit on a bench, when they tired of walking, of for other reasons requiring privacy. Or, also, the sons of *balebatim,* who were afraid to be seen smoking a cigarette publicly on the night of the Sabbath. Here were benches on which to lie down, and somewhat towards the middle a place for an orchestra.

At the edge of the garden, there was a pond in the midst of which frogs croaked. On one side of the pond there was a high fence, and on the second side was the Kuza Street called after the name of the jail. From the jail, sharp voices rent the air, and the singing of the inmates, which disrupted the whisperings of lovers, who were in various corners of the garden. Further on, from the jail, the street continued through descending streets, to the flour mill and the 'round' river, as it was called by the local people. Bathing would occur in this river, during the summer, and pleasure was derived from its refreshing waters that flowed from under the dams beside the mill.

The last house on Lwowska was that of the *Starosta* (the District Elder). When one turns to the right, and one goes downward along the descending streets, one passes over a mound of sand that was 'consumed' in part by the wagon drivers of the city for construction purposes and other requirements.

The forest. Only several hundred meters from the sand dunes the forest begins, without which it is not possible to describe the city itself. In this forest, the residents of the city spent a large part of their lives. It was in the forest that the first meetings of boys and girls took place, who organized the '*HaShomer*' movement. On summer evenings, and during the Sabbath, their songs of longing for The Homeland would resonate. It was in the forest that the first of the soccer players gathered, playing with a ball fashioned from rags, with the goal consisting of and area sectioned off with two poles, and they began to practice playing soccer. It was possible to encounter Jews in the forest, who were suffering from all manner of distress, sitting in the shadow of the pines, inhaling the air to the full capacity of their lungs. R' Leibusz Burg, who suffered from asthma, did not miss a single day of the summer in which he visited the forest.

The town Cantor, and his coir would go through rehearsals of '*Kol Nidre,*' and '*U'Nesaneh Tokef*' on one side of the forest, while on the other side, Pan Jan, a Cossack of the White Guard sat, who fled Russia after the revolution, playing on a balalaika, and singing songs in Yiddish for the enjoyment of all the groups in his vicinity. And here is a song, that has remained with me in my memory, from the month of Elul, in honor

of the approaching High Holy Days, sung by Pan Jan as follows:

Di Yomtovdikeh tegelakh haybn zikh on	The Holy Days begin
tsurikn hartziger tateh,	to draw near, dear Father,
A bisseleh vyn fun Yom Tov tsu farzukhn,	To taste a bit of wine from the holiday
is besser vi tsu laygn a lateh.	Is better than putting on a patch

The Cantor, and *Panie* Jan, accompanied by the chirping of the birds, was a concert that could only be heard during the month of Elul in the forest of Tomaszow.

Couple, couples would wander in various corners of the forest, and dreamt of futures in the shadows of the pines amid the chirping of the birds. Teachers would teach their students the *Gemara* in the forest, with *Tosafot*, and on Tisha B'Av the students would gather mushrooms, and forest berries for the wife of the teacher. In the forest, the gentile women would gather wood used for heating during the winter. The gentile women would rake the pine needles in the forest, and use them to cover the walls in their cottages, to keep out the winter cold. In the forest, there were ant hills, such that whoever touched them with his hand, or threw pine needles on it, sensed the odor of fermentation. Everyone believed that the odor was a deterrent against headaches. Many would gather around to inhale the ants, and they struck the ant hill with their hands, moving their hands quickly to their nostrils in order to relieve themselves of any distress in the head. Children who attempted to attack the ant colony by throwing a flaming match onto the ant hill, were educated by seeing how the ants put out the fire with their saliva, without the help of fire fighters.

My father, of blessed memory, was one of the regular visitors from the city, and it was from him that I got my love of trees and plants. He would get up early on evert Sabbath, and wake me up from my sleep, and took me into the forest in the capacity of his 'bearer,' since it was forbidden for him [sic: as an adult] to carry anything on the Sabbath. Sitting down at his regular hillock, he would look into a book until it was time to pray. When the hour of worship arrived, he would return to the city, and would go to pray at the *shtibl* of R' Yehoshua'leh. After noon, he would return to the forest until the *Mincha* prayer service time. My father, of blessed memory, was a man of strong character, stout-hearted, and did not stop his walks in the forest, even during the days of the predations by the followers of Haller. I remember one Sabbath of those days, when I sat by his side in the forest, on his 'hillock,' and suddenly, at a distance from us, I saw a soldier from the Haller ranks tramping in our direction, with a drawn sword in his hand. When I tried to importune my father that we should flee, he replied: I have never fled from a man, and I am not going to now. In silence, he sat, and waited for the soldier to arrive, and when the soldier reached us, to my dismay, he asked my father, whether he was aware of a certain type of white tree from which it would be possible to make brooms. My father explained to the soldier where to go, and my soul that had nearly burst – returned to me. *Lag B'Omer* was a forest day for all of the schoolchildren. All the schools, and the *Heder* classes, went out into the forest, as a group, under the direction of their teachers, and the *melamdim*, like an army going to do battle, armed with bows and arrows, full of aggressive spirit, each boy with his portion of food in his knapsack: ring cakes and a hard boiled egg, in an onion wrap, colored brown. Each 'section' under the oversight of its 'leader,' lit a campfire, ate its 'rations,' shot arrows, made camp and passed the time until the sun set.

Towards nightfall, a war took place between the various Heder students with stones and branches lashed together. The older boys fought without pity. One time, I came out of such a Lag B'Omer battle with a 'mouse' under one eye, such that my mother didn't recognize me.

Tomaszow-Lubelski – The City Where I Was Born

By Mordechai Ehrlich
Kiryat Motzkin, Israel

An inner emotion disturbs my rest – perhaps we will be too late! [It is this which] moves me to pen these lines.

I, one of the last of the generation of our city, in which we were raised and educated, despite the fact that we have been gone for decades. If we do not undertake to do this sacred task, it will not be done by the generation for whom that tie has ben sundered.

It is a responsibility that falls on all of us, to memorialize for all time all of the scions of the city who were murdered, and put to death such that no man knows where they lie buried.

Let this book serve as a monument for us and the coming generations.

My pen trembles when I remember what happened to my relatives, and in general, to the Jews of Tomaszow.

[It was] a city that counted about twenty thousand residents, most of them Jewish, that, in its day, was privileged to have a leader of the city who was Jewish – Yehoshua Fishelsohn ע"ה, surrounded by an abundance of pine forest, which served as a meeting place in the summer for young and old alike.

It was a city that was not uniformly developed, and was partly neglected. It had no sources of economic activity, no factories, with most of its residents living in considerable want, yet rich in its Jews. No matter in which direction you would turn – Jews. Religious Jews, Hasidim, and even a small number of progressive Jews. There was an abundance of synagogues, houses of study, and *Shtiblakh*, that throbbed from Jews at prayer, and adherence to Talmud study, with a refrain that spilled out into its streets.

Slowly, slowly, the course of life flowed on. Night – day, with each day like the next. Today was like yesterday, and so would be tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow would be like yesterday. The railroad was at a distance of seven kilometers from town.

Life is manifested with a traditional imprint, in the deeds and legacy of ancestors, a chain of generations, in a set of links, where each resembles the other. It was in the same place, in the same house that one's father, father's father, and his father, that one lived one's self, as it was received by inheritance.

Even the forms of livelihood, though impoverished, and of a minimal nature, they too were handed down as a legacy: storekeepers, merchants, saloon keepers, the Jews that served the nobleman, sporting houses 'forbidden,' 'Open Tobacco' without permission, tradespeople, butchers, wagon drivers, water carriers, etc. All anticipate the 'Market Day' on Thursday, the day that will sustain them for the remaining days of the

week, and especially to fund the preparations for the Sabbath.

'Market Day' was the basis for sustenance for hundreds of families. It is deeply etched into my memory, because my parents' home stood close to the place, and I was able to observe it for years.

In the heart of the city is a large, empty lot, around which goes a walk path shaded by trees, getting filled up from the earliest hours with hundreds of wagons from the village folk, with their wives, until there is literally no more room. Around the walk are stands on which are long white breads, black round loaves, pitas, rolls, and ring cakes. There are stands with fruits and vegetables, stands with ready-made clothing, shoes and boots. A Jewish woman with a barrel of salted fish, not of the best quality, whose odor could be sensed all around.

The women vendors sit under the burning sun in the summer, and in the winter they are cloaked in lamb's wool, with a pot full of glowing coals flickering under their dresses to keep them warm. They call out in loud voices to the lady villagers the '*goyehs*,' '*shiksehs*' praising their wares.

We must not, God forbid, skip over people in a higher station. However, the number of such people was not great, and these are the owners of stores that were pretty, and well-organized on the Lwowska Street, the merchants of forest products, Jews of means, wit leisure, standing and milling about with their walking sticks, leaning on the fence of the 'public' park that was set aside for the exclusive use of Christians. They would stand like that for hours, days, and years.

Life was sustained from these kinds of occupations, raising sons and daughters, paying tuition and giving charity.

Sabbath and the Festivals

On Fridays, with the arrival of darkness, everything vanished. The wagons, the market stands, the people, and the square remains standing deserted, abandoned as if it was orphaned. One hears the sound of keys turning, the scraping of doors and shutters. Jews are returning from the bath house – which does not operate according to all of the details of the sanitation code – inside it is flaming, with measured steps, and underneath the house are the dirty bricks that were laid out.

One person stands in his Sabbath rousers, with a vest over his fringe garment, polishing shoes in honor of the Sabbath. Women, with sweaty faces, sit outside, resting from the burdens of the labor of doing all the Sabbath preparations, and in the process, snatch a bit of conversation with their neighbors. Children in their Sabbath finery, with shined shoes, walk diligently and carefully while holding a bottle of sacramental wine in their trembling hands.

Snippets of the melody associated with *Kabbalat Shabbat* are waft from the synagogues, and the festive voices of the worshipers. An alarmed 'laggard' hurries home, whipping his horses with an angry nervousness, and the wheels of his wagon reverberate noisily on the stones of the street.

With morning, a shutter is opened, a woman, wrapped in a coarse housecoat, calls to the '*Shabbes-Goy*,' strolling with his wife expansively, in the quiet of the street, in whose hands are bags of bread rations that they receive from the Jews for stoking the oven and removing the candlesticks from the table.

A Jew, in his house slippers, returns from his morning ablution in the mikva before prayer. Men, enveloped

in tranquility, are walking to the synagogue. Their prayer shawls are tucked under their jackets, and on their heads is a yarmulke that sticks out from beneath a hat. Behind them are women in their Sabbath dresses, with the little girls behind them, carrying the prayer book, '*Korban Mincha*' with a white embroidery wrapped around it.

During the festive afternoon Sabbath repast, children carry pots full of the warm food for the Sabbath from the nearby bakery ovens. Jews return from *Kiddush* amid vociferous discussion. The sound of Sabbath song bursts forth from the open windows. There is the rest taken in the afternoon, the pleasure of a 'Shabbat Nap.'

The Jewish community was centered about the Lwowska Street. At its head, stood Mr. Shmuel Shiflinger, and its Secretary Aryeh Levenfus ע"ה. Its mission was highly circumscribed. It did not concern itself with the establishment of educational institutions, or cultural ones, etc. Sources of revenue were meager, and apart from a minor sum that came from the ritual slaughter of fowl and cattle, expenses covered building maintenance and the limited functions [of the community].

Accordingly, a certain vigilance was felt by the community leaders when it was necessary to retain a Rabbi, a ritual slaughterer, and the like. One of the tasks that required its sanction, was the retention of the first Jewish doctor, Dr. Shulman ז"ל. At the beginning, he was involved with the Jews, but after establishing a location, he consorted with the Christian intelligentsia for lack of such a group in the Jewish settlement.

A *Bank Spoldzielczy* was established that served both Jews and Christians before the First World War, at whose head stood Dr. Zawadzki, a liberal Christian, an enlightened man, who was a student of the *Tanakh*, and a lover of Israel. The bank employees were purely Jewish.

My father, of blessed memory, R' Kalman Ehrlich, was one of its original founders and employees. Most of his Jewish friends, storekeepers of middling status, who wrestled with survival. Were pressed to utilize loans and credit. It took over a central location in the town in a pretty and tended garden (*Kasse Gorten*) and its reputation went out before it.

After The First World War, the town placed its remains in the premises of the bank. It's Jewish Secretary, Eliezer Dornfeld ז"ל served in this position until the year of the Holocaust. The bank transferred to its new building opposite its prior location.

In 1930, a purely Jewish bank '*Nadorkor*' was established as a workers bank. Its members were craftsmen, and diligent storekeepers. At its head stood Mr. Hirsch Meir Cyment, and Elazar Bergenbaum ע"ה.

The *Gemilut Hesed* existed only nominally. It could not respond to the demands of the needy, and its management was primitive. Many who came to knock on its doors did so in vain.

Educational Institutions

Our city was poor in educational institutions in general, and in Jewish ones in particular. Despite this, the government established a general school and a high school, but many of the Jewish children, especially the sons, did not attend them, for a variety of reasons, such as: to have to sit with head uncovered, boys and girls mixed together. Accordingly, there was a preference to send their sons to Heder, in which secular studies were taught at the margin.

The high school was open to all capable children of the Christian residents, and to a limited number of the more fortunate among the Jews. There [sic: the Jews] numbers were smaller because of the *'Numerus Clausus'* law.

The issue of observing the Sabbath, and the cost of tuition, foreclosed the gate with certainty. Among the results of this was the absence of a Jewish intelligentsia. Part of the yung people streamed to the various houses of study, and to the *shtiblakh*, to study Torah, some went to work, and a portion went into the business of their parents, or simply were left idle.

In the year 1918, with the conclusion of The First World War, activists of the *Mizrahi* youth arrived, headed by Mr. Joseph Lehrer, who was found among us, from the Land of Israel. They saw a great responsibility, to the youth that was trying to get education, but without any Jewish schools. It was decided to establish a progressive '*Mizrahi*' school. The curriculum consisted of integrated secular and religious subjects. Its first teachers were: R' Benjamin Tepler, teacher of Talmud and Pentateuch, and Alter Gitlin from Baranovichi, teacher of Hebrew and *Tanakh*. Nahum Dov Glass as the teacher of experiments. The school had forty students, and was located in the house of Yitzhak Maiman on the Zamoyski Street.

Two months had not gone by, when a great fire broke out and burned down the entire town, except for the northeast quarter. Despite the fact that the house that contained the school survived, the rooms were grabbed up by those who survived the fire, and the students were scattered about.

Thanks to the efforts of the teachers to preserve the school, they succeeded in obtaining two rooms in a timely fashion, in the home of Avigdor Eidelsberg, but after a short while, all their efforts came to naught, and in the end they were forced to close.

The *Mizrahi* activists did not remain silent, nor did they feel their work to be complete. Their sense of responsibility to the local youth, to assure they do not remain idle, and to educated them in a Zionist pioneering spirit, gave them no rest. At the end of the year 1919, with the visit of Rabbi Graubart ז"ל from Stacze, and the arrival of a group of Mizrahi activists to the office in the house of R' Israel Garzytzensky ז"ל, Among them were: Chaim Joseph Lehrer, David Yud'l Szparer, Zusha Kawenczuk, who [sic: today] are found in Israel. Kalman Ehrlich, Yaakov Lederkremmer, Sholom Zilberman, Leib'l Lederkremmer, Yankl'eh Arbesfeld הי"ד. After many deliberations, it was decided to , once again, open the school.

This decision was taken with great trepidation. There was the concern of how to sustain it financially, as well as other aspects. One of the issues was to find a suitable building. After extensive searches, it was decided to rent the hose of Zvi Winder, even before the building was completed.

With its opening, the number of students grew to one hundred, and courses were conducted in accordance with their normal manner. With its expansion, the number of teachers also grew. To the two teachers that I have already mentioned, were added, the son of Rabbi Graubart of Stacze, as a teacher of Hebrew and Tanakh. The teacher, Frischleiser from Lvov was added to teach Polish and Arithmetic. After he left, we retained Zvi Edelstein and Yeshayahu Firger הי"ד.

The school did not have much time to breathe freely. After several weeks, with the outbreak of the war with the Polish-Bolshevik War, the normal rhythm of the school was disrupted, and there was a need to close it. With the end of the war, classes immediately started up again. As the Principal and a teacher, Abraham Huberman was retained, one of the teachers who excelled in both direction and leadership simultaneously.

His influence contributed to the development and progress of the school.

In the year 1921, before the holiday of Shavuot, the Office of Education closed down the school because it was not recognized as a [sic: legitimate] educational institution. All attempts to nullify this order were ineffective. After its name was changed to '*Torah V'Da'at*,' was permission granted in 1922 from the Office of Education, and the enlightened government administration to re-open it. It continued to function without interruption until 1929.

In that year, the school joined the network of '*Yavneh*' schools in the *Histadrut*, from its foundation in *Mizrahi*. Even its name was changed to *'Yavneh.*'

Mr. Zvi Edelstein was retained as the secular principal, and teacher of Polish. In addition to the teachers that I have mentioned above, were added: Shmuel Blei, and Karelman as Talmud teachers, Joel Kaufman for Hebrew and Tanakh, and to be separated for long life, Mr. Shapiro, currently to be found in South Africa, Aryeh Arbesfeld, and Mrs. Sandberg who are in Israel.

With the expansion of the school that was [now] comprised of over one hundred fifty students, it was necessary to rent a number of rooms in ordinary houses. As you can understand, this had an adverse influence on the way instruction was implemented. In the year 1934, there was success in renting one large building that consisted of seven rooms, from Moshe Adler (Latter) on the Krasnobrod Street. The leadership of the school passed into the hands of Mr. Kessler. A number of years before the outbreak of The Second World War, a Kindergarten was opened, by the school, in which there were forty children, and for which a separate, suitable building was erected.

It is necessary to underscore the not-very-little amount of laborious effort and the sizeable dedication of Mr. Yaakov Arbesfeld ז"ל, in his role as the central technical director from 1925 up to his last day.

In the year 1938, at the twentieth anniversary since its establishment, this halfway jubilee was celebrated with a large assembly, with the participation of Dr. Sh. Z. Kahana, the Director of the *Histadrut 'Yavneh'* schools for all of Poland. Today, he is the director of the Ministry of Religion in Israel. The newspaper, *'Das Jüdische Leben,'*of the *Mizrahi Histadrut* in Poland, published a special supplement that was dedicated to the halfway jubilee of the school, which got a lot of play in the vicinity. A generation was inculcated with a love of the Homeland, for the pioneering movement, and for the rejuvenation of the Hebrew language.

The first graduates continued at the '*Takhkemoni*' school in Warsaw, in high school, and at universities throughout Poland. Many tribulations and crises befell the school. It survived only thanks to a group of activists, who saw a sacred duty in preserving it, and who contributed a great deal. The sowed with tears, but they reaped with joy.

My responsibility in setting down this record will not be properly discharged, if I do not underscore the dedication and tiring hard work, done without compensation, and performed by Mr. Chaim Joseph Lehrer. A man of noble spirit, full of activity, and able to energize others, who led the school from the day it was founded to its last day, when it ceased to function. He truly raise the standard of the institution during the fruitful and blessed era in which he led it.

Talmud Torah

Page 380: *Facsimile of a Receipt from the Talmud Torah signed by R' Yisroel'i Farzitsensky[98] ע"ה, to R' Yitzhak Daks ע"ה a scion of Tomaszow in New York.*

The network of Jewish educational institution also encompassed a Talmud Torah of several tens of students, children of the poor, from the less-endowed classes, most of them orphans, hungry for a slice of bread. Barefoot, and in tatters.

In the year 1929, the responsibility to provide shoes was allocated to one of the respected *balebatim*, a Torah scholar, wise, of impressive appearance, and an Elder of the community, a man who had great influence – my grandfather, R' Israel Garzytzensky ז"ל, and, to be separated for long life, Mr. Yitzhak Karper, a forest merchant, well received both in the Jewish and Christian communities, and today with us in Israel. They gathered a number of other respected balebatim around them, Mr. Aharon Lakher, ז"ל, and others, who dedicated a substantial part of their time and energy to this undertaking. They linked up the Jewish community with other public institutions. After a while, a house was obtained for this purpose, and the number of students grew to about one hundred, receiving food, drink and clothing to wear.

How joyful it was, and how the heart beat, to see these children stroll off to the forest on Lag B'Omer, with bows and arrows. Wearing festive holiday clothing of their own, and new, shined shoes, with their teachers and melamdim, with packages of food for their adventure in their hands.

Groups and Youth Movements

Page 381: ***The Young Girls of the Mizrahi 'Bruriah'***

Among others, the following are found on the picture: *Chaya Stang, Fanel, Mirachnik, Shayndl Arbesfeld, Rachel Lichtenstein, Gitt'l Fersht, Leah Arbesfeld, Feiga Goldman, Shayndl Zucker, Sarah Fersht, Masha Shaffel, Rivka Tanenbaum, Rivka Blank, and Katz*

Page 382: ***The General Zionist Movement***

Among others, the following are found on the picture: *Jonah Zilberstein, Leib'l Lederkremmer, Sinai Putter, Yitzhak Borenstein, Israel Greenbaum, Hirsch Zilberberg, Avigdor Eidelsberg, Chaya Putter, Y. Minkowsky, Abraham Pfefferman, Zilbergeld, Chaim Goldzamd, Hirsch'l Ehrlich, Ary' Levenfus, Asher Herbstman, David Shapiro, Moshe Eilbaum, and Moshe Eidelsberg*

Our city was blessed with all of the groups, beginning with the Zionists all the way to the *Bund*, and communists.

The general Zionist movement, at whose head stood Avigdor Eidelsberg ז"ל assumed the central position and was the progressive group. A number of the Mizrahi membership went to the general Zionist movement

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[98] This does not match the signature, which indicates this is R' Yisroel'i ***Garzytzensky.***

because most of the city residents were religiously observant, and therefore this movement appealed to them. At its head stood Chaim Joseph Lehrer. He was one of the founders of the movement in the city, a man knowledgeable in literature, and who accomplished a great deal, a powerful protagonist without bounds. He was at one with his ambience, and stood at his post up until the destruction of the city. This movement established a training camp of *Poel HaMizrahi* at which tens of pioneers received their physical training and pioneering indoctrination before they made *aliyah* to the Land.

The *Poalei Tzion* group took a very respected position – *Tze'irei Tzion* at the head of which stood Fyvel Holtz הי"ד who dedicated his heart and soul to it. The youth movements of *HaShomer HaTza'ir, HeHalutz, and Freier Skut* all coalesced around it.

Hundreds of young people found a place in the movements, most of them in '*HeHalutz.*' They went out to training camps, and were spread out all over Poland. Many of them made aliyah, and continue the legacy of Tomaszow scions in the Land of Israel.

The activities of the Zionist movements in the city were legion. They played no small part in the collection of donations to *Keren Kayemet* and *Keren HaYesod*, at parties, weddings, flower days, etc, that were arranged by the young people, and in which they saw a sacred duty.

And they suffered no little subversion by *Agudat Yisrael*, ordinary Jews, Hasidim, and fanatics, who saw in this work that was sacrilegious.

On the eve of Yom Kippur, at the time of the *Mincha* service, it was an accepted custom to give to charity, in order to redeem one's soul. On the '*Balemer*' {the table on which the Torah scroll was placed to be read) plates were set out for all the various institutions that helped the poor, anonymous giving, the Talmud Torah, the Yeshivas, R' Meir *Baal HaNess*, etc. It was also the custom to put out a plat for *Keren Kayemet* and Keren *HaYesod.*

An incident occurred in the house of worship of Rabbi Yehoshua'leh, where most of the worshipers were Hasidim, known to be great fanatics. The writer of these lines volunteered not to skip this house of worship with a plate set out for *Keren Kayemet.* My decision was accompanied by great trepidation, because I know fully well, before whom I would be standing. Thanks to my family connections, I had the nerve to stand beside the 'plate' in silence, and to observe who might choose to seek redemption for their soul by making a donation to *Keren Kayemet*, and *Keren HaYesod.* This was in vain, since this plate was orphaned [among the others]. And then, an elderly Jewish man entered, bewhiskered with a long beard, with curly side locks, wet from his ablutions at the *mikva,* his lips moving silently in prayer. He approached the table with the platters, placing his coins in plate after plate. When he came to the row of the Keren Kayemet plate, he stopped dropping coins, and with an angry cry, he asked: 'Who is the *sheketz*[99] who had the nerve to place this abomination in this holy place?'

With frightened respect, and without moving, I indicated that it was myself. In one moment, he gave me two slaps to the cheek that were forceful enough, in front of the entire assembly of people. My reaction was not to move, and also not to remove the platter.

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[99] The Hebrew word from which the Yiddish epithet, '*shaygetz*' is derived, meaning someone who is unclean, an abomination,

A sense of dissatisfaction coursed through the worshipers in regard to the behavior of the individual who disturbed the mood of the prayer leading to *Kol Nidre*.

It was not trivial for the young Zionists to contest with the fanatics on one side, and the *Bund* and communist on the other side. Nevertheless, their resolve stood with them.

In part, the words of the prophet came to be: 'and the wolf lived together with the lamb.'

Today, in the Land of Israel, can be found those, who in days past, were opposed to the State, as citizens with equal rights. A shame! What a shame! It is a shame that so many did not reach us, and no man knows where their graves might even be.

Let their memory be for all eternity!

Kiryat-Motzkin, 1 Nissan 5719, 8April1959

Elections in the Town

By Sh. Licht

The B.B.W.R. (Pilsudski's Sanacja) and the Jewish Voters

The Tomaszow Jews took a involved part in the elections to the governmental representative bodies. In the elections to the Sejm and the Senate of 1922, all the Jews in the city went under the national minority block, which had the number sixteen. In later elections, the [various] Jewish parties put up their own [separate] slates.

On March 4, 1928, Pilsudski stood for election to the Sejm and the Senate, after having taken power with the force of his military, and also wanted to have, so to speak, a parliamentary majority. For this purpose, a non-partisan government block was created, in which all of the minorities were included. Deputy Wiszlycki, among others, was elected from this slate.

The block called itself Sanacja, or B.B.W.R.[100] They were listed in the election under Number one.

Many Jews were drawn into this election work, to enable Jews to be elected, and also so in our town.

And, indeed, in each election, they were able to get a meaningful number of candidates elected, in which much was accomplished because of the proximity to Galicia, who were accustomed to voting for the 'sitting government.'

However, after Pilsudski's death, his heirs, the 'colonels,' took on a more manifest anti-Semitic direction, the situation becoming keenest when Colonel Katz organized the AZAN.

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100 Stands for *Bezpartyjnego Bloku Wspolpracy Z Rzadzem.*(Non-Party Block for Cooperation with the Government).

In general, Jews were drawn to the elections passively, but despite this, a specific group could be found which assisted in finding votes for the AZAN, as the results demonstrate to us.

Community Elections

Page 385: *An Election Poster from the Jewish Election Committee in Tomaszow, calling for the election of Dr. Adam Kerbel, the Sanacja candidate, to the Sejm.*

Up to the time that Poland became independent, there had never been elections for community representatives, on a democratic basis for '*Dozors*' as they were called among us. The 'powers,' in partnership with the authorities, found ways not to let the force of rule out of their hands.

Communities, in fact, only first started to organize themselves under Polish rule, and despite the fact that the new law anticipated an immediate organization of the Jewish community (paragraph 709 of March 17, 1921) the Polish government did not want to give the Jews even the slightest illusion about their so-demanded 'self-determination,' and they deliberately postponed the elections of the community., because in the independent elections of the community, a spoor of independent thinking manifested itself, and purely Jewish issues.

After the establishment of independent Poland, the Municipal Council nominated the first *Dozors*, the persons of: Mendl Lejzor's (Reichenberg), Benjamin Weinberg, and Abraham Yitzhak Blonder.

The first contest between the parties took place in 1924, during which the so-called 'community elections' took place across all of Congress Poland. Despite the fact that the community bore both in theory and in practice, the stamp of a very obvious religious character, not a single party chose to forego the opportunity to field candidates, and take part in the elections, so that even the *Bund* took part.

Each [political] coterie wanted to demonstrate its strength on the Jewish street, which, in turn, would create authority and visibility for them, as well as providing them with the possibility of utilizing the community platform as a propaganda vehicle for their own party. At that time, people carried out, and still believed in, party dogmas.

Because of this, the contest was stubborn and sullen. One fought hard and bitterly for each and every vote. The party agitators did not stop at anything, especially the representatives of the parties for whom the majority of its members were the younger people, most of which had not yet even reached the age of majority, where they could vote, who had to seek votes among those who were not fully informed, and the non-oriented masses. The principal battle took place over the common people of the streets. All manner of wonderful promises were made to them, such as lowering the fee for ritual slaughter, repealing the payment for entry to the *mikva*, or the baths, and other demagogic sort of 'solutions,' which the leaders, knew, because of the conditions in Tomaszow, constituted a utopia that would never come to pass, but what will one not do to obtain the seat of a *Dozor* in the Municipal Council.

Despite all of this, one could foresee a substantive victory for the Agudah, which united all of the Hasidim and Orthodox in the city. However, because, at the last minute, the Belz and Chelm Hasidim joined forces with the Hevra Kadisha, and put up an independent slate, the situation changed. He result was the following:

Agudah –	5 Seats	General Zionists –	1 Seat
Belz –	1 Seat	Manual Trades –	3 Seats
Mizrahi –	1 Seat	Bund –	1 Seat

They were elected to the council that consisted of 12 members, and from among those elected, they formed a leadership, consisting of 8 members, which, in fact, carried out the activities of the community.

I wish to refresh my memory, and to provide a list of the people who were elected, or assumed the office after the resignation of their predecessors. I am, however, not certain that I am providing a complete list, because of the force of forgetfulness, and I beg those omitted for their pardon.

I am also not making a separate list of membership in the council or its leadership. The list entails more terms of the council and the leadership.

Agudah:	David Weitzman, Ary' Heller, Mikhl Yuda Lehrer, Pinchas Zilbergeld, Yehoshua Goldstein, Mikhl Yuda Pflug, David Schwindler, Neta Heller, Yitzhak Meir Gartler, and Joseph Friedlander (son of Yerakhmiel).
Mizrahi:	Lejzor Lederkremmer, Sholom Zilberman, and Mordechai Ratzimer
General Zionists:	Avigdor Eidelsberg, Yitzhak Borenstein, Yitzhak Lederkremmer, and Moshe Reichenberg.
Belz – Hevra Kadisha:	Mendl Reichenberg, Baruch Szparer, and Yud'l Ader.
Bund:	Nahum Schuldiner.
Trade Union:	Yekhezkiel Kaffenbaum, Meir Bumer, Hirsch Meir Cyment, Joseph Grohman, Shmuel Shiflinger, and Eli' Stralzer.

In the election of a President, all of the parties united with the Belz *Hasidim*, and elected Lejzor Lederkremmer (Mizrahi) as the President.

In the first honeymoon years, each meeting attracted a large audience of attendees, with meetings conducted just like matters of general parliamentary matters, with reading of declarations by each of the party representatives, his wish and regards, that the community fulfill the desires of his party, in which the Bund sought to free humanity from fascism... or to come out with a sharp attack against the clergy...

Before the term of the first elected officials came to an end, a number of the party politicians argued before the authorities, to diminish the size of the body, meaning, that instead of a council and a leadership [committee] that the body consist only of a group of eight people.

In the later elections, the public had already lost a bit of its interest. Very heated engagements took place among the parties at each election.

Shmuel Shiflinger was elected as the community President., who held the office of President for almost the entire time, up to the last term, when Chaim Joseph Lehrer (Mizrahi) was elected, who held the position to the very end. R' Itcheh Meir Gartler held the position of President for a certain period of time as well.

Municipal Council Elections

Here, the parties really spread their hands far apart. The council consisted of twenty-four members. Jews were a majority of the general city population. There was something from which deals could be cut. In the first elections, Jews achieved a clear majority, because of which, by law, the Jews were entitled to the position of Burgomaster (or Mayor). However, under pressure from the *Starosta,* Wielonowsky (incidentally, a convert to Christianity, Grossman from Bochnia) the Jews voluntarily stepped back from this position in favor of the Polish population, and with their help, Mr. Logowski was elected, a landowner and former anti-Semite, but later he was a very liberal person. He raised a homeless Jewish child, and paid tuition for him. Later on, the child received a surname: Lejzor Logowski.

The Poles, however, did not want to depend on the good will of the Jews, and later on, the Interior Minister amalgamated all of the nearby villages through a special decree (with a privilege that would remain with the smaller villages) and in this manner, gerrymandered a gentile majority. Despite this, the Jews had fifty percent of the council membership.

However, in order to elect the burgomaster, nobody had any ideas. Only the *Starosta* imposed a retired colonel from the Sanacja.



In Passing

By Neta Eisen (A. Roum)

Page 391: *Zionist Youth*

Abraham Unterbukh, Szparer, Zelig Pomerantz, Naphtali Messer, Shmuel Boxenbaum, Yerucham Munster, and Nathan Szparer.

The following rule applies: what has happened in the past, everything that has gone by, and no longer is, except – as is understood – the gruesome death of our near and dear ones, all of this later reappears so interesting in our memory, so fecund, so touching.

Even difficult personal experiences, and profound human suffering, is illuminated by a stark and pure candle of nostalgia of an idealized past. That is the nature of the human heart: It loves, and longs for that which once existed, and has gone forever, even when the present is better, more comfortable, and brighter than yesterday.

In reality, there is nothing new here. That 'past,' was our childhood, our youth, our innocent world of dreams and aspirations. So what is the wonder that we yearn for it, yet again? That from which our memory draws

buckets overflowing with delight, longing and tranquility?

I often admit to myself, that from the day that I achieved the ability to reason and understand – and to my joy or sorrow – that was very early on, I strove mightily with all my strength to flee our town. I was beset with want, the flighty forms of making a living, the insecurity with which the Jews had to live. But entirely apart, what troubled me was the idleness, the hopelessness of the young people, of the boys and girls, that loitered about empty-handed, with nothing to do, and lived with a perpetual fear of what tomorrow might bring.

I personally was tortured by a sharp contradictory inner feeling that burned inside of me: on the one side, I deeply loved the land, meaning the fields, forests, rivers, the beautiful frosty moonlit nights, in the winter, the rich, invigorating early morning of the Polish autumn; I drank thirstily from the sources of Polish literature and poetry, and I even loved the Polish man, and I was prepared to forgive him. On the other side, again, I felt like I was passing over an alien territory, that I live among an unfamiliar and hostile nation, that there is no resolution or hope coming tomorrow, and it will be darker than yesterday, and the further one proceeded, the worse it would become. It was in those sleepless nights, and restless days for doubt and struggle, of contradiction and suffering, that my Zionist revelation was born, and took me onto different roads and ways.

Such is fate.

As I said, I derived little pleasure from my home town. I was dissatisfied with everything, despite the fact that I did not hold anyone responsible for this situation. Such was our plight. The curse had been poured out over it, just like it had been poured out over all the other Jewish cities and towns in Poland.

But it is interesting, that the further I distanced myself from Tomaszow both in distance and in time, all the more did the good, and beautiful times in the city materialize before me, the genuine virtues of its Jewish residents, the interesting content-rich social and cultural-spiritual life.

Paying no mind to the difficult and bitter struggle of earning a bit of bread to eat, for sustenance; paying no mind to the economic want, and the hostility of the environment, causing the Jews to have to run their lives like a captive country within a country, from a national and spiritual standpoint. The Jews, as a rule, were untied by a common language, with their own holidays, with their personal traditions, with obligations and mutual assistance, in short: despite the fact that we lived in a strange land, and under a foreign ruler, we guarded our own national Jewish identity, our spiritual inheritance, and continued to spin the thread of Jewish survival and Jewish continuity and Jewish vitality.

It total, several thousand Jewish families lived in Tomaszow. It was a small Jewish community, but it conducted its Jewish and spiritual life rich in color, and dynamically. Across the omnipresent Tomaszow sky, was spread the rainbow of all the concepts, possibilities, and ideals that in the first decades of the twentieth century dominated the Jewish polity, if not the entire world.

Ardent Hasidim and self-made freethinkers; adherents of *Mizrahi* and those of the *Agudah*, and communists, Zionists, Bundists, adherents of the Sejm, territorialists, and even anarchists. One could find someone from all of these persuasions in the tiny Jewish settlement of Tomaszow. And each of these believed in their own way, in their own ideal, each read and studies; [each] agitated and fought stubbornly and with commitment for the victory of their particular beliefs. Today, it would not be believed that such a thing would be possible,

or even existed. Truthfully, we all went hunger, and the solitude and need was not minor. Everyone created a different world of their own, a spiritual one, a conceptual one, in which he felt free and without fear, and it served as a form of refuge from the plight of reality, and as a harbinger of a better future. There were so much spiritual energy, so many beautiful dreams about humanity's love for one another, of the unity of nations; so much longing and a dream of personal resolution, and salvation for the [Jewish] people, that was invested in the Jewish children, in the Jewish youth, and in every Jew in Tomaszow!

Until [the decade of] the thirties, of the present century, I was bound and tied to all parts of the Jewish community in Tomaszow, with young and old alike, with the faithful and non-believers, with simple people from the masses, with Zionists, and *Bundists,* with every thing and everyone. I see them all before my eyes, downtrodden and proud; listless and feisty; poor in material goods, and rich in spirit; resigned and hopeless. All pass by, as if in a kaleidoscope. Tomaszow did not have the privilege of producing *Gaonim.* I think that it is hard to find even a single Jew, whose fame transcended the borders of that very city. As a result, the oversight has granted me a boon:

The summation of worth and virtues between each, jointly and severally was certainly more accurate and possibly more necessary.

There once was a Jewish Tomaszow that had within it suffering and happiness, with the creation of faith and hope.

It was – and is no more!

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The Spiritual State of Tomaszow Jewry

By Sh. Licht

The theme is both broad and deep, as our Torah says, from time immemorial, with the heavenly dictum: 'man lives not by bread alone.' If he desires a life of substance, a spiritual satisfaction with his existence, then he mist have some purpose, a goal, and ideal, which will endow him with strength to negotiate the twists and turns of life, and avoid falling of the path in a material sense, so that he should not fall so low, and not go so high, that he should earn something that contains his worth, in today's parlance, a vitamin of life – in the best sense.

I do not have it in my mind to write an historical treatment of the high spiritual plane of Tomaszow Jewry, since its establishment. We can take pride, when 350 years ago, when many Jewish settlements in Poland were still raw, and undeveloped, barely able to assemble a prayer quorum, many of which had an appointed clergy serving simultaneously in the six functions of Rabbi, Cantor, *Shokhet, Melamed, Mohel* and Shammes, Tomaszow already had a thriving Jewish settlement, with the greatest of the *Gaonim* of that era, as Rabbis and Headmasters of Yeshivas. It is worth recalling our own, such as the Gaon, Rabbi Mordechai a brother of the Rabbi of Cracow, the author of '*Maginei Shlomo*, and *Pnei Yehoshua*, martyred in the year T"AT [1649], the *Gaon*, Rabbi Yaakov son of R' Fyvel, the Rabbi and Yeshiva Headmaster in Tomaszow, and later in Lutsk, the *Gaon* Rabbi Yehuda son of R' Nissan, a disciple of the Maharsh"l and Maharsh"a, and later the Rabbi of Kalisz, the author of 'Bet Yehuda,' was the Rabbi of Tomaszow in the year 5414 [1654], from whose Yeshiva, there came the great scholars of that generation, and the most eminent of the Rabbis of that

time. Such a work would take me too far afield, and later on there were the various Rabbis of Kotzk, and Jarczow, etc. I only wish to concentrate on the later era, the one that we [personally] remember, or that we heard about from our parents, about times through which they personally lived.

The Spiritual Nourishment of the Last Era

And one wants to deal with the question of what was the spiritual nourishment of our brethren, the Jewish people, in the Tomaszow community in our time and yours?

In order to suitably and accurately deal with this subject, I must divide the answer into two parts:

First: Up to The First World War; and second, after The First World War.

This is because the War not only changes the borders of countries and nations in general, but also created a new comprehension, a new look at life and the world. It simply revolted against the entire old order of Jewish life and thought. In order to be more specific and realistic, the period before The First World War needs to be divided [also] into two parts: Up to the year 1905, and from 1905 to 1914, that is, the outbreak of the war.

The Spiritual Situation Up To 1905

And so, let us go in [chronological] order. Up until the year 1905, our Tomaszow Jews lived with a way of life, and customs, of their ancestors. The foundation of their lives was the holy faith, and the construct of their lives, whether in private life, or in public, was shot through and interwoven with all of the stringent rules of the *Shulkhan Arukh*. The laws of the Torah, were the forces that shaped individual and public life. There was no distinction between rich and poor, between a merchant or a laborer; all had one goal, and all had one purpose: it was to observe all the dictates of the Torah in theory and in practice, and the importance of an individual was measured by the caliber of Torah knowledge, or according to his piety, and charitableness. The more learned and honest a Jew was, the more respect he obtained. In a large sense, *Yiddishkeit*, in the last century, strengthened itself because of the influence of *Hasidism*, which rooted itself powerfully in Tomaszow. It refreshed, re-energized and infused commitment and energy, joy and liveliness, self-strengthening, self-reliance, energy and revitalization. The common people were especially uplifted. The greatest wish that a mother and father could have was to raise children who would become Torah scholars, and God-fearing people.

Jews prayed morning and night, in a *minyan,* and tried to take in a bit of study each according to their own means. Even the low level manual laborers, who because of their impoverished means had to go to work in their early youth in order to earn a living, had their own Rabbi who studied *Eyn Yaakov* and the *Mishna* with them. True, one found unlettered people, an ignoramus, and even those who transgressed the laws, but this was only the occasional individual, without any ideological underpinnings, or organized only mostly by appetites, driven by base lusts, and instincts, or it was because of difficult circumstances and tribulations that a person came to grief. The *Haskalah,* which in neighboring Zamość and Szczebrzeszyn, had such giants as Yaakov Reifman, Sh. David Schiffman the original Peretz, and other phenomenal people, appeared to touch the integrity of Judaism, the original *Yiddishkeit* in Tomaszow. As I see it, the formidable bulwark of *Hasidim* in Tomaszow helped [sic: as a barrier]. To begin with, there were no *Mitnagdim,* or as they were

called, 'the worldly Lithuanian Jews,' only *Hasidim, balebatim*, and simple Jews, that class later to be designated as 'the masses,' which consisted of poorer craftsmen, village itinerants, and a certain level of small scale storekeepers.

There was never any talk of secular education. Certain Jews (especially from the wealthier merchant class, could read and write the language of the land, and could do calculations to the extent that was required in commerce. And even that was learned only through private tutoring who themselves were very observant Jews with a full beard and side locks. The greatest emphasis was placed on sacred studies, *Shas* and its commentaries. Almost nobody attended the municipal school. One had little interaction with non-Jewish neighbors even if they might have been the best customer, or neighbor. The Hasidic Jews would add to this the study of Hasidic texts, such as *Noam Elimelekh, Kedushat Levi*, and *Avodat Yisrael*, and the books of the Rabbi of Lublin. The more modern would make use of the research text, such as 'the Guide to the Perplexed,' *Baal Akeda, Kuzari*, or later on, *Sefer HaBrit*, and studied the *Tanakh* with *Malbim*.[101]

One hundred percent of the population knew Hebrew and how to pray. Being able to sign one's name, and use Yiddish, by about 80 percent. This was at a time when 80 percent of the non-Jewish population was illiterate.

Life proceeded monotonously. Nobody missed morning and evening prayers, and only the more refined would study on a daily basis, each in according to their station and capacity to learn. Hasidim would also fulfil this obligation with an Hasidic conversation, or the telling of a Rabbinical tale. In the *Bet HaMedrash* of the lesser-educated, the so-called 'itinerant preachers' would come around, and the common people would eat them up, in particular the 'parables.' And if a dispute arose, which regrettably was not in short supply, there was fresh news every day. There were 'private tutors' in the city, and a municipal Talmud Torah, for the poorer children. There was a Russian school in the city for elementary education, but not everyone sent their children there. From among the Jews, almost nobody. Jews lived together with Poles and Russians, and dealt with them on a daily basis, but did not have any relationship with them. And this was not only religious, but also culturally there were two separate, or even better said, opposing worlds. Most of the Jews did not speak the native language, and it was in this manner that entire generations were raised, a generation going, a [new] generation coming, and the Jews remained the same stubborn adherents to their original *Yiddishkeit*.

New Currents

By the end of the nineteenth century, fresh new people took up residence in Tomaszow, who had come from very far away. Modern people, nursed at the bosom of the *Haskalah*, these were the contractors and forest merchants. In their homes, the language of discourse was only Russian, and it was under their influence and pressure that the Litvak, Rabbi Shidkovsky was retained, first in the capacity of '*Kozioner Rabbiner*' and later as the Rabbi of the city. The ambience of his home was very close to the new currents, and they also drew in the young Hasidim to the extent that a circle of 'modern youth' began to form, to learn Russian, read a newspaper, or a pamphlet. The [newspaper] *HaTzefira*, began to make an appearance in Jewish homes, and brought in a bit of 'Enlightenment' and sowed the first seeds of Zionism. In 1905, with the outbreak of the

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101 Rabbi Meir Leibusz (1809-1879) '*Malbim*' is an acronym of the full name of Rabbi Meir Leibusz ben Yekhiel Mikhl. The Malbim's fame and immense popularity rest upon his monumental commentary on the *Tanakh*. He composed and published it between 1845 and 1870.

Russo-Japanese War, and the first signs of revolution, the Russian Empire, in general, underwent a shock, and with it, all the old foundations under the Jews also began to wobble and shake, taking into account the newly arrived *balebatim*, the modern Russian Jews. Among some of those who were inoculated with the 'Zamość *Haskalah*,' there were those who derived some satisfaction from sneaking a pamphlet to a young Hasidic boy or girl, to the extent, that in 1910 the first Jewish library was founded through the help of a Mr. Maiman, but it did not exist for long. A couple of observant Jews, together with R' Mordechai Joseph Milchiger ע"ה at their head, entered at night, and tore up and burned all of the books, and demolished the local. The Russian authorities took pleasure in this, and remained silent. A general community Zionist organization began to blossom and develop, but it did not achieve realization. It was in this fashion that life continued until the outbreak of the war in 1914.

The Spiritual Revolution

During the time of The first World War, which brought destruction, hunger and want, nobody had community activities in mind. It was only at the end of the war, that a variety of parties, and circles began to appear, especially after the war, with the establishment of an independent Poland. Among many, it elicited hoped for new opportunities to exist in the same place. They were blinded by the paper-based liberation documents that put forth ideas of proletarians and *Bundists*, that suggested that here, in Poland, was our future, and it is hear that we must battle out our rights and this is our home. They called for unification with and fraternization with the Poles, whose destiny was seen to be one we shared in common, and actually, that spiritual barrier [between us] began, slowly, to disappear. This was not from the part of the gentiles to the Jews, but rather from the Jews to the gentiles. This was for the most part, what the liberation of enslaved lands elicited from them a pent up zeal, and awakened a national pride, especially after the Balfour Declaration. Jews became enthusiastically in favor of the rebuilding of the Land of Israel, a ray of hope for their own independent national homeland, a land of their own that Jews craved and longed for, for thousands of years. It was this, which drew large groups into the Zionist organizations, in all of its forms, and in all of its nuances, from the *Mizrahi* to the *HaShomer HaTza'ir*, and left-wing *Poalei Tzion*.

New winds began to blow through the Jewish street, and began to penetrate almost all the houses, breaking down all barriers and impediments. The party was placed higher that all else, even family interests. [Reading] Pamphlets and newspapers became a daily activity, speeches and get-togethers were often occurrences. Libraries and drama circles were created, sports clubs, and in general, the participation in all these things brought dereliction, and the yoke, of the Torah and its commandments, was discarded. Not everyone with the same tempo in Tomaszow, but the old foundations of *Yiddishkeit* were shattered, and the gap between one generation and the next became wider and deeper. Orthodoxy had been broken and beaten. The *shtiblakh* were practically empty of the young people. Every new party or ideal, when it first looked to obtain candidates, it was from the 'Orthodox camp.' Until the Agudah was established. But this helped only minimally, until the Cieszanow Rebbe took up residence in our city. He raised the spirit especially of the young orthodox, instilling them with energy and pride. And he raised an aware Hasidic youth, who were no longer torn away and swept along with the modern current/ Rather, here were proud, energetic young people and young boys, and it was in this way, more, or less, into which life settled.

In Summary

Page 401: *Zelig Wassertreger*

The older generation, meaning age 40 and up, was one hundred percent religious, drawing its spiritual sustenance from the ancient Jewish storehouse, a *Gemara, Mishna*, a Hasidic book, etc. However, a larger percentage of them, already read a newspaper on a daily basis, and many of them were seduced by '*Heint*,' or '*Moment*,' Zionist periodicals overloaded with irreligious content. The very observant and the 'Agudah' people read '*Der Jude*,' and later on, '*Tageblatt*.' Even though they personally didn't need to, they took it into their homes, to block an excuse for their children to buy a second paper. Reading did not come easily. Part of the people had the paper for only an hour, and a part only on the morning of the following day, or even the next day, because 6-8 people subscribed to one copy, but the paper was read from beginning o end. And when it came to party matters, one lived it, as if it were a personal experience.

From 25-40 those who were 'liberated' had a good savvy and were aware. Among the younger generation, almost 50% were already 'liberated.' In this category, what it meant in our context was, people who did not observe Torah laws, meaning they permit themselves to ignore the Torah. The sense of the 3-day-a-year Jew, where being religious meant coming to synagogue on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, did not exist for us (with the exception of the doctor). If he was not religious he never went at all. There were no people in the town who violated the Sabbath publicly, because all businesses and laborers didn't work, with the exception of the hairdressers. However, in some of the party offices, where the *Bund*, or left-wing *Poalei Tzion* or the Jewish Labor Party, known under the acronym *AYAP*, could be found, the violation of the Sabbath was (practically) a part of party life.

But even the substantive cosmopolitan parties, did not officially adopt a policy of violating the Sabbath. Especially the pioneering youth. The reason was, that it represented an expression of parting with the old and idle way of life.

Not everyone read books, but everyone carried a pamphlet 'under the arm,' because this created the appearance of 'enlightenment,' and being modern. Almost a majority of the Jewish children in the city were already attending the *Powszecna Szkola*, yet only a rather small percentage went on to the gymnasium. Yiddish was the daily language of discourse, even among the young people, and nobody subscribed to a Polish periodical. Even the Bund made do with the '*Volks Zeitung*.' It was only in the thirties that Polish began to penetrate into the Jewish homes. The small percentage of Jews, who attended gymnasium, already spoke only Polish. The young intelligentsia also spoke in Polish, and this continued to spread. The '*Khvalyeh*' from Lemberg, and the '*Nasz Przeglad*' from Warsaw (Zionist periodicals in the Polish language), were being read for about a year, and became widely disseminated. Orthodox youth was divided into three parts: Mizrahi, Agudah, and unaffiliated. The national-religious youth concentrated itself in Mizrahi, into two groups, '*Torah V'Avodah*' and '*Shomer HaDati*,' but by and large they didn't have any staying power, because in the main, it served as a bridge to pass on to the more liberal camps. But in any event, they derived benefits from both worlds... mixed membership of boys and girls, studying little, and rarely was any of them from those who attended the *Bet HaMedrash*. They were keepers of the faith, which is why they took the name '*Shomer HaDati*.'

The *Agudah* youth were the zealots, young men who studied all day. Even the sons of merchants also had lessons in the morning and the evening. However, the newspapers, and the various periodicals, such as '*Darkeynu*,' '*Jugend Blätter*,' '*Bet Yaakov*' journal, stole from the time available for Torah study. They

reasoned, however, that they needed this to arm themselves with the principles of the *Agudah*, so that they would not be called ignoramuses. It was either that, or they simply found the reading of interest to them... The unaffiliated were a small percentage, and from year to year, Yiddishkeit in general grew weaker. Despite the fact that there was no official violator of the Sabbath, and Kashrut was observed in all the homes, and there were only a few exceptions to the observance of ritual family purity. However, in general, this was the observance of instructed people, and the young always went further away. It is true that this was brought about by the special limitations pertaining to Jews. They were frustrated and embittered people, and this created barriers for them along many paths. They simply wanted to run away from themselves.

Also the hatred of the faith was very strong with many, and in general, the party played a great role not only in public life, but also in shaping the spiritual persona of each individual.

And in each party, there were to be found such idealists, who placed the party's interests above their own private interests. In any case, Polish Jewry, of which our city was a part, exhausted itself in spiritual convulsions, and continued to alter its spiritual appearance from year to year.



Unique Jewish Sartorial Choices

By Sh. Leibowitz

Page 404: *Leib'l Ryvetzer, studying*

Page 406: *The Rabbis Journey to Kosher the Mill*

The Rabbi, R' Ary' Leibusz Rubin ז"ל, (Rabbi of Cieszanow), Rabbi Sholom Yekhezkiel Rubin, שליט"א, Abraham'li Rapoport, and the wagon driver, Leib'l.

Jews were found in Poland for close to one thousand years, living, trading, and working among the non-Jewish population. He differentiated himself from that non-Jewish population not only by religion, but also with the choice of a specifically Jewish mode of dress. Despite the fact that part of the time this was a deterrent to making a living, and with the greatest of stubbornness, part of the time literally with danger to life, Jews expended energy to maintain and keep up their Jewish wardrobe, fulfilling the meaning of the custom of our ancestors in the Egyptian exile, 'that they did not change their dress,' they did not change the appearance of their clothing.

It is not my objective to give an historical overview about the development of the costume. I wish only to convey the custom of Jewish dress as it took form in the last hundred years, and how, for the most part, it was retained up to the Final Destruction.

The traditional Jewish dress consisted of the following garments:

A Jewish cap. A low, circularly-shaped black cap, which was covered by a stiff piece of cardboard, with a small visor in front. The material was made from a black linen, worn for the entire week, and the same shape was used for a cap on the Sabbath and Festivals, except the material was a black velvet.

The velvet cap took the place of a *shtrymel*, which was worn in Galicia, except in our area, the velvet cap expressed, more emphatically, the strict Hasidic demeanor of the wearer. It also demanded more seriousness in self-control, because not all Jews who wore the *shtrymel* in Galicia, would have worn the velvet cap in our area on the Sabbath, because the velvet cap imposed more demands of *Hasidism* and fear of God. Higher class Jews would wear a silk hat during the middle of the week, or one that was entirely velvet.

The Jewish cap was worn by 90% of the Jews in the city, but the velvet cap by only 60% approximately.

A *shtrymel* was worn on the Sabbath only by the clergy, Rabbis, *Rebbes*, and Directors of the Faith. Also, there were a few individuals who wore a *shtrymel* in their homes, but did not appear in public or in the *shtibl* wearing it.

Only those seeking a special feeling wore a yarmulke underneath the cap.

Most of the Jewish populace did not dress in short garments. A child of 10 and up, was already dressed in long garments, which consisted of a cloth robe, among the poorer class, and made from alpaca or wool among the well-to-do, or a small jacket.

On the Sabbath, these same individuals wore a black little jacket, with a deep split, who some, because of the issue of fringes, made one edge round, and a small number wore silk or satin long jackets.

Trousers and vests were worn by the more modern, with a gold chain drawn through the entire width of the pocket to the second, on the little vest.

The more religious wore boots drawn over their trousers, or boots with rolled up trousers. The more modern wore fully laced shoes.

The religious wore a white shirt, without any adornment, and many had no buttons, using only a strip of cloth to tie up the collar of the shirt. The balebatim would wear a pressed collar woven with a band, or a bird, or a black underlay under the collar. Also, it was only the modern, who buttoned up their cuffs with cufflinks. A genuine Hasidic shirt was a simple shirt, on which the collar was not even starched.

In the winter, one wore a black outer coat, or a fur coat.

Naturally, everything was tailored, so it would be tied from right to left.

Workers at their jobs would wear short overcoats or jackets, that is short garments. And a '*Maciejowka*' on their heads, and also a regionally-styled hat with a long visor, tailored from colored material. Modern people – a colored linen hat.

Since the establishment of Poland, the situation changed: Poland became a single country, including Galicia, and Tomaszow, as the first and closest neighbor, had an influence. The young people did not understand what a linen hat was, that in Tomaszow was thought to be forbidden, was being worn by observant Jews in Rawa Zolkiew. In general, young people threw off the special Jewish garb, by nevertheless, the Hasidim, with full commitment, strove mightily to hold onto the old style clothing. In the Husyatin *shtibl*, they once waited for hours, in protest, for 'the hat wearers to leave the *shtibl*.'

Up to The First World War, almost all of the Jews, young and old, wore a beard, especially the young men who studied at the *shtibl*. Even those who barbered their beards, cut it lightly, or just shaped it. By contrast, since Polish independence, the young people, even those who were religious, did not wear any beards. There were certain exceptions who did not touch their beards, but they were a small minority.

The women would shave their heads entirely, and cover them with headdresses, wigs or kerchiefs. The *Shytl* [designed wigs] became widespread, but a woman would not come to prayer services with a *shytl* visible. Rather she would wear a black scarf as a head cover. The modern [women] would also wear hats.

The custom of cutting off a woman's hair became generally weakened after the decree of the Czar. Because Tomaszow obtained Rabbi Sitkowsky, the Litvak as its Rabbi, whose wife did not observe this custom, this led to rift. Despite the fact that the community leaders cut the Rabbi's salary as a form of punishment, a rift persisted.

The women wore coarse stockings, and silk stockings of dark color, which were opaque. Since Polish independence, style has penetrated the households forcefully, even in the case of the very religious homes, where they were already wearing transparent silk stockings. Only the religious did not permit this, as well as any form of flesh-colored stockings.

It is interesting that the Rebbe of Cieszanow the Rabbi and *Tzaddik*, R' Leibusz Rubin, would visit Tomaszow at the invitation of his *Hasidim*. While he was still living in Cieszanow, he was greatly beloved by the *Hasidim*. On one occasion, he made many amendments in R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl* (which, at that time, was the largest in the city), namely, that women who continue to wear their own hair must leave the women's synagogue. There was one of the *balebatim*, who was prominent, whose wife was tripped up by this, and because of this, on a Sabbath, the worshipers did not permit the inception of the '*Hodu*' prayer. Regrettably, the amendment could not b implemented, and as a result it was not observed.

In addition, he wrote an amendment into the *Pinkas* of the synagogue, that anyone who shaved with a razor is not permitted to take an aliyah during the reading of the Torah. This held on for a couple of months, and became impossible to implement, because from year to year, Yiddishkeit got weaker and weaker, and along with it, [sic: the unique] Jewish dress. However, it is possible to say that, in general, the dress, even among the liberal, was solid and conservative. By comparison with what we see today in America, it can be called a chaste, modest form of dress.

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The Preparations for Sabbath and Festivals

By Sh. Leibowitz

I know it would be better to describe the intensification of events before the Sabbath and Festivals. But this 'preparation' in anticipation of a mitzvah has a special meaning. It is a type of expression that does not allow itself to be expressed in words, because according to Hasidic lore, the act of preparing to perform a mitzvah, is a mitzvah in its own right, and from certain standpoints, even a greater mitzvah that the mitzvah itself. I am writing not only about the Sabbaths and Festivals alone, which have their own order and arrangements following set Torah laws. In contrast to them, the preparations

were a formation that was derived from the emotions of the soul, for which each location had its own customs and traditions, and in that way, it serves as a reflection of the deeply religious position of the Jewish populace in that locale.

I wish to refresh my emotions and sacred trepidation for a mitzvah, fir which I stir my memory, and those holy faces swim before my eyes, from our shtetl that was so pitilessly exterminated. Our fathers and mothers pass us by, wit their trembling and love for a mitzvah. Despite the distance in time and place, they remain yet so close to my heart. I see everything standing out, fresh and clear, as if it all happened just yesterday. Entirely apart, their customs and God-fearing appearance shine before me, at the time they did the preparations for Sabbath and the Festivals.

Each, in accordance with their economic capacity, made preparations involving better food and more attractive clothing for the Sabbath. And they prepared special dishes that were not eaten during the entire week. On Friday, before dawn, in preparation for the Sabbath, fresh Challahs were baked, and pastries. And even those who baked their own bread, they also baked [something special] in honor of the Sabbath, in the expectation that the blessing of the Sabbath should rest upon them. Fish was a special Sabbath delicacy. New underwear was put on only in honor of the Sabbath. All the tables were covered in white tablecloths, only in honor of the Sabbath and Festivals. One went to the baths and the *mikva* to bathe and be switched in honor of the Sabbath, even grabbing a nap in the afternoon, in honor of the Sabbath.

Now, the *cholent* with the various *kugels*, the special Sabbath delicacies.

Even the Jew, who for the entire week could not afford himself a bit of meat, for the entire week, he would save and scrimp in order that he could buy a piece of meat for the Sabbath. I am aware of an instance, where a poor Jewish man who ate humble bread and potatoes, on the Sabbath, he always managed to provide fish and meat, though he was not always able to provide both together. However, he always had one or the other. You can imagine the joy of the little children, who hungered for the entire week, one satisfying himself with a drumstick, another with a wing, and another with a neck, and if there was fish, then the joy knew no bounds.

Before *Kiddush*, the children would ask the father, what will we use to honor the Sabbath? He would answer, with meat or fish, or both together, in accordance with the money he had allocated for provisions.

One time, he had a particularly difficult winter. He had earned nothing. He scrimped and borrowed, to at least have a bit of meat in honor of the Sabbath. There occurred an incident, that the little chicken that he had bought in honor of the Sabbath became unfit for kosher consumption, and secondly, he had no place to even borrow money from. Sadly, he therefore had nothing for that Sabbath, only bread with watery bean soup. When he returned from synagogue, and proclaimed his lust '*Gut-Shabbes!*' The little ones ran up to him: Father, father! With what will we honor the Sabbath today? To which he replied: With a very important thing, which up until this day, we have not yet had.

The children asked him out of curiosity: with what? He answered them: You will see already after *Kiddush*.

They sang *Sholom Aleichem* to a pretty tune. When they had already eaten the Challah, and they see nothing else being brought out, no fish, and no meat, they asked their father: Father, where is the new 'honor.'

He answers: Today, we are going to honor the Holy Sabbath with the Holy Torah. Children, I bought a small

chicken for the Sabbath, but the Torah made it unclean, and this is our '*Oneg Shabbat*,' because on account of the Torah, we are not eating the little chicken, even though we are hungry, and desire it. And so, come children, let us come and take joy in the Holy Torah, and with the Holy Sabbath! And he stepped off into a little dance step with the children, whose holy song woke up all of the neighbors who had fallen asleep.

Passover Preparations

If it is true that the preparations of some other Festival began in the near days previous, or at most weeks before the holiday, Passover was the exceptional holiday [sic: in this regard], where preparations for Passover went on for the entire year.

Immediately after *Shavuot,* the wheat for *Shmura Matzo* was cut. Among the ardent *Hasidim*, this was a whole production, to travel and inspect the wheat, followed by the cutting and threshing, with genuine Hasidic excitement and song, ending in a toast of *L'Chaim* and a bit of a dance.

When winter had barely arrived, geese began to be raised. It was from them that fat was obtained for Passover. Usually, around the time of Hanukkah, the geese were slaughtered, and the fat was drained. For this, the kitchens and the fireplaces were especially heated to glowing heat. The *gribbenes* were fried up with *latkes* or *pletzl* bread with kasha.

Immediately after Hanukkah, the season of *kashering* the mill began. In our city, we always had to *kasher* two mills, with rollers and a water mill on a stone, because the Radzyn *Hasidim* did not use flour that came from a mechanized mill or that was ground through rollers, elevators (the things that lift and transport the grain and afterwards grind it automatically) which were sidelined for Passover flour. Among the more particular Jews, the only thing that was used was manual grinding, first combing through the wheat, to remove every possible suspicion of leavening.

If these prior preparations touched only part of the Hasidic Jews, or Rabbis or other community functionaries, the baking of matzos became a matter that involved the entire Jewish populace, because there was not even talk of machine-prepared matzos (because they had been prohibited by the Great Elder Sages of the Jewish people in bygone generations). Also, ready-made matzos, prepared by hand were not available to be bought. Rather, each individual engaged in the baking of matzos in accordance with their standing.

Immediately on one day after Purim, the season of matzo baking was opened. There were about 18 matzo bakeries in the city. Not all of these bakeries were permanent, rather, special matzo bakeries in which individuals transformed their private dwellings, and some, their place of work, into a matzo bakery. This impinged upon the matter of a franchise. Each baker had his families that had baked with him for generation upon generation, and the bakery itself, was handed down as an inheritance, from father to child. The bakeries operated under the direct supervision of the Rabbinate, who incidentally, took nothing in the way of a fee. The bakeries were very primitive and poor.

The first baking in the oven was thought to be the greatest honor. However, within this, there were three categories: 1) The very first baking when baking was first initiated, 2) Every Sunday morning, because there was a recess over the Sabbath, and 3) Each day in the morning. It was not possible to get first place at the oven, without a prior precedent, unless a new bakery opened. Usually, each Jewish person would first bake his *Shmura* matzo, and the ordinary kind. The dough rollers consisted of Jewish women and girls, as opposed to the people who punctured the rolled dough, the flakers, and sometimes the kneaders, who were men.

Usually, it was the master of the house, or his lady who would come to do the baking, or both. Among the modern folk, they would not come personally. Each would leave tip money for the workers.

The matzos would be taken home, wrapped in a cloth and tied at four corners with a pole through the middle, and two young lads would carry it home and the package was hung in the middle of the house.

Then, the borscht was strained, and later, raisins were put up to make wine. Then, the regimen of cleaning began, sweeping, scraping and *kashering*; airing out books in the yard, turning out the pockets in garments, and *kashering* the utensils, where there were special barrels on the ground where the *kashering* was performed.

A special task entailed the baking of the matzo on the Eve of Passover, which began a day earlier, because on the prior night, one went for '*Mayim Shelanu*' (water that was permitted to stand overnight, and it was with this that the matzo dough was kneaded).

It was especially festive at the home of the Rebbe of Cieszanow, where, along with the Hasidim, he would go to the pump near Moshe'leh *Sofer*. One held the bucket (specifically, a wooden one) the second an earthenware gathering pot, a fourth the cheesecloth. It was considered an honor as to who got to draw the water initially, and afterwards. When five pails were filled with water, they went home, or better said, danced their way home in song.

After *Maariv*, the search for leaven began, along with the sale of all leaven. Understand that most of the *balebatim* were up for the entire night, getting ready for the holiday, and with it all, they still were not ready.

At one in the afternoon, Sabbath finery was donned, the Rabbi in his shtrymel, and one went off to bake matzos. There, only Hasidim worked, from the man who poured the water, and flour measurer, to the roller and puncturer, kneaders and flakers, all were men.

The Rebbe himself kneaded the first of the dough, and recited the *Hallel* in song and with joy. And the entire gathering participated with him, and then all of the participants baked their own matzos, which was apportioned by the measures of dough. Every couple of minutes, the overseer of the dough portions would cry out: 'The remnants are to be discarded!' The work of doing this baking was special at the Hasidim from Trisk. In the Kielce *shtibl* they had their own bakery for the Eve of Passover.

The Eve of Shavuot

Among the ordinary people, there were no special preparations, because this festival was not connected with any ceremonies. The children made strings of flowers and hung them in the windows. They also prepared vegetables to hang, or spread around the houses, they laid sorrel (green growth from the river bank) on the floors.

In the *shtiblakh* and the various houses of study, the *Shamashim* decorated the premises with tree sprigs, especially around the *Bima* and the Holy Ark

By and large, Hasidim would travel to their Rebbe for the holiday. Also, dairy was heavily favored, with the provisioning of dairy products for *Shavuot*. The women would prepare dairy noodles, and special dairy baked goods, such as cheese rolls, cheese *rugelach*, etc.

The Eve of Rosh Hashana & Yom Kippur

Or, as part called them, the 'Days of Awe,' or the Holy Days. Here, the preparations were spiritual in nature. Among the very particular Jews, this season began as early as the fifteenth day of Av. [From that time], one remained in the *shtibl* to study at night. If one took leave of someone from another city, one already wished one another a *Ktivah VaKhatima Tova*. However, the real season began on the first day of Elul, with the blowing of the shofar, and the communal recitation of the Psalms every morning. Days of self-reckoning began, and taking stock, forgiveness ,and self-improvement, being brotherly, and engaging in acts of charity and good will. People were more guarded in what they said, and people spoke in a more subdued manner, carrying on conversation in a gentler fashion. And definitely conducting business affairs with more integrity. The principal moves began with the recitation of the first *Selichot* services, was done in the middle of the night, and by some, on Sunday before dawn. With a trembling stride, people would rush about in the darkened streets. All the adults, husband and wife, and small children, streamed to the houses of worship just as if they were seeking shelter before a difficult trial. The principal period of arousal took place on the Eve of Rosh Hashana, in which they did not content themselves with the *Selichot* prayers only, but they also recited the entire Book of Psalms before *Selichot*, and then again, after *Selichot*. One went through the act of cancelling all vows, went to the cemetery, gave charity, and fasted, some for a whole day, while others only a half day. Afterwards, with even greater emphasis and ecstasy, recited the 'Thirteen Attributes.' The culmination point was reached on exactly Yom Kippur Eve.

My pen is too poor an instrument to convey the mood, experiences and feeling of Erev Yom Kippur. This mood persisted up to the Holocaust, when a large portion of the young people had become secularized, and another part, regrettably, too far removed from religion. People streamed to the *mikva* beginning before dawn, because almost all of the Jews, especially members of the older generation, went to the *mikva* on Erev Yom Kippur. There was a part of them that went to the mikva three times during that day, before the morning prayer, before the afternoon prayer, and after the Final Meal, prior to beginning the fast. On that day, the women also partook in ablutions. One must remember, that in all of Tomaszow, there was only one *mikva* for the entire city. The *mikva* was crowded and steamy, but this did not deter anyone.

From the night before Erev Yom Kippur, a litany of '*Kaporeh Shlogn*' began. A white rooster was preferred. The ritual slaughterers would go to the homes of the wealthy to slaughter their [rooster] offerings. Before dawn, they would stand at the slaughterhouse where one would have to wait for long hours, to reach the right place. Jews would distribute charitable contributions generously on that day. A couple of hours before candle lighting, the entire Jewish population was already dressed in its festive finery, the women, mostly in white, with white kerchiefs or scarves over their heads. Everyone went to their relatives and friends to exchange greetings and the hope that one would be able to receive the blessings of a good year to come, and a *Gmar Khatima Tova*,and as was also the case, some of the time, to ask for forgiveness for some misconduct during the year. From almost all of the Jewish houses, one could hear wailing and weeping. Children clung to their mothers, people walked with tear-stained eyes in the streets. The men donned a white *kittl,* with their prayer shawl prior to leaving home. With hot tears, they blessed their children with the well-being of te house. The spasms and weeping tore hearts. Even those who did not cry, had tears that choked their ability to speak. The mood was earnest, sacred and heavy with broken hearts, and full of fear before the Great Day of Judgement. An hour before the appointed time, Jews would hurry off to the houses of study and *shtiblakh*, to recite the prayers of purification and confession of *Rabbeinu Nissim*, until the Cantor began to intone Kol Nidre.

The Eve of Sukkot & Simchat Torah

While *Sukkot* is a holiday that indeed is connected to a lot of ceremonies, and *mitzvot*, it was necessary to make all the preparations quickly because of the limited amount of time [sic: from Yom Kippur to *Sukkot*]. Most of the preparation centered about the procurement of the *Lulav* and *Etrog*, which were articles imported from outside the country. In Tomaszow, there were specialized Etrog merchants, Gershon Zegel, Yaakov Feinbaum (the Rav's), Mikhl Weinblatt, Sinai'leh Putter, Yehoshua Goldstein, and others. The purchase point was Lemberg. Most of the citrons were 'Greek.' Usually, each *Bet HaMedrash* would buy a couple of citrons for the use of the congregation, and each of the worshipers contributed to the purchase. There was a special citron for the women, and the *Shamashim* would circulate, going from house to house, to give the women an opportunity to recite the blessing on the *Etrog*. The better off Hasidim, would purchase an *Etrog* individually, or in partnership in order to carry out the ritual taking of the Festival Plants. Each year, the number of people buying an *Etrog* for their private use, grew.

The construction of the *sukkah* also took a great deal of work, especially a new *sukkah*, which was a special mitzvah for the children. The *Rebbe* of Cieszanow had a rather large, and beautifully decorated *sukkah*, which was a source of wonder to all. The young men of the *shtibl*, and the *Rebbe's* children, invested a great deal of work in order to make the *sukkah* beautiful.

A misfortune once occurred in the city, whereby Mikhl'i Borenstein ע"ה hung out his *sukkah* before nightfall on the eve of the holiday, because it had rained that entire day. The *sukkah* was very damp and the electric wire was not well enough insulated, and the entire *sukkah* became electrified. When he began to manipulate the *sukkah*, he got an electric shock, and fell point blank on his head, causing a cerebral injury, and he died immediately. This incident elicited great sorrow in the city.

For Simchat Torah, the children prepared paper flags with apples on the tip of the flag holder. For the children this was a major experience as a way of participating in Simchat Torah. Also, for Simchat Torah, the women would prepare a sweet kraut with broiled [meats].

Preparations for Hanukkah & Purim

These are festivals on which one works, and consequently the preparations are minimal, especially Hanukkah, which did not occupy to great a place among the general Jewish populace. Hanukkah candles were lit only by the head of the household (at very few observant families, all the menfolk lit and blessed their own). There was no need to do preparation in advance for this, because everyone had an inherited menorah for this purpose. For those young men of the shtibl who were to become grooms, and be married, Hanukkah meant a great deal, because it was the usual custom that a groom received a gift of a silver menorah from his prospective father-in-law. The community let itself go a bit, and indulged in playing cards. Among some of the people, *latkes* were eaten.

For Purim, the womenfolk were already occupied with providing *Hamantashen*, moist and nourishing , and meat *kreplach,* as well as a variety of baked gifts [*mishloakh manot*]. In our time, Purim, and even *Shushan* Purim was celebrated with great joy and performance. On *Shushan* Purim, the young people would circle the marketplace (which was deep in mud) seven times with a loaded sled. But from year to year, this custom waned. The one place where Purim was celebrated lustily and with life with its full import, was at the home of the Rebbe of Cieszanow, where his young people, and young men carried out lovely Purim numbers. The act of sending gifts drew in the children.

It was in this fashion that traditions and customs were observed. And it was in this warm homey Jewish atmosphere of lovely customs and traditions, idealist generations grew up, that drew their life force from a bottomless well of *Yiddishkeit* and became tied by all the strands of their soul to the Jewish people and empathized with its suffering and its joy.

The Black Pillar

By Yoss'l Shepsel's

Page 416: The Black Pillar at the Cemetery

This took place about a year or two after the Polish-Bolshevik war. Life was in the phase of getting itself stabilized. Men had already returned from the war, and the fear of artillery fire had passed. Everyone, or almost everyone, had rebuilt their homes after the great city fire, and suddenly, as if awakening from a nightmarish sleep, Jews confronted the degree of the revolution that had taken place on the Jewish street, which for the longest time had eaten its way into the spiritual fabric, and transformed the physiognomy of the Jewish settlement in the city. Religious and God-fearing Jews began to feel like accomplices in what they saw as a 'dereliction,' which they described, though they did nothing about it. The *Bet HaMedrash* and the *shtiblakh* became even more aroused, when, one person, a hairdresser, kept his place of business open on the Sabbath.

All at once, it was heard that the *Hevra Kadisha* was preparing to cordon off a part of the cemetery near the field, and set in place a black pillar as a marker of obloquy for those who publicly violate the Sabbath. And in order for it to make the requisite impression, so that it have an effect, the pillar will be taken to the cemetery in a parade through the city.

And that is what happened.

On *Tisha B'Av*, after the recitation of *Kinot*, a large assembly of people gathered in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, in the foyer house of the Bet HaMedrash lay the pillar, which had been smeared with black pitch, with specific spots skipped over and not blackened, in order that those who would carry it not get the pitch on their hands. The assembly came out of the *Bet HaMedrash*, heading towards the cemetery. However, nobody made a move to take the pillar. Finally, the religious Mordechai Joseph, and the goldsmith, R' Abraham Mordechai Perlmutter, took the pillar and carried it to the cemetery. On the way, others took over the load from them.

It is interesting that not one of those who carried the pillar was a member of the Hevra Kadisha. On the field, the pillar was set into the ground, at the designated place, so that it serve as a warning that here, near the fence, is where violators of the Sabbath will be interred.

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In the middle of the night, when the town was very deep in sleep, a group of young people came together from a variety of political parties, such as the *Bund, Poalei Tzion*, etc. Gently, they extracted the substantial pillar from its anchor, out of the darkened cemetery ground, and carried it to the municipal bath house, and through a window, flung it into the *mikva*. In the morning, people ran in wonder to look at the pillar which rested with the larger half of it in the *mikva*, sticking out of the smashed window to the outside.

The story of the pillar became an object of satire for many days in Cities and towns, and even found a report on the pages of the Jewish press in Poland.

In the city itself, wags thought up a ditty that they sung as follows:

Heydotz! Heydoz! M'feert a klotz
Sholom, Sholom. Doh vet men lign graum
Doh veln lign aleh drobehs.
Di vos zanen mekhalel Shabbes...etc., etc.

Hey! Hey! A pillar is being carried
Peace, peace. Here one will lie with room to spare
Here all the slobs will lie
Those who violate the Sabbath, etc., etc.

Author of the ditty – Avigdor Zucker



The First and Last Theater Performance on the Sabbath

By Hirsch Reis

It was at the start of the decade of the thirties, on a Sabbath between Passover and *Shavuot*. At seven o'clock in the morning, the one-time President (community head) R' Lejzor Lederkremmer, came to the *Rebbe* of Cieszanow at home, an occurrence that had never before taken place, and it was at an hour when the *Rebbe* was occupied with lofty matters of service and prayer, for the purpose of discussing specific community matters with the *Rebbe*. But the fact that the head of the community, in his August personage, came in person to do this, made the members of the household appreciate that there was something extraordinary had happened. They came into the *Rebbe,* and told him that the head of the community has a pressing need to consult with him over an urgent matter. The *Rebbe* ordered the head of the community to be admitted to his private room, and he says to this important guest, before services, 'What is new?'

R' Lejzor is quick to the point, since the *Bund* had organized a public theater presentation for three o'clock on that afternoon at Galecki's cinema (movie house), and in general, this was the first public Sabbath violation in the city. Because of this, it is his opinion that something should be sone about it. After further consultation, they come to the conclusion that notwithstanding the fact that there, sadly, is already a large number of young people that have been caught in their net, the Lord save us, where they step on everything that is sacred to us, but since, to date, they have not dared to make any public, open violation of the Sabbath, one must, at the very least make a protest. And secondly, the essential thing is to guard those who still have a bit of sensitivity, and see to it that they do not enter the theater (to picket). Accordingly, any child from a *balebatish* home would not have the nerve to go into the theater. This would spell a certain failure for them, and this would be 'Rebbe Payment' for them not to have any performances on the Sabbath. It will also be a warning for other 'worldly' youth organizations not to openly violate the Sabbath.

No sooner said than done. (After having obtained the concurrence of the Rabbi of Krylow), the *Rebbe* sent emissaries to gather all sixteen houses of worship under the order of the *Bet Din*, and the order of all community leaders, that all Jews are to come united as one at one o'clock in the afternoon, and gather in the

municipal Bet HaMedrash. From there, the entire host with the Rabbis at their head, will march to Galecki's cinema, to protest the planned violation of the Sabbath.

That Sabbath, happened to be a rather nice, sunny day, and indeed, men, women and children came some who were earnest, and others out of curiosity. The Rabbi ascended the *Bima* and in a few short words, clarified the purpose of the march. The Rabbi said: We are not going to for our amusement. We are only going to take the part of defending the honor of the Holy Sabbath, and to guard against preventing those who have not yet fallen into their net from being subverted in this way. He sad these words with great ecstasy and ardor, such that the assemblage of people was well warmed up, and the march began with everyone possessed of an aggressive spirit. True, the Rabbi demanded that the entire host should comport themselves in order, and quietly, and should not engage in any unruly behavior, on their account, but to follow the directions of his own young people, who were march coordinators.

'And who could see these go out, and not go out themselves.' The Rabbis, wearing their *shtrymels*, and the Jews of the *shtiblakh*, in their *kapotes* with velvet caps; and as it happened, the path of their march took them right through the Lwowska Street, the principal street where [sic: the homes of] all of the municipal and government officials were concentrated. This included the Magistrate, tax collector, the senior Sejm representative, the Postmaster. All of these officials immediately dropped what they were doing in order to be able to witness the spectacle. The march lasted for two hours.

At the outset, when th demonstration drew near the cinema, the Rabbis and the community elders took up the important positions that lead to the main entrance, and comported themselves quietly, to carry out the protest only by picketing the theater. However, the exhortations along with the march itself, added ardor to the crowd, and a little at a time, the crowd pushed closer to the doors, and became unruly and aggressive, and opened the doors.

The group of young people inside, began to flee, and they jumped through the windows, and the entire performance was disrupted. The Rebbe, personally, had the owner, Mr. Galecki, a Christian, called to him, and assured him that he would make good the financial damage. This entire performance was never ever put on, and they no longer dared to engage in an open violation of the Sabbath. The Rabbi, and certain 'privileged few' then had to agree to a payment of 150 zlotys to Mr. Galecki, and the city fell still.

It was on a certain night afterwards, that two stones came crashing through the windows of the Rebbe's Bet-Din house. There were notes attached to them indicating that this was 'revenge' for having disrupted the theater performance.

With this, the incident came to an end.



Sabbath and Holiday Time in Tomaszow

By Kh. Y. Biederman

Page 434: *This picture was sent to Mr. Yud'l & Chaya Zoberman, as a memento for their support of the Talmud Torah. On the reverse side of the picture there is the round stamp with the signatures of R' Y. Garzytzensky – President, and Yitzhak Karper – Secretary.*

Do you want to relive, in your memory, the warmest feelings, the most beautiful moments, and thereby also bring out in sharp relief the characteristic aspects of our beloved *shtetl* – then let us tax our memory, and our powers of imagination, and together go out for a stroll on the Sabbath or a Festival Holiday, through the quiet side streets of Tomaszow, where one would rarely encounter a gentile. All places of business are closed, and quietly proclaim that Tomaszow is a Jewish city which even the gentiles must *de facto* recognize. Let us observe the happy strolling groups, from all walks of life and circles. As if by a magic wand, they appear to have thrown off the entire burden of the hard, middle of the week life. The many worries and problems, that pre-war Poland had so generously prepared for the Jewish populace, the overblown hate, and 'deliberate' political boycott, hostile neighbors, and ruined livelihoods, accompanied by a future with no prospects. Suddenly all is forgotten, all the worries and anxieties, the very special grace that the Sabbath Queen bestows on each and every Jew, straightens out his bent back, and instills in him a special soul, full of pride and security.

It was not easy to celebrate the Sabbath in many Jewish homes. I had the privilege of being active in certain municipal institutions, such as *Bet-Lekhem*, and Talmud Torah, and in the archives of the Tomaszow Association in New York, it is certain that letters will be found, that portray the reasons why *Bet-Lekhem* had to be created, and I cite from memory, a letter that I had written a that time:

> 'A head of household who was taken to be a [good] breadwinner in the town, was allocated a guest for the Sabbath. When the guest entered the home of this Jewish man, he trusted a secret to his guest with tears in his eyes, indicating that all he had provided for the Sabbath were two small bread rolls. He then begged the guest to partake with him, in his meager repast, and in his awesome secret. The hungry guest could not, however, contain the secret within him, and the necessity to create a *Bet-Lekhem* that will secretly distribute Challahs to hundreds of Jewish homes became the cause of the hour.'

Also, these so-called breadwinners had to work very hard in order to be able to afford to celebrate the Sabbath at home. The 'AYAN' politics of the '*Owszem*' economic boycott, was best characterized by the renowned somber, Jew-pursuing Tomaszow police officer, 'Max:

> 'We will let the water out, and the fish will then stop of their own accord.'

Yes, it was difficult to provision one's self for the Sabbath, but when the Holy Sabbath came, it radiated majestically from each and every Jew, and that Jew was, once again, recognized as a prince.

More than two decades have gone by, since I threw my last, longing, glance with a heavy heart, at that beloved town where I was born, and where we spent out youth; where our families had been deeply rooted for centuries. [I was] fleeing in fright the pursuing Nazi Beast, which to our fortune, drove and scattered many of us, like alphabet letters all over the earth's globe. At the very least, we had the fortune of having the possibility to flee the net that was spread for us, in a timely fashion. This was a good fortune that very, very few Jewish towns had. It is thanks to this, that Tomaszow has a larger number of survivors. In retrospect about the more than two decades that consisted of stormy years of blood and tears, aimless wandering, of new hope, and the building of new homes on the top of ruins, may pictures remain obscured. You will forgive me when I attempt to relive the events and the people in my mind, the side streets and little houses, the leaders and the masses, that many details are omitted, or some of the times, not accurately related, despite the best of intentions, and the most strenuous effort. But if the picture is incomplete, our stroll through the Sabbath/Festival shtetl will enable us to relive many very special moments. It will fill us with longing for that shtetl that once was; for that lofty faithful joy, for those modest activists, committed themselves with all their heart and soul to work for the benefit of their poor and suffering townsfolk, and filled hearts darkened with despair, with hope. Regrettably, we will have to confine ourselves to a few, numbered, places, who yet stand alive before my eyes, and this will serve as a playback as well, of other places that we will have to gloss over because of a lack of material and space.

Erev Shabbat in the City

Do you recall the *Erev Shabbat* in the *shtetl?* For sure, Friday was a stressful day, especially for the women, and especially on those short Fridays, where for some of the women, they were short at least a half hour to finish off their preparations. Those women, who were good managers, by contrast, had everything prepared several hours earlier, having time to braid the locks of the children, and dress them in their Sabbath finery. Jewish men, sweaty and hot, would be returning from the *mikva,* where one also reinvigorated one's self with taking a hot bath. There were Jews of a' higher station,' who went for the full treatment, and had themselves switched as well, while crying out, 'Oh, fire!' and getting themselves refreshed by the bath house switches. But also those, who had to make do with a lesser treatment, also felt the 'joy' in their bones, that came from simultaneously ridding themselves not only of the dirt and grime, but of the worries of the hard week, and replacing it with the happiness of greeting the beloved Sabbath. The bath was an outstanding place to take up all the political problems of the shtetl, and not only one flaming fiery argument broke out and was boiled over on those bath house benches. There, one became familiar with all of the latest news of the world in general, and with all the local news of our community, in particular.

When the *Shames* banged three times on the door of each house in the *shtetl,* the sound of the closing of the doors to businesses resounded about. Tardy customers were shooed out the door, and from all windows, the festive light of Sabbath candles would begin to wink and flicker. Jews, each rushed off to their chosen location of prayer, and the Tomaszow Jews had a choice. I will exert myself, and attempt to enumerate all those that I can remember: The Synagogue, The Second Synagogue, The *Bet HaMedrash,* the Hasidic *Bet HaMedrash,* R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl,* The Belz *shtibl,* The Kielce *shtibl,* The Chelm *shtibl,* R' Nachman's *shtibl,* The Sanz *shtibl,* The Ger *shtibl,* The Radzyn *shtibl,* The Husyatin *shtibl, Mizrahi.*

Kabalat Shabbat

Upon arriving in the synagogue, or shtibl, the first thing was to find the place where the various insignias of all the organizations were found. It was there that all the party and organizational activity took place. Posters could be found there, announcing speeches, or fund-raising assemblies, news about the Siyyum celebration

for the conclusion of studying a tractate of the Talmud, or a eulogy for a well-known personality. Apart from this, when it was the time of local or general elections, the walls were totally plastered with loud posters, which [were calculated] to arouse the emotions of the readers, who were far from being passive onlookers. Jews took a lively and active part in all the events of public life, whether it was of a local or of a more general character, and everyone was deeply interested in their development.

Immediately as the Cantor, or the person chosen to lead the prayers began to pray, everything appeared as if all the other matters were quickly forgotten, and sang along, and prayed along in greeting the Sabbath Bride. After the Friday night meal, the streets became full of strollers. For some, the stroll was a purpose in itself. For others, they streamed to the Rebbe's *Tisch*, or in the *shtiblakh*, to study lessons, or to organizations, where a formal presentation had been prepared on some actual theme.

At the Rebbe's Tisch

At this point, I wish to pause by the institution of the '*Tisch*' that was prepared at the home of the 'Rebbe of Cieszanow,' The Rabbi and Tzaddik, R 'Leibusz Rubin ז"צ and here is the scene: outside, a snowstorm is raging, a biting, frosty wind whips the face, but with how much joy, and inner loftiness, are we streaming from every nook and cranny of the *shtetl*, to one center. To the house of the Rebbe of Cieszanow, The Rabbi, Rubin ז"ר. No matter how cold and frosty it might be outside, one is immediately warmed by stepping over the threshold of this house. And this was not because the house was well heated, but rather, it warms the heart and soul, from the loving look with which you are greeted by wise eyes, and the tall, majestic persona of the Rabbi. And every corner of the house becomes filled with the dulcet tones of a heartfelt '*Sholom Aleichem*,' whose refrain is immediately, and enthusiastically picked up by the variegated assembly of people, consisting of elderly Hasidim, middle-aged balebatim, and young little boys, with glowing eyes, and inflamed cheeks from the frosty outside. All join together as one, in Hasidic enthusiasm. All eyes are concentrated on the patriarchal, magnificent persona of the Rabbi. Each of his words is snapped up with great reverence and respect, each melody becomes transformed in a frenzy to and outbreak of new well springs of joy and the pouring out of one's heart, of heavenly elevation, of such a spiritual pleasure that only the Hasidic melody, whose roots reach back to the melodies of the Temple, beside the Temple of Repentance, can bring. And in a chain, from hand to hand, shoulder to shoulder, the hours are consumed in a long dance.

It is difficult to portray the state of spiritual joy that possessed each and every person, going home late on a Friday night, sunken in thought about the spiritual elevation they had just lived through, which imbued them with a reserve of life force and strength, for the entire, coming week. And in the morning, to make one's way along a new path, through freshly fallen snow, coming into the Sanz *shtibl*, to a lesson in *Rambam*, or the Pentateuch, along with *Or HaChayim*, and anew, one meets at the Rabbi's *Tisch* in the afternoon, and at the Third Feast, when it is pitch-black dark in the house. The house ,where the Rabbi presides over the *Tisch*, is filled from end to end, and immediately the premises becomes filled with heartfelt movements, with longing melodies, and also with lively marches. Young people and boys who were blessed with good voices, are given the honor of leading a variety of songs. Very soon, R' Meir Rubin ז"ר, the *Rebbe*'s eldest son, will lead the singing '*Baruch El Elyon.*' and you cock your ears because very shortly you will hear a wondrous new tune or 'opera' sung in a manner that only he can summon. The Akst Brothers, and, to separate for long life, Yitzhak Koch, Yekhezkiel Heller, Shimshon Malarsh, were given the honor to sing almost at every Third Feast, and the moment of '*Reva-Drevin*[102]' becomes deeply etched in the hearts of the numerous participants.

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102 A Kabbalistic reference to a 'time of the favor of favors.'

Rosh Hashana to Tashlikh

And here, you have yet a new image: The Rabbi with the assembly of *Hasidim* are going to *Tashlikh.*

The way passes through a number of the principal streets, and the march becomes transformed into a procession rich with impressions. The streets are filled with Hasidic song, and if here or there, a gentile attempts to throw a stone, he is ignored, and it is charged off to the 'old year...' The march is launched, and one sings with more fire and a sense of security, showing that we are not afraid of anyone, but only of You Alone, as we were wont to sing in a Yiddish verse from '*Al Tira Avdi Yaakov*' on every Saturday night, at which time, again, we regrouped at a *shtibl* for a *Melaveh Malka*, to escort the Sabbath out, with longing and fresh concern, for the coming week. And it is precisely this concern that was expressed best of all in the parody of the *Geshem-Niggun*[103], late in the evening of *Simchat Torah*, (after having entirely forgotten the whole two days of gladdening one's self with the Torah, after having drained the last keg of beer, to the bottom, and having enumerated all of the Jewish virtues in '*Um Ani Khoma*,' and to feel how good it was to be a Jew) when the darkness of night fell on the outside – and together with it, a darkness in the heart. The contrast of joy and dance, up to when the self-induced amnesia was replaced by the awakened awareness that here, again, comes a long, hard, cold winter, with all of its problems, And the joyful R' David Ofen הי"ד or R' Shimon the Elementary School Teacher, stood up on a bench in R' Nachman's *shtibl* and using the *Geshem-Niggun*, would sing: 'For sure – the summer is gone, and winter approaches. The roof is broken, the overcoat is threadbare, and still there is no money, for tuition that is still owed from last year (and who would know better than R' Shimon Melamed הי"ד himself?), and so forth, in the same vein.

Simchat Torah

Page 427: *At the Third Great Conclave in Marienbad, 5697 [1937]*

Strolling from the right: Rabbi Meir Rubin ז"ל, The Rabbi Moshe Chaim Blum ז"ל (The Rabbi of Zamość) and Rabbi Schuster הי"ד (The Rabbi of Sokolka)

And speaking of *Simchat Torah*, we will once again return to our beloved Sanz *shtibl*, where the Rabbi would organize the renown Sanz *Hakafot.* It had finally gotten to the point, where one made a pilgrimage from all of the other houses of worship, as soon as one was through with the *Hakafot* in those other locations. And it was really worth making the effort. The Rabbi זצ"ל would dance for hours at a time, without stopping, and with forceful ardor, sang the special Sanz *Hakafot* with the famous rapturous melodies. Between the *Hakafot,* many various songs were sung, sometimes in solo, and other times the *Perakhim*-Choir would sing, which was a special attraction. I am able to recollect one of these songs, which was especially popular: One individual sang in alphabetic [sic: acrostic] order, the words '*Emunat Khakhamim hobn unz,*' and we would respond *'Bereshit barah lernen unz,* whereupon, the choir immediately would sing, '*Voyl, voyl voyl is unzer dienst, unzer leben is tsuker-ziss...* '[104] How many of these very young, vibrant sugar-sweet young boys, full of hope,

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103 The Fall prayer for rain.

104 We possess the faith of our Sages
We study the text of Genesis
How comely and beautiful is our worship
Our lives are sugar-sweet....

were cut down by the Gruesome Murderer?

As was usually the case, Rabbi Meir Rubin ז"ל distinguished himself with solo performances, who apart from being a gifted musician, was also a man of unusual virtue. As a good and talented organizer, he was the president of *Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael*, and took part in many conferences, among which also the large *Agudat-Yisrael* conclave n Marienbad. He was a member of the central organs of the *Agudah* in Poland. A great future was predicted for him, but his live was cut short in his prime, from hunger and disease, in Siberian exile.

Having brought to mind the *Tze 'irei Agudot-Yisrael* in Tomaszow, let us pause for a while , and take stock of the activities and the leadership of this group, and also how the *Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael* and *B'not Agudot Yisrael* in Tomaszow, whose activity introduced much festive feeling into the gray weekly life of the city, and underscored a chapter rich in substance, in the history of Tomaszow, up to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

In another part of this book, R' Yitzhak Meir Gartler has already described in detail the founding and the activity of the *Agudah* movement in Tomaszow. Therefore, I wish to pause here only briefly about the activity of the youth groups, of this very movement, in which I had a privilege to take an active role for a period of time.

The Siyyum Celebration of Daf Yomi

The leaders of the *Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael* have to be credited with many moments which cannot be otherwise described except as 'Festival Holidays during the regular week.' On an ordinary Wednesday evening, you could see hundreds of Jews dressed in their holiday best, streaming to the *Bet HaMedrash*, to a *Siyyum* of a Talmud tractate by the *Daf Yomi* study group. At this type of opportunity, the young people would invite a known leader, and speaker, who would use their oratorical skill to transport their audience into a newer and loftier world, of spiritual pleasure. They would arouse the audience, and give them an opportunity to take account of themselves, and also an awareness that all of the day-to-day difficulties, and all of the dark clouds that had already begun to gather in the Jewish skies, in the suffocating atmosphere of the Hitler epoch, were nothing more than transient moments in the millennial journey of Jewish continuity, whose existence will remain to the End of Days. And in order to achieve the highest goal, tribulation and martyrdom must come, whose purpose, indeed, was to hasten the arrival of the Messianic Era. Well, it provided some bolstering, and also a prideful awareness, having been won over to the view that the trials and tribulations have a purpose, if not for one's self, then at least for future generations.

Among the young people and the *Perakhim*, there were a few good speakers. Rabbi Meir Rubin ז"ל, the President of the *Tze'irei Yisrael*, and also, separated for long life, his brother, the Rabbi of Tomaszow, the Rabbi R' Sholom Yekhezkiel Rubin, illuminated the tribunal and engaged the enthusiastic assembly. Also, Yud'l Szur הי"ד, was a good speaker. [He was] a dynamic and ambitious young man, who was wounded immediately after the outbreak of the war from the bombardment, from which he was crippled, and later suffered the same fate as all the martyrs.

The Joy of Purim

Such festivities, along with their accompanying celebrations, occurred frequently. One time it might be a *Tu B'Shvat* or *Tu B'Av* celebration, or a *Lag B'Omer* celebration. At Purim time, the *Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael* would put on plays, such as the death of Moses, and others.

Usually, on the night of Purim, R' Yisroel'keh Pfeiffer ה"ד along with other young men, would make such merriment at the Rebbe's *Tisch*, with there various antics and presentations, that people would look forward to it for the entire year. And it happened one time, that R' Yisroel'keh became angry for some reason, and did not come to the *Tisch*. Lat on the night of Purim, they came and knocked on his door, and told him that they needed benzine (which he sold). When he came out, the group 'kidnaped' him and brought him to the Rabbi, re-dressed him in rabbinical clothing, with a silver cane in hand, and marched him to the home of his father-in-law, R' Ary' Heller. One of the people knocked on the door, and represented that a certain Rabbi, R' David Lancuter had arrived. The household quickly dressed, and the 'Rabbi' was admitted. The father-in-law did not recognize his son-in-law... and it was in this manner that they marched joyously and in a carefree way waking up one Hasid after another. However, R' Sholom Akst sabotaged the scheme when the electricity was turned on to receive the 'Rabbi.' And it was precisely at that point that the 'Rabbi,' Yisroel'keh Pfeiffer had spotted a half-eaten schmaltz herring in the dark, and had grabbed it and put it in his mouth, and in this situation, the 'Rabbi' was unmasked at the moment the electric lights were turned on... however, the young people were merry, deliberately causing consternation to their enemies, who assumed an ever increasingly threatening posture, influences by Hitler's poisonous propaganda.

One time, the festivities in the middle of the week took place as a farewell event for those making *aliyah* to Israel, for that very limited number, who had the privilege of obtaining certificates [sic: exit visas]. They were accompanied along with the best of wishes, as well as hidden emotions of envy by many of those who could only dream of doing this (as one who, during the time when most of the *olim* from Tomaszow received their certificates, had the oversight of the *Va'ad LeMa'an Ertez Yisrael* and the *Morasha* of *Keren HaYishuv* at the *Tze 'irei Tzion,* I had all of the information and was well acquainted with the mood that pervaded our ranks).

The Bet Yaakov Movement

And here is yet another festive sentiment: the young women of *Agudat Yisrael*, the *B'not Agudat Yisrael*, at whose head stood the teacher Toba Lewkowicz, the sister of Chaya and Mal'ya Heller, Rachel Shafran, etc., invited the renown Sarah Shenirer with the purpose of broadening and strengthening the *Bet Yaakov* school, which was established after a considerable expenditure of effort, by a few tens of activists, at the head of which stood my father, R' Abraham Yekhezkiel Biederman ז"ל, who literally committed his entire soul and dedicated his prime time and energy for the school. The visit of Mrs. Shenirer literally shook up the religious [residents] of Tomaszow. The respect for her was enormous, both by the students, teachers and parents. Mrs. Shenirer stayed in our house during her visit, and I remember how the teacher [Mrs.] Lewkowicz stood in awe and respect for her, despite the fact that Mrs. Shenirer was a very lovely and simple person, as is appropriate for a matriarch of the many thousands of *Bet Yaakov* children whom she reviewed as if they were her own (being childless herself).

The '*B'not*' was a focal point for the girls of the religious families, and especially those who completed the *Bet Yaakov school*, which had earned a reputation in the whole vicinity as the model education that the girls got there.

The Heder Yesodei HaTorah

Along with the *Va'ad* of the *Agudat Yisrael*, the leadership of *Tze'irei Yisrael* was also engaged in assuring the existence of a '*Heder Yesodei HaTorah*, or as it was called: '*The Agudah Heder.*' It is possible to aver with great confidence, that the largest part of religious youth received their education in this Heder, which had outstanding principals and educators. R' Yitzhak Meir Gartler, a very talented organizer, orator and writer,

who today is located in Israel, and himself writes a chapter regarding the life of the *Agudah* in Tomaszow for this Yizkor Book, was the principal and living spirit of this institution for years, which educated hundreds of Jewish boys in the genuine traditional spirit. It was these students who became the *avant-garde* for the '*Perakhim*,' and later on, the '*Tze'irim*.'

One of the most beloved of the educators was R' Aharon Untzig, who today lives in Israel. A neatly dressed short individual, with gold-rimmed glasses, the children in the highest grade would sit, as if chained to their places, to hear his lesson in *Gemara*, and commentaries with great interest. Either that, or a beautiful sharp Hasidic word about the portion of the week, which remained deeply etched in the memory of his students (I had the pleasure of being one of them). The principal, R' Yitzhak Meir Gartler, was someone who conducted a beautiful lesson himself. One of the principals was also R' Chaim Untzig from Krasnobrod. Among the other educators, I will here recall R' Meir Klarman, R' Pinchas Korngold, R' Simcha Herzog, R' Benjamin Tepler (who left his teaching position in the Mizrahi *Heder*).

Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael

A very substantially rich chapter in the history of the religious youth in Tomaszow was written by the youth group where the younger boys came together, who were between bar mitzvah age and 18 years old. This was the '*Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael*, at whose head for many years, stood my very important partner and friend, Rabbi Benzion Schneider, who today is located in Haifa.

Two photographs of this very youth group lay before me now. Many of them are spread out to all four corners of the world. Many of them shared the fate of the six million. Looking now at their eyes, in the picture, and becoming as one with their souls, it is difficult to hold back a tear. They all look so full of life, they spread around themselves such a roiling fire of youth, and such stormy energy. How, and under what circumstances, did your young lives come to an end?

For many years, you had allocated to me the position of being the Recording Secretary of *Pirkhei Agudah* and *Tze'irei Agudah*. I could never imagine that the 'Yizkor Book Committee' would allocate to me the responsibility to memorialize your precious and sacred souls.

At this point, I wish to enumerate those members that are found in the photos, whose lives were cut down while in the flower of youth:

First and foremost, from *Tze'irei Yisrael*: Rabbi Meir Rubin, Yitzhak Meir Pflug, Mordechai Ganzer, R' Eliezer Gershon Teicher.

Now the leaders of *Pirkhei Agudat Yisrael*: Shlomo Gartler, Mendl Heller, Yaakov Panzer, Yud'l Szur, Sinai Shapiro, Yud'l Brand, Mott'l Schwindler, Shmuel Kaufman, Nathan Akst, Moshe Heller, David Heller, Yitzhak Youngman (who was killed by the first bombs that fell on Tomaszow), Peretz Singer and Shlomo Kupiec (whose death as a martyr is described so movingly, and in such a heart-rending manner, in this same book, by my dear comrade and friend Abraham Singer), Meir Wolf Ofen, Yaakov Eliezer Gartler, Shmuel Hirsch Liszczanewski (son of the *Shokhet* of Turobin), and Moshe Maltz.

The Activists Among the Youth

At this opportunity, let us enumerate a number of the activists among the youth (apart from those previously mentioned that appeared in the photos of the *Perakhim*), namely: R' Sinai Stender, The Secretary for many years, Elimelekh Heller, who took over the secretariat after Sinai's marriage, and was killed while fleeing from Lodz during the 1939 bombing, R' Leib'l Mermelstein, the longtime president and beloved role model for the young people, Gershon Brand, a disciple of the Rabbi of Tarnopol, and [himself] a formidable scholar, R' Yeshay' Heller, R' Yaakov Herman, R' Yaakov Mordechai Guthartz, R' Jonah Singer, Yeshay' Hirsch Heller, Baruch Akst (who especially dedicated himself to the spread of Torah study and Hasidism).

Even though the Rabbi and *Tzaddik* R' Leibusz Rubin ז"ל was not an official member of the *Agudah*, the entire membership of the *Agudah* youth stood under his influence, and the entire *shtibl* was *de facto* the center of all the *Agudah* activities in all of its branches. Additionally, his two sons stood at the head of its leadership. In recalling the Sanz *shtibl*, we should, in passing, also recall a couple of the important *balebatim*: R' Ary' Heller, R' Neta Heller, R' Yisroel'ki Pfeiffer, R' Moshe Knobloch, R' Shlomo Akst with his sons. R' Hirsch Ganzer, and a formidable host, R' Sholom Singer (R' Sholom Rachaner, whose son, Abraham, describes his martyrdom).

Talmud Torah

An important educational institution for the poorer class of children, who were unable to pay any tuition, was the Talmud Torah, at the head of which stood (for the time that I was the Secretary for this institution) R' Yaakov Lederkremmer, R' Ephraim Rov, R' Yaakov Szerer (or as he was called Yaakov Lehrer) and additional important *balebatim*.

Thanks to the generous support of the Tomaszow *landsleit* in New York, R' Nachman's *shtibl* on the Krasnobrod *Gasse* (or as it was called towards the end, Pierackogo), was converted and rebuilt as a Talmud Torah building, and I was deeply moved, on many an occasion, when I would attend the distribution of a glass of hot milk with a small roll for each child, seeing the eagerness with which the starving children awaited their breakfast, while standing in line (many of these sons of the poor, earned prizes for excelling in their studies and conduct). And the thankfulness in the eyes of these children was the greatest satisfaction for those who were active, and who witnessed it. Indeed, the Tomaszow *landsleit* in America may justifiably take pride for enabling this. Apart from this, when *Tu B'Shvat* arrived, and they would receive gift packages of fruit, from the Land of Israel, there was no bounds to the children's joy.

The house next to the Talmud Torah was the 'Yavneh' School, or as it was called, the Mizrahi-Heder (which is described in detail in other places in this book). It was from there that the sound of Hebrew singing resounded far and wide over the Krasnobrod Gasse, and brought a little liveliness among the lumber merchants who were located nearby, who would stand for hours, looking for a customer to appear and take away several boards of lumber for a price, so that at least one might see some 'real money' before one's eyes.

The Shtibl of R' Nachman Neuhaus ז"ל

Page 435: Left to Right: Shprinza Ofen, R' David Ofen (Teacher)

Many dear, and warm personable Jewish people worshiped in R' Nachman's *shtibl.* Let us recall a number of them here: R' Abraham Shimshon Melamed, R' David Ofen, a soulful leader of worship, the little old man, Kasha Makher, the Elder, R' Moshe Aharon Maus (who would argue that he personally remembered the wars of Alexander of Macedon), R' Chaim Yaakov Schenner, and his brother Yoss'leh Wassertreger, and the beloved R' Tevel'eh the grinder, known from the taking in of guests, where he was called R' Tevel Madior, the father of the important landsman the activist and *Maskil,* R' Fishl Hammer.

Rabbi Nachman Neuhaus ז"צל was the Teacher of Righteousness in the city, himself a disciple of the B'KH and other great sages. I remember him in his last years as being sick, oppressed by travail, God protect us, when he was bedridden.

I was an exile with his son, Rabbi Leibusz Neuhaus ז"ל, with whom together, I was sent to the colonial village of Matveyevskaya in the wilds about Archangel, and after finally being released, traveling on a train to middle Asia, under inhuman conditions, with up to 40 people or more packed into a cattle car, with the meager baggage, full of filth and vermin. Many fell ill on the trip that lasted eight weeks, and R' Leibusz Neuhaus and his wife both died on the way. Their bodies were laid out at the front of the train cars, where the daily procedure was that the N.K.V.D. would come and collect the dead, and bury them somewhere. It was in this fashion that, deep inside Russia, they took part in the same fate, as millions of many others of those martyred by Hitler, who did leave behind a place where one could come and mourn over a grave. In contrast to those small colonial villages where the death rate was higher, those who died created, with their death, the only Jewish institution in those God-forsaken places: A Jewish cemetery.

The Angel of Death [in the form of] Typhus

A scant two weeks after arriving at their designated 'locations,' my father, R' Abraham Yekhezkiel along with many others, succumbed to a massive typhus epidemic which killed them in their starved and exhausted state.

The following incident should also be recollected here: We had no sooner arrived at the location, when, along with two Jewish families from the *kolkhoz* [sic: collective farm] 'Kizil Bulak,' in the Osh Oblast in Kirghizstan, 9not far from the Chinese border), we were allocated a small cottage with windows that had no panes, and an oven without a chimney, which gave off smoke inside, assuming that there was something to burn for heat (in the heat of middle Asia, more often we froze for lack of fuel for heating, that was the case in the cold of Archangel), The nights were especially cold. My mother, Chaya Sarah ע"ה and I, immediately fell sick with typhus, and my father ע"ה, escorted us to the hospital in a nearby town, where many people were billeted in a single room, on the bare floor because of the shortage of beds. When a few days passed, and my father ז"ל and brother Yisrael, separated for long life, did not come to visit us, I began to ask a variety of people in the hospital as to wether anyone had inquired about us, at which time a Polish nurse told me that my father ע"ה was no longer alive. I did not want to believe her, because –after all – did she even know who my father was? On that same day, Yisrael Greenbaum ע"ה, the leader and commander of *Betar* in Tomaszow came to visit us, whose sister and brother-in-law were lying on the same floor, as we who were suffering from typhus. I asked whether he had heard anything about my father, but he avoided giving me an answer. This was

on Thursday, and on the following Sunday, I became aware that this same Yisrael Greenbaum who visited us on Thursday in good health, was no longer alive. He died a sudden death from the typhus epidemic, and other maladies together with thousands of other refugees, among which was my father ל"ז. My brother was the only one to sit up with him in vigil after he died, for two nights, and had to bury him with his own hands on a separate plot of land which had been allocated to him, because the Islamic population did not want anyone of a different faith interred in their cemetery. Afterwards, my brother himself became sick with typhus, and lay alone in the hut, at the time we were in the hospital. It was only thanks to the family of Liebeh Stahl, and her brother Shlomo Gelernter, the only Jewish family in the *kolkhoz*, who noticed that no one had seen my brother for a couple of days, who then entered the hut, and found him without any strength left, on the bed, without a drop of water, even if there were someone to bring it to him. They transported him to their residence where, with God's help, he quickly returned to good health.

The Ger Shtibl

Page 439: ***The Scharfman Family***

From the Right: Sarah Pearl, Nunya Pearl, Chaim Yehoshua Biederman, Chava Scharfman, Yisroel'ki Pearl, R' Joel Scharfman, Yisrael Moshe Biederman, and Zvi Lakher

Page 440: *From the Right: Yisrael Moshe Biederman, Sarah Pearl, Stempel, Chaim Yehoshua Biederman, Yuta Lehrer, Leah Pearl, Zvi Lakher, Menucha Pearl (Lakher), Dvora Scharfman, Yisroel'ki Pearl, his wife, Reizl, Menucha Millstein, Koppel Kalinberg, Sarah Biederman, Aharon and Menachem Pearl*

A few words are in order about the Ger *shtibl*, which was a very Sabbath and Festival-spirited place of worship. For the entire week, the Ger Hasidim would pray either in the neighborhood of their homes, or in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*. The young people prayed and studied in the nearby Sanz *shtibl*.

For the entire week, that which on the Sabbath called itself the Ger shtibl was – once a division of the *Heder Yesodei HaTorah*, and once – on the contrary, guess!~ – a saloon, where a couple of thirsty peasants and their wives would quench their thirst (the owner of the premises did need a way to make a living, and the way 'making a living' looked in the Poland of that time of the 'Directed Boycott,' perhaps you do recall, that it was difficult to hold a Jew culpable, if during the week he covered the 'Holy Ark' and attempted to bring a little bit of merriment among the gentiles, and a bit more income into the household – because R' Mordechai'leh's impoverished place of business by itself did not bring in enough of a living on its own.

I would like to recollect a couple of name here, and present a couple of personalities.

R' Mikhl Yehuda Lehrer, ל"ז was the *Gabbai* of the Ger *shtibl* for many, long years. A Jewish man with a broad and loving smile on his face (depending on how he might be feeling) was beloved and respected by all that came in contact with him. He was a soulful leader of prayer, and would lead the Kol Nidre prayer (he was born at exactly the hour of the recitation of Kol Nidre). He was skilled in reading the Torah, and was the head and leader of all activities that involved sacred ritual.

His brother, R' Yekhezkiel Lehrer ל"ז, was the President of the '*Agudah*,' and was a very gifted individual. He was merchant of forest products, and could evaluate a forest very accurately, rarely making an error. He was a *Mohel*, a gardener (his flower garden was something to see), and could inscribe a complete sentence on the

side of a grain of wheat. He once made a basket and a handle out of the pit of a cherry, and on the half side of the basket etched a complete map of Austria. An Austrian officer, during the years of The First World War, took it with him for the Vienna Museum. He was fond of immersing himself in learned discourse, explaining a difficult point in grammar, or Ibn Ezra, with his neighbor, and sister's son, R' Mikhl Yehuda Pflug, a Jewish man who was a scholar, a candle manufacturer, and rigorous at the level of the Kotzk, as befits a Hasid. He was a man of means, and active in the Agudah (his son, Yitzhak Meir ל"ז, was active in the *Tze 'irei Yisrael*, his second son, to be set apart for long life, Mendl, was one of the first of the *Agudah* to make *aliyah*, and is today a candle manufacturer on Israel).

My grandfather, R' Yaakov Joel Scharfman ל"ז would get up every day between 3-4 AM to study and recite Psalms, with a heartrending melody. Afterwards, while still before dawn, he would go to pray with the first *minyan*, and later, together with his son, R' Mikhl Scharfman ל"ז (a scholar and activist) would engage in their forest product business, and was respected by everyone who knew him. His son-in-law, R' David Pearl ל"ז , who in a short time became well-known and beloved in Tomaszow with is whole-hearted commitment to public works, his fiery and ardent praying, and singing, during the High Holy Days, left as a young man, for Lublin, being underweight.

R' Mendele Tepler ל"ז was a genuine and beloved person of that period. He was dedicated to Torah study, prayer, and charity, day and night. His sons, R' Gedali' and R' Sholom, also worshiped in the *shtibl*, with their children, and also his son, R' Yisroel'keh, who was the 'Secretary' of the Ger *shtibl*, because he had committed many melodies to memory, and always had the appropriate melody ready, and refreshed everyone who was leading services, on demand (it is no wonder that his son, Ephraim, sings so well...).

R' Shmuel Shier was also the *Gabbai* for a long period of time, who was killed by bandits, along with his son Netanel in Lemberg, in 1941.

R' Moshe Lieberman ל"ז has remained in the memory of all the worshipers, for his heartfelt and sweet High Holy Day renditions.

Among the other worshipers, it is also necessary to recall those dear and heartfelt Jewish men such as R' Shmuel Lubert ל"ז, who would dance for hours on end, with the boys from the *Heder* on *Simchat Torah*, with a small flask of ninety proof whiskey in the back pocket of his silk *kapote*. [We also recall] R' Mikhl Yehuda Scheinman, R' Zalman Brandwein, R' Yehoshua Goldstein, R' Itcheh'leh Goldstein, and their children, R' Itcheh Szparer, in whose house the Torah was read on Simchat Torah, as an auxiliary synagogue, R' Gershon Zegil, the *Etrog* merchant.

And such was the life of the Jews of Tomaszow, in their happiness and sorrow, during their festivals and ordinary weekdays, until – until the coming of Elul 5699 [September 1939]. Elul is always a time when serious days draw near, the Days of Awe. The breezes of Elul, like the blowing of the shofar, introduce an unrest, accelerating fear and a trembling in the heart. However, in Elul of 5699, instead of the normal Elul breezes, a wild storm that brought destruction blew in, accompanied by the frightening thunder of *Blitzkrieg* which killed many thousands, uprooted and flung off to faraway places those who were survivors, and completely wiped out and exterminated the centuries old Jewish settlement in Tomaszow-Lubelski (which even demonstrated the capacity to survive the terrifying Chmielnicki Pogrom in 1648-9), along with its deeply entrenched homes and institutions, synagogues, houses of study, and not even overlooking its cemeteries – and the Sabbath and Holiday was disrupted, and those Jews who observed that Sabbath and those Holidays were killed – May God avenge the vengeance of the spilled blood of Your servants!

The Great Wedding

By Asher Reis

Page 441: *At the Departure of the Rabbi of Widoma, Rabbi R' Joseph Baruch Be'er* הי"ד *from Tomaszow 1932*

From the Right: *Herschel Brenner, Rabbi A. N. Teicher, Mikhl Weinblatt, Rabbi Joseph Baruch Be'er (The Groom), Rabbi Yekhezkiel Rubin and Rabbi Simcha Rubin.*

Page 442: *A Young Man from the Shtibl, as an Uhlan, Mendele Heller,* הי"ד *Killed as a Partisan in the Rabizner Forest*

Page 443: *Yoss'l Shapiro* הי"ד *as a Cossack*

As usual, small towns have their own calendar, and, [for example] something may be reckoned to be three years before, or possibly after the 'Great Fire.' Tomaszow had an important historical event, that young and old alike remember, and date events by this type of measure, as being before the 'wedding' or after the 'wedding..' And don't think this was just an ordinary event. This wedding remains deeply etched in memory, such that all who lived through it, talk about it to this day with a mouth full of detail. The story is as follows:

The Rebbe of Cieszanow, the *Gaon*, and *Tzaddik*, R' Ary' Leibusz Rubin זצללה"ה, who was also the Rabbi of the city, had a large circle of adherents and disciples, especially among the young *Hasidic* people, and *Agudah* circles. They were tied to him by their skin and their lives, loving him with the love of the soul, and were prepared to sacrifice themselves for him. This is not novel, because the Rebbe was a soul mate to all of them, and guided them with love and loyalty which was truly exceptional, being the pride and joy of the entire area. And, indeed, it was this lively group, which on the occasion of every Festival, or day of celebration, that would joyously carry on with fine dance and singing at the Rebbe's *Tisch*.

A day came to pass that the Cieszanow *Rebbe* arranged a marriage for his oldest daughter, Henneh'leh הי"ד who was promised to a son of the Rabbi of Khenczyn, R' Joseph Baruch הי"ד, later to be the Rabbi of Widoma-Przedborz. The *Hasidim* of Cieszanow decided that they would arrange the wedding to be sumptuous and shining, as was the case in all Rabbinic courtyards, and in the process, to repay the *Rebbe* of Cieszanow for his work that was so full of blessing for all of them, for his entire life.

Even thought the wedding had been set for 19 Kislev 5694 [November 26, 1934], the group began to make preparations during the prior summer. It was decided to observe the old custom in the Rabbinic manner, to ride out and greet the groom and his parents with appointed 'Cossacks' on horseback (the distance to the Belzec train station was eight kilometers). For this purpose, three companies were mustered, each consisting of fifty persons. The first company of riders were outfitted as Cossacks, and the other two were on foot, wearing special insignias. Regarding uniforms, each of the group contributed, and traveled to Lemberg, and against cash, borrowed historically genuine military costumes with swords. They made rifles from wood, nicely dyed so as to look real, and the young people who had served in the military became the instructors and

mustered the group, so they would be able to march in the correct military manner. The hardest thing, was for the young boys in the *shtibl* to learn how to ride a horse. These, literally, were living, four-footed horses, but this too, they learned to do. Drills took place in the yard of Ary' Heller, and created publicity to the point that many curious people from the surrounding towns and villages made preparation to come to the wedding.

Both Jushson in '*Heint*' and B. Shefner in '*Volks Zeitung*' dedicated two articles to the wedding in their papers, understandably, with a critique of these outdated customs. However, it had the reverse effect, and ended up giving the wedding even more publicity, and the Hasidim more courage. Also, the burgomaster of the town had the electrical lighting service increased to those streets where the wedding train would pass.

On the day when it was necessary to ride out and meet the groom and his family, the organization of the parade began at seven in the morning. At the head of the military contingent, rode R' Hirsch Ader, a 70 year-old man with a white, broad patriarchal beard (who had served in a royal division in Petersburg) and after him, came his Adjutant Yekhezkiel Heller, and afterwards 2 orchestras, and after them, all three companies led by their designated officers, with genuine military discipline. The feeling of inspiration was unnaturally high. People wept out of joy, and hundreds of people ran after them for the entire way. At 12 noon, the entire military assembly marched back with music, and with the groom and his family, and he was escorted to his lodging. At four o'clock in the afternoon, the military came before the Rabbis of Cieszanow, The Rabbi & *Tzaddik* R' Yekhezkiel הי"ד, of the Belz court, the *Rebbe* of Przeworsk, the *Rebbes* of Sanz and other important relatives.

At night, the military, with torches in their hands, escorted the groom to the wedding canopy, which was placed by the synagogue, where the municipal firefighters and police had cordoned off the area with their personnel, in order to maintain order. Inside, only 'important people' were admitted, and the dignitaries of the community, and those relatives and Hasidim who had come from faraway. The *Rebbe* was compelled to invite the municipal officials, because they too, were curious to see the wedding ceremony, and for them, a special repast was laid out in a separate house.

The wedding guests were served by the military, who remained in military dress for the entire night. The *Rebbe* arranged a special feast for the poor, and distributed alms to them. [After the wedding] the custom of *Sheva Brachot* was held twice daily. A different prominent Rabbi came to each of the *Sheva Brachot*, such that the entire town felt like they were members of the family, especially the Hasidim, and the entire community spoke about the impact of the wedding for a long, long time. Of special note was the 'Mitzvah Dance' that the *Rebbe* of Cieszanow danced with his daughter, the bride. The entire audience was so moved that they cried as if it were at Kol Nidre. Yes! This was the way our parents made merry at the time of a happy occasion of a mitzvah for their Rabbi and *Rebbe*.

Reminiscences of Youth

By Isaac Krass

Page 447: *The Heder Class of Bezalel Melamed*

As *Heder*-boys, the best time for us was *Hol HaMoed*. We would play with filberts and buttons, took pleasure in visiting guests from nearby villages, because almost everyone end up with a relative at home; it was festive in the streets; each child took pride in their new item of clothing that they had received for the Festival Holiday.

Also, in the summer, we would keep enjoy ourselves finely, playing hide-and-seek, and other games. When we were a little older, we would go for walks in the Siwa Dolina Woods.

Careless, and with only juvenile sensibilities, and not feel the yoke of needing to make a living, or the anti-Semitic assaults of the Poles, we loved to joke and laugh, to stroll among the prayer houses, to eavesdrop on a minor dispute about a prominent Jewish man who was not given a 'distinguished' *aliyah* [sic: to the Torah], or party [sic: political] disputations. Also, in this manner, when a *Rebbe* came to visit the town, we were curious to see how he presided over a *Tisch*. The young boys were especially amused to annoy Yaak'leh Tcheppeh's, the crazy one, or talking to Blind Nahum. The meeting plaice was at the plain *Bet HaMedrash*, but if the boys made too much noise, then Nahum *Shames* would take the strop and impose some order.

On *Lag B'Omer*, we would dye eggs, and march out of the city. In the wintertime, especially for Hanukkah, the Tenth of Tevet or Christmas, we would play cards. In the summer, we would also go to bathe in Balan's pond.

When we reached the age of 13-14, one went either to study in a *shtibl*, to learn a trade, or to go help one's father in his business. Later on, young people were drawn into party circles, each in accordance to his own taste and disposition. The young people did not have too much to do, so they read newspapers and books, and the more religious sat and studied.

Afterwards, pressure developed to make aliyah to the Land of Israel, and the young people went off to training camps. However, sadly, because of limitations placed by the British Mandate Authority, only part of those who wanted to go, were able to achieve their objective. Those who remained behind, continued with their burdensome life in the Diaspora, until the time that the Great Haman came, and made a total desolation out of everything. However, our continuity in Israel continues, and improves [with the passage of time].

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A Cure for One Who Was Sick

By Sh. Leibowitz

Page 452: *The District Hospital*

As I understand it, the purpose of the *'Yizkor Book'* is to memorialize the special way of life and thought processes, customs and practices that our forbears preserved and also practiced throughout their lives. Accordingly, I have found it necessary to underscore, and indeed, to preserve, that part of life that made no distinction between the poor and the rich, observant and non-observant, Hasidim, and ordinary folk, and this is the theme of medical care for the sick person.

At such an opportunity, it is worth taking note of the historical fact, which Meir Rubin ע"ה has lodged permanently in the Vilna YIVO (the original is to be found in the New York YIVO, a conveyance from the Vilna YIVO to Dr. Yaakov Shatzky who brought over the history of Jewish doctors in Poland, concerning the note from Meir Rubin), a conversation with Dr. Fetter, the Chief Doctor of the area hospital in Tomaszow, who had researched the history of medicines and pharmacy in the Tomaszow district, since its establishment. He transmitted everything in accordance with historical documents, and it was illustrated that among all of the doctors that practiced medicine in Tomaszow and its vicinity, since its establishment, 90 percent were Jewish.

But, for everyone, I wish to document the 'customs' practiced by us Jews, during the time of an illness. (However, I will not here make note of [the practice of] conducting weddings at the cemetery during the time of epidemics, especially when cholera was rampant, God protect us, or bordering the cemetery in linen, and dividing it among the poor, because these were rare and exceptions.) Here, I wish to make the effort to permanently document the day-to-day, frequent occurrences and practices that relate to illness.

A Catarrh or Cold

When a person became weak from being chilled, what is here called 'catching a cold,' back home, it was called a catarrh, and it caused a nasal drip. One felt a bit 'under the weather.' There would be a pain in the sides, but for such a minor matter, one did not even take to bed. One took aspirin, drank a lot of tea, especially homemade 'Lipowa-Tea,' made from [the flowers] of local trees in town. Cupping was performed, using small-sized glass cups, in which a partial vacuum was created by a burning taper that drove out the air, and then affixed to the back. If the flesh under the glass became very dark, this was a sign that the cold was severe. Usually, it was a relative, or a neighbor, who would affix the cups, because nearly every other person knew how to do this job. Only in the case of *'gehakteh bonkes'* was a doctor summoned. I, personally, never saw this procedure done, but as it was told to me, the body was cut, and blood was let. It was also held that going to the steam bath on Fridays, and sitting on the 'high benches' was a great cure, and afterwards allowing one's self to be thoroughly switched with a soft broom. All of this was understood to help promote the circulation of the blood, and thereby drive out the cold.

An Evil Eye

In general, when a person felt poorly, or had cramps, or a severe headache or any sort of physical distress, the first thing that people thought was that it was some sort of 'evil eye,' The family began to recollect, who it

was that had been in the house that day, and who was capable of inflicting an 'evil eye.' And in each section, there was a Jewish man who was an expert in exorcizing an 'evil eye.' The sign of an authentic 'evil eye' was when the victim and the exorcist began to yawn. Others had different signs and indicators, such as measuring out three spoons of water, and then decanting them into three other spoons of the same volume. If there was any water left over, this was taken as tried and true evidence of a formidable 'evil eye.' The left over bit of water was then used to wash the forehead of the sick person. Others has a method whereby they would take a piece of the individual's clothing, which was suspected of giving him the 'evil eye,' or a hair of his, and then smoking it on a burning coal behind the head of the bedridden individual. The 'evil eye' of a woman was considered more potent in its impact on a sick man. Some would have the custom, that when a man entered the home who was thought to have the bad eye, they would make the sign of a fig under the skirt, this being a sign that the 'evil eye' had no power in this place.

Pouring Wax

On being frightened, it was customary to pour wax. Sarah'leh Zucker Nahum Shames' wife, was a specialist in this area. According to the figures that were formed in the wax, she was able to recognize and specify what it was that caused the fright, a dog, a cat, a horse, etc.

Broken or Hyper-extended Limbs

In injuring a limb, one went to homegrown people with the right knowledge, who immediately set it, or even made prescriptions. It is worth recalling Sheva Brand and the Stemmlers, who were great experts in orthopedics.

A 'Lemung'

That which we refer to this here as a 'stroke,' and in Europe as a '*Lemung*,' we called a 'wind' an 'air' a 'draft' or idiomatically expressing one's self by saying that 'he was seized by something.' It was accepted that this illness had something to do with, God protect us, the bad spirits of the netherworld, especially when one goes onto their territory, or one disturbs them, such as standing under tree branches, or passing through alone, or, God forbid, building a door or a window permanently, and not leaving a small hole o that the demons will once again be able to go on their way, or to have slept on a place where there used to be an oven. Under those conditions, the demons become angered, and the person is afflicted (becomes paralyzed). This form of belief was strengthened by the fact that of a widow who lived at the cemetery. She lad children, the oldest of which, Netanel'eh, was severely paralyzed, and his entire body was twisted and bend. His face was turned around towards his back, and his mouth badly twisted. His eyes were crossed, limping on his right foot, with both hands lame. Merely looking at him caused a shudder, not to say what happened when he would begin to speak, when he would make such frightening sounds, that it would inspire terror. A legend circulated in town that Netanel'eh was healthy and had the appearance of a normal person. Every night, he was supposed to put out a pail of water, so that the dead could wash themselves. Once, he forgot to do this, and they became angry, and he was seized, and from this, he became paralyzed.

Feldscher or Doctor

If matters did not improve, then the doctor was called, or the physician. The 'physician' was a leftover of the Czarist regime, who was an individual that did not possess any sort of scientific training, or a theoretical

knowledge of medicine. I have my doubt as to whether they had even elementary public schooling. Despite this, such an individual had a great deal of practical experience in medicine, meaning that he was a assistant to a doctor in his office, and helped out a bit much as a nurse would do today. And it was from the experience and practices in the doctor's office, he would treat te sick by himself. Of note, Yaak'leh *Rofeh* ר"ע was held to be a very knowledgeable individual and an expert. The joke was that he really understood disease, which in today's parlance would be called a good diagnostician. In Poland, such a doctor was not permitted to write a prescription, but Yaak'leh *Rofeh* found a way around this. He would enumerate the name of the ingredients, and would instruct the individual to write it down and go buy it directly from the pharmacy. It is interesting that Yaak'leh *Rofeh's* family name was Assia, which in the Aramaic language of the *Gemara*, means 'doctor,' and as he told this writer, he was descended from generation after generation of doctors. The *feldschers*, or doctors, were also barbers, and for the most part, their wives were midwives.

Pregnancy

Women who were pregnant took great care not to look at a cat, dog, or a mouse, etc. And when she became frightened by an abnormal occurrence, such as a fire, or being pursued by a wild animal, she is not to grab hold of herself. The thinking was, that if she were to grab a hold of herself, the newborn would develop the same mark as she did, on the same spot of the body where she would grab hold of herself.

Birth

Each woman was confined at home, without the assistance of a doctor. Rather, a midwife was called, Yaak'leh *Rofeh's* wife, or later on, Shayndl Blank, Rachel'eh Eli' *Rofeh's* etc. (Interestingly, there was a custom, that when a midwife died, all the people that she helped to bring into the world and be born, would, at the time of her death, light a candle. It was the case, that when Yaak'leh *Rofeh's* wife died, she was quite old, and therefore hundreds of people lit candles). Usually, homegrown remedies were used with a woman who was delivering. The woman in labor would circle the table seven times before lying down in bed. She was given plain pure black coffee to drink (without sugar). They then blew into a bottle, and placed the book '*Raziel HaMal'akh*' under her pillow, or '*Noam Elimelekh.*' If, God forbid, the delivery was a difficult one, the Psalms were recited, or the *Rebbe* was informed. In extremely difficult cases, the midwife would ask that the doctor be called, who then delivered the child with forceps.

The Seriously Ill

As written above, when a serious condition developed, a doctor was finally called. If the illness lingered, and the means were available, one traveled to Lemberg to a prominent doctor, especially in those cases where the local doctor said that an operation was required. One did not rely solely on the [opinion] of the local doctor, but rather, one traveled to Lemberg, especially since the Jews did not utilize the *Powszecna* area hospital. There was no trust in the doctor, and only in those exceptional instances when there was no time, was an operation in the Tomaszow hospital permitted.

'Tearing In'

When the doctor had established that the patient was, God forbid, in danger, or if it was a pressing sudden pain, such as, for example, a difficult birth, or the night of crisis for someone severely ill, when the doctor would say that if the sick person can hold on through the night, then he will survive, or in the case of an

operation, one went 'Tearing In.' The meaning of this is that close relatives and friends, of the victim's family, would gather, and together they would run to the municipal *Bet HaMedrash*, or into the neighboring *shtiblakh*, where they engaged in prayer and study. Most of the time, this was done between the afternoon and evening prayers, or immediately in the morning at the time of prayer. The women would come into the Bet HaMedrash with a storm and weeping, and they went directly to the Holy Ark with wailing, and heartrending cries. This was a sort of 'emergency appeal.' hey took no note as to whether the Cantor was in the middle of the *Shmoneh Esrei* prayer, or in the midst of reading the Torah. The Holy Ark was opened, and the oldest of the women, who recited prayers, commenced with a stirring, awakening appeal – '*Master of the Universe! You, the great Master of Mercy! Take pity on the father of five young and tender children, or a mother of six young fledglings, Master of the Universe! Do not shame us! Master of the Universe! Open your gates of mercy!*' And each outcry was greeted with a storm of tears from the accompanying women. They would wring their hands, and weep with such pitiful wailing, that everyone was moved to tears, even those with hearts of stone. Something about the 'Tearing In' had an unnatural power of arousal.

The strong feeling of 'Let him communicate his distress in public, in order that they plead for mercy on his behalf,' could be seen in reality. After such a 'Tearing In,' complete strangers would be sucked in, and the health calamity, that had occurred, became a common cause for the entire *shtetl*. When they left, a prayer quorum was immediately formed to recite Psalms, especially those chapters that were felt to be effective in extending the powers of a medical cure.

Many times, verses were recited in an acrostic alignment with the letters of the name of the sick person, and part of the time also using the letter of '*Kera Satan.*'[105] All of this was carried out by the leader of the train of people. Hasidic Jews also held that it was a good omen to bring a bit of strong drink into the *shtibl*, in order to be able to offer the *'L'Chaim'* toast and to wish a speedy return to good health for the sick person. Also, charity was dispensed, in two forms. Bread was distributed to known paupers, and some of the time, the clothing of the ill was also given away. Those poor people, saddled with debt, were sent money.

Cures & Prayers

As previously said, in the case of serious illness, the doctor was called. Under the Czar, there was no Jewish doctor. In the year 1926, Dr. Shulman arrived, who was retained by the Jewish community, and towards the end, close to the Holocaust, there were already three Jewish doctors. And when the doctor began to become a frequent guest, coming in and going out, one began to run to the righteous Jews, such as R' Yehoshua'leh, and R' Yisroel'ish, and in the last years, to the *Rebbe* of Cieszanow זצללה"ה, or to the neighboring *Rebbes*, such as in Belz, Sieniawa, Magierow, or if an out-of-town *Rebbe* happened to be visiting the city, he would be asked, such as the grandchildren of the Trisk and Belz dynasties. Some would write out a check to their *Rebbe*.

Toothaches

Until the 1920's there was no dentist in Tomaszow. One did not fool around with a toothache. At the outset, one rinsed out the mouth with strong aquavit, or plugged the hole in the tooth with pepper and salt. When this didn't help, the tooth was extracted by rather primitive means. A stout cord was tied to the tooth, and a strong

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105 This is the Hebrew phrase 'tear [sic: destroy] Satan.' The most familiar occurrence of this is a construct from various verses in the Psalms, which is recited as a prelude to the blowing of the *Shofar* on *Rosh Hashana*.

pull was then made and the tooth was out, or broken in two. People, who did not have enough nerve to pull out their own teeth, went to the doctor, but even he made use of rather primitive means. In the twenties, Dr. Gerson arrived and later Dr. Malka Orenstein.

Baby Teeth

When a child lost its first teeth, there was a saying among the people that the child had said *'myzeleh, myzeleh*!' Here, have a tooth of bone, and give me back a tooth of iron, and afterwards casting the tooth onto the oven.

Prescriptions

There were two pharmacies in the city, and two *sklad owczenie*, meaning businesses who were permitted to sell only prepared items. Only the pharmacies were permitted to compound prescriptions. If it was necessary to procure a prescription on the Sabbath, a child was taken along to carry a silver cup, or some other item of security, in order that money would not have to be carried on the Sabbath for the prescription.

Memories of My Childhood

By Leah Ardinatsky-Barnstein

Page 455: *'The Ahasuerus Play' performed by the students of Beth Jacob. Balt'sheh Singer (at the center of the table) as Queen Esther*

Page 458: *The House of the Talmud Torah*

There were five children in our household. Our parents gave us a strict religious upbringing. All three of us, the girl sisters, went to the Beth Jacob School until the outbreak of the war.

These were genuinely sweet childhood years. [They were] fortunate, happy, and carefree, surrounded by love, and the warmth of a genuinely Jewish home. Every Friday evening, we would go to worship at Beth Jacob, passing the time in prayer, song and melody. And the sweet nostalgic tunes carried out over the lively Lwowska Gasse, which was the principal promenade for the Jewish Tomaszow youth. It was, in this fashion, that our childhood years flew by.

Coming home on Friday, before nightfall, the house cleaned up, the whiteness and cleanliness emanated from all the corners, light and warm, beautiful and magical, the sanctity of the Sabbath lay poured out over the entire house. Everything looked different than it did for the entire week. Our father would arrive, happy and full of energy from the Belz *shtibl*, and uttered the effusive and hearty '*Gut Shabbes!*' We, the children, would then seat ourselves at our father's table, and with respectful attention, listened to his rendition of '*Sholom Aleichem*,' and *Kiddush*. These sweet melodies so elevated the already fine atmosphere, and simply, God's Holy Presence rested among us and in each Jewish home. The taste and flavor of a royal Sabbath at home is difficult to portray. We, children of 13-14 years of age, would celebrate in our own juvenile manner. We would go visit our girlfriends. Part of the time during the summer, we would all go together into Baretsky's Forest, joking, laughing and singing. We were a group of fourteen girls, of which, tragically, only two survived, myself and Pesha Brand. She is found in Israel.

Such was the case up to that sorrowful and dark Thursday, when the first bombs fell on our beloved city, Tomaszow. Who is it that has the strength to portray the formless chaos and confusion that immediately ensued? Thursday, in our locale, was the market day, when the peasants from the villages would come to sell their grain and eggs, and to buy a variety of goods for their use. On this Thursday, there was something of an especially large fair, with an overflowing marketplace. And immediately as the bombs began to fall, the people were gripped by a frightful panic. Out of great fear and terror, part of the people thought these were gas bombs, and that all of us would be poisoned. And out of great fear and confusion, people began to run like wild, senseless people and all of this became intermixed with aimless wandering. There was a feeling that the world was coming to an end. The more established people went to take shelter in the cellars, taking along their immediate next of kin. When the bombardment stopped, everyone ran to look for and find their close family members, who at the time of the bombardment may not have happened to be at home. We immediately went off to the village where it was more quiet and tranquil than in the city, however, the gentiles appeared to have become distant, and seemingly unfriendly. This was up to the time that the Germans entered, then the Russians, and then again the Germans, this [sic: second] time to really take up positions. And at that time, a chaotic tumult ensued. Beards were cut off, and every day, there were new decrees, aimed especially at the Jews. Each day became more gruesome than the last, and it was impossible to move elsewhere. I said that I

was very much afraid of these murderers, and that we should flee to Rawa Ruska, where my mother had a brother. To my good fortune, I was able to discuss this with my mother, and on one night, all of us, went over to Belzec, and from there, we crossed the border illegally and in a fortunate manner, we were able to arrive in Rawa [Ruska] peacefully. My mother then returned to Tomaszow to attempt and save some of our possessions, but she had to live through the frightening and terrifying experiences when the Germans drove all of the Jews, on the Sabbath, int the '*Ludowy*' were they were beaten murderously, and afterwards, the firemen poured water on them. In this manner, they were abused for the entire day. Eli' Shtruzler (who later died of hunger in Russia), pitifully, was beaten half to death. My mother barely escaped with her life. Then, in the summer of 1940, we were sent off to the Russian Taigas (what we lived through there, is a chapter unto itself).

In May 1946, we came back to Poland. My mother, again, traveled 'home' to Tomaszow for the purpose of finding out where her brothers and sisters were killed, and to determine if, perhaps, maybe a child was saved. There she no longer encountered any Jews. The Polish neighbors related to her the barbarous acts perpetrated by the German murderers assisted by their Polish accomplices. One of the spectacles: On May 3, 1942, in honor of Polish Independence Day, they gathered all of the Jewish mothers and their children in the *Kasse Gorten*, and separated the children and then turned attack dogs loose upon them, that tore hunks of flesh from the Jewish children. To this, the mothers were forced to applaud and shout 'Bravo!' and a mother who could not bring herself to do so was beaten to death with rifle stocks.

Many Jews hid in cellars and bunkers, but the Polish 'neighbors' informed on them, and showed the Gestapo all of these well-concealed hiding places. Dobra Akst and her children were discovered three days before the liberation. My great-aunt Tema Herbstman with two children were hidden at the home of a Russian local resident. However, two days before the liberation the Poles informed on them and she, along with her two children Leah, and Dina were shot and buried on the spot. It was in this fashion that all our relatives, neighbors and acquaintances were killed. [sic: Jewish] Tomaszow was cut down and eradicated, there is no more [Jewish] Tomaszow. There is not even a trace of a grave, where it would be possible to pour our one's heart. May the memory of these Holy Martyrs remain permanently sacred and dear to us. Let us remember, from generation to generation, the cruel barbarism of the murderous German people, with the assistance of the low-life Amalek-like Polish people.

We the remnants and heirs of these holy martyrs, must exert ourselves to re-plant the sacred flame, and Jewish pride of our parents, brothers and sisters, into the hearts of our children, so that a love and loyalty to the People of Israel, Israel's Torah, and the Land of Israel, burns vigorously in their young hearts. And that all of us shall live in a world of peace, freedom and belief in God.

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Unforgettable Impressions

By Yaakov Minkowsky

My little *shtetl* of Tomaszow-Lubelski. We really don't know from when to start and count the years from the time of its extermination. Shall we start to count from 1939, or perhaps earlier? The onset of the destruction for the Jews in Poland manifested itself quite a bit earlier. I do not have the appropriate materials to set out the data that set out the critical points in this pre-Holocaust period. But why start to count from the time of those Jews who were the last to be killed? Because, for us, the essential fact is, that you were there for us, and now you are gone.

European Jewry was disemboweled down to its very foundation. The terrifying scope of the mass murders created an absolutely frightening and sorrowful impact. Only a few remained from each family, and these remain as the [eye] witnesses of all of European Jewry. Along with that part of Jewry, cultural treasures that nourished almost all of World Jewry were wiped out, along with its cultural creations. This branch of Jewry was fecund with its creativity and life-force, and this mighty European Jewry is no longer here. All that remains are memories of families, parents without children, children without parents, husbands without wives, and wives upon wives, without husbands. The decent and beautiful period has become orphaned, and along with it, we too, and also our city, Tomaszow-Lubelski.

Tomaszow-Lubelski, a city that lies in the area between Lublin and Lemberg, which connects central Poland to Galicia, was known as a border city up to the year 1914, or as it was called 'Little Tomaszow.' The border separated the dark, reactionary Czarist Russia, from the one-time democratic Austria. The border was of great help to 'recruits' who did not want to serve the pogrom-laden Czarist regime in the achievement of its ideals, which was to instigate even more pogroms, and impose even further restrictions on its Jews, with its malign decrees and blood libels. The border city provided the possibility to the democratic and progressive elements to liberate themselves from this dark reactionary [regime] and to build a democratic and free life in that one-time tolerant Austria.

The Synagogue

Page 460: The Synagogue and the Annex

Tomaszow was one of the oldest Jewish communities, where a Jewish populace was in the majority, with well-rooted Jewish residents for generations, with Jewish groups, with an old, tall and beautifully built synagogue which was an architectural rarity. It was so not only among us, but it had a reputation in the entire area, which stood for approximately four hundred years. Immediately opposite the door, stood the large, circular *Bima,* used for the reading of the Torah. It consisted of an entire array of rare beautiful pictures. The Prayer Stand, was illuminated by an old, beautiful menorah. The stele (soffit) of the Synagogue was like a huge pit that was rounded out, dyed with a sky-blue color. The walls were decorated with pictures of the symbols of the Twelve Tribes. Large and small copper candelabras were attached to the soffit, and during Sabbaths and Festival Holidays, they were all lit, and they would shed a very unique fiery illumination. When they were lit, they cast a festive grace on the face of those worshipers who came to pray, each of who recited song in his own place: '*Holy and Great God, open the doors of heaven and accept my prayer, for me, for my entire family, and for the entire Jewish People. Send us your holy blessing and help.*' And historical images had been drawn on its walls. Among others, there was Noah's ark, which explained that which we did not

understand, namely, that we were in exile, like in an ark without a rudder on the sea, on which each tiny storm is capable of drowning and exterminating us. Birds, animals, musical instruments, the Western Wall never let us forget about the freedom we once had, our glory, wealth and holiness. In the old Holy Ark, in which were found the sacred scrolls, whose laws sanctified and cemented the Jewish people, was decorated with plush velvet curtains, which had been donated by those who worshiped there. Among the beautiful curtains, it is worth mentioning the curtain of Chaim and Zippora Putter, he being a *Gabbai* of the synagogue for many years.

The Situation on the Eve of War

The community would have gone on and conducted its modest way of life, quietly and in tranquility, were it not for the outbreak of the bloody war between Germany and Poland in 1939. Also, our city was not spared the gruesome slaughtering, on the part of the murdering German occupiers, with the help of a portion of Polish lawbreakers and murderers. The Polish murderers and hooligans, sensing the storm that had been carried from murderous fascist Germany, immediately made ready with their plunder sacks, for taking Jewish assets, and immediately began to working side by side with the German murderers. They received their 'friends' from the west, with a full heart. Polish lawbreakers, and underworld figures took part, directly and indirectly in exterminating Jews, as well as elements of the local citizenry, peasants from the villages, and with assistance from part of the intelligentsia.

The next-to-the last bloody and economic anti-Semitism in Poland began when the "Colonels'[106] with Sławoj Składkowski[107], Pilsudski's favorite, who organized and created the 'AZAN' movement, concluded the criminal agreement with the bloody Hitler regime. Immediately after this, a radical change for the worse took place for the Jews. Hitler, ימ"ש knew very well that it would be easiest for him to carry out his bloody work in Poland. He knew very well that a large part of the Polish people was always ready to take the knife in hand, and to help him perpetrate mass slaughter against innocent Jews.

It suffices to recall their wonderful good deeds on behalf of the terrifying Inquisition and bloodbath.

- We remember well, and will never forget the Polish 'intelligentsia' who murderously beat their fellow students, Jewish sons and daughters, and then threw them out of the windows of universities and other institutions of higher learning!

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106 The Polish government became increasingly authoritarian and conservative, with Śmigły-Rydz's faction opposed by that of the more moderate Ignacy Mościcki, who remained President. After 1938 Rydz-Śmigły reconciled with the President, but the ruling group remained divided into the "President's Men," mostly civilians (the "Castle Group," after the President's official residence, Warsaw's Royal Castle), and the "Marshal's Men" ("Piłsudski's Colonels"), professional military officers and old comrades-in-arms of Piłsudski's. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, some of this political division survived within the Polish government in exile.

107 Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski (9 July 1885 - 31 August 1962) was a Polish general and a politician who served as Polish Minister of Internal Affairs and was the last Prime Minister of Poland before World War II. He was Poland's longest serving Prime Minister in the inter-war years, his cabinet lasting for 3 years and 4 months.

- We remember the 'picketers,' who stood in front of Jewish places of business, and did not permit customers to enter!

- We remember the sacred 'boycott' in the year 1937, that cultured Poland doesn't have to perpetrate pogroms, but exterminate the Jews economically via 'boycott.' This needs to be carried out with one's total might, so did the interior minister Składkowski order. The Poles understood the boycott order very well, and they implemented it even better.

- We will forever remember the pogroms in: Lemberg, Przytok, Minsk Mazowiecki, Kielce, and many other places.

We asked, and continue to ask, what wrong did we ever commit against Poland? Have we not enriched their country? Have their banks not become full of Jewish money that was earned so hard? Have we not beautified their cities and streets with beautiful houses and places of business and with factories, small and large?

The Institutions and Their Activists

Here, before my eyes, my shtetl of Tomaszow Lubelski flows by, which was full of Jews and with a budding youth, institutions, schools, *Heders*, Talmud Torahs, Jewish banks and a Free Loan Association, a synagogue and a *Bet HaMedrash*, many Hasidic *shtiblakh*, a beautiful and large 'Yavneh' school. Here, let us recollect the progenitor, who bore so much of the burden and served this great cause so loyally. R' Chaim Joseph Lehrer as well as Zilberman, Lejzor Lederkremmer and others. 'Yavneh' was the cradle and the governess for the Zionist youth. All of this no longer exists!! The entire community of Tomaszow has been cut down. Not a trace or a remnant of Jewish life in Tomaszow remained. Only a set percentage emerged from this frightening Hell, and became scattered and spread out over various countries, with the largest portion selecting the homeland of Israel. The 'old home' now belongs to our distant past. For us, all that remains is a black dot on the dark map where our onetime home used to be. Tomaszow served as an economic and social center for many small towns in its vicinity, who also shared in its tragic fate. As a venerable Jewish community that lived a full Jewish life, and felt connected to the Jewry of all generations, the sentiment for the Land of Israel as always strong. Even in the early days, the name, '*Eretz Yisrael*' elicited a deep resonance in the hearts of those who warmly responded and contributed to our Land. The Zionist parties occupied an important place in the society. And these ranged from the extreme right to the extreme left. Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael carried on a beautifully and multi-faceted work, in which, among others, the following took an active part: Fishl Fish, Fyvel Holtz, Birkh Pfefferman, Zlat'keh Goldstein, and Moshe Blonder.

The Keren HaYesod was able to function beautifully and well, with the active support of the Messrs.: Shmuel Shiflinger, Fishl Fish, Yitzhak Lederkremmer, Moshe Baretsky, Abraham Pfefferman, Moshe Blonder, Meir Blumer, and the writer of these lines. Yisrael Greenbaum, Yisroel'keh Greenbaum, Edelstein Avigdor Eidelsberg.



A program for the preparation of pioneers to make *aliyah* to Israel was also expanded in our city, under the auspices of the General Zionist Organization, which took place at Mr. Moshe Baretsky's in the forest. This was the training location where Rivka Minkowsky was very occupied and was very helpful with her activity. Despite their hard life, all were very fresh and energetic, full of energy and inspiration. They lived carefree and happy, with the great hope of simply reaching the Land of Israel, which, despite all of the difficulties, they

achieved their objective.

Between the World Wars

Most of the Jewish residents did not have an easy life. The principal sources of Jewish livelihood were: grain, being a storekeeper, a craftsman, a dealer in wood, renting a place in the market, saloon keeper, etc. There were also well-to-do Jews, *balebatim* that had larger or smaller houses, who owned mills, factories, etc. These were well established livelihoods. In 1918, with the establishment of the Polish regime, the Jewish community builds itself up anew with renewed strength, after the destruction of The First World War. An upsurge in commerce takes place, along with work and cultural life. In these later years, Jewish doctors and lawyers take up residence. A larger Jewish 'People's Bank' is established, that generously assists the manual trades, craftsmen, and merchants. The Free Loan Society, whose founder was Moshe Baretsky ז"ל, occupied a very respected place. For its development too, he expended a great deal of time and energy. The library had a very nice level of activity as well, which benefitted a large part of the residents, especially the young.

The Holocaust

For us, none of this exists anymore. That place is no longer a home to us. Our dear parents, brothers, sisters, children and friends, are no longer there. What we see there, is the terrifying extermination, the mass grave of our loved ones, and perhaps even that is not there either. It is said that the graves of our parents and great-grandparents were desecrated and destroyed in a bestial fashion. The murderous revenge was taken out not only against the living, but also against the dead. We had always believed that the Polish bands of robbers were after only our assets, but what was it that you wanted from Jewish lives? What was it that you had against the younger and older innocent children? Murderers! What was it that moved you to rip little children apart while they were still alive, in front of the eyes of their parents? And to shoot our nearest and dearest in gas chambers? We mourn our martyrs and also our religious, cultural and social institutions which were all destroyed together.

The Lesson

Because the world is so cruel to us, let us, the survivors, cement our friendship, love and camaraderie from one to another. Let us be mutual friends, and let one be prepared to help the other with everything that is within their capacity. This will be the most beautiful monument that we can erect to our dearly beloved. Let us, forever, not forget that a third of the Jewish people was slaughtered and incinerated, including our own nearest. Let us sanctify their souls with a permanent hate and antipathy, towards their murderers, from all countries.

Let us recall our martyrs and those who were killed, with honored respect, and let us remember that their wish was that we should continue our lives in the Land of Our Fathers, and this will become the sacred Yizkor candle that commemorated their lives.

A Threnody for Tomaszow

By Yaakov Herbstman

Page 466: *The Principal Entrance to the Slaughterhouse*

Page 467: *The Fire Station Tower on the Right, and the new stores (Halles) in the market square, on the left.*

Dedicated tot he precious memory of my
brother, **Noah** ben **Abraham**, his wife, **Esther**
bat **Yaakov** Stuhl, and their children, Abraham'eleh,
and Sarah'leh, my sister-in-law, Tema and her
daughters Leah, and Chaya Tzina who were killed
in the Holocaust in Europe ה"ש

To the town where I was born and raised, in which I loved my first loves, and experienced my first disappointments. The city of Rabbis, Hasidim, Torah scholars, of porters, hagglers, and Jews who labored. [The town of] youth institutions, each to its own kind, and the simple, yet dedicated and ardent youth. Of parents, brothers, and children who were guarded, to the town that was, and is no more – to these I will raise my voice in keening.

I did not leave [my home town] with a heavy heart 23 years ago. For it was the Land of Israel that was our choice, whose fields and settlements – that was the thing that carried our souls and it was of this that its youth trained for and dreamt of. Nevertheless, in the first years I had hoped that I would take my daughter or son, and convey them to Tomaszow, to its fields and gardens, and the forests, and show them the paths and byways on which their father trod in his childhood. I will prostrate myself on the graves of my parents that they did not know. An here, all of this has been lost.

With a watch on my wrist, I raised the images of all of the corners and places before my eyes on one frightful evening. One by one, they came up in my memory. My head became heavy, and in the end, floated down onto the table, and here – – – – – –

With a enormous speed[108], we covered the distance by airplane. We reached Zamość by bus, and until after Tarnawatka. Here, I said, I will take my daughter and go with her on foot – – her hand in mine, and we walk together....

Here, to our right, behind the hill, the pond of 'Balan' spreads out before us. It was there that we would rush with the completion of our Heder studies to bathe in its waters, and to learn how to swim. A gentile with a moustache stood there and collected an entry fee. Quickly, I could cast off my garments, one after another, until I remained naked. I would tie my clothing in a bundle and jump into the water. The water was sweet, and fresh. Despite the fact that the waters were pacific, there were drowning incidents. The building that appeared was the slaughterhouse. I have already told you that our family business was in forest produce. We

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108 There appears to be a typo here. The word makes sense if you put in a '*mem*' to make '*mehirut*,' the Hebrew word for speed.

had a warehouse next to this cooking facility, and it was there that skins were stored and guarded.

To our left we see the flour mill of Cyszkewicz. Just a little further on, and we will reach the city itself.

Further on to the right – the yard with the haystacks of the Bergerbaum family. Beside the yard, the 'Cemetery River' goes by – it appears to be what is left of the Wieprsz. The river is narrow, and its waters flow slowly. Mostly women bathe there. Why is this location unique to the womenfolk? – You need to know, my daughter, that by us, we did not always wear bathing suits, and we bathed in the nude, and this was the reason for the segregation [sic: of the sexes].

Here we are, on the bridge. Under it, a deep ravine spreads out for its entire length. In the winter it would fill with water, and in the summer it was practically desiccated. From its lip, we would cut the sorrel plant and use it for decorating our houses for *Shavuot*.

We are on the Zamoyski Street. The house to the right was our house, meaning that it had still belonged to our grandfather. He would expand the house when a son or a daughter would marry, a fence, or adding an additional cubicle, or den, for use by the young couple, and that is how they continued to live, to have children and grandchildren. And the children would run around in the hallway, and the broad yard, that divided the house into two wings. In the fulness of time, it became necessary to tear down part of it, to strengthen part of it, to repair the roof, etc. The stores were in the house – the source of their livelihood. You have to know that on one side, it opened up onto the marketplace, and the prevailing saying was: 'A door to the market – a window to heaven.' What this meant, was that whoever has a storefront at the marketplace, had an assured livelihood.

The garden that you see, this is the garden that is in front of the Russian Orthodox Church. At this time, it is run down from its glory. In the time of the Czar, the soldiers would go there to worship every Sunday morning. At their head was the orchestra, with the leader using his baton to keep the beat – to the amusement of the children. It was said that this bandleader was a Jew, and this is why he brought the orchestra up to the church – but he did not himself go inside.

That tall tower belongs to the fire fighters, who had a very important position. Fires in our town were all too common an occurrence, because the houses were made of wood, and if a fire broke out, it was highly likely to consume half of the town. The elderly would count off the years according to these blazes: so many years after the Great Fire. For us, the children, fires would cause nightmares. On winter nights, with storms about, when I was covered by a warm blanket, I would always add to the bedside reading of the *Shema*, my own personal prayer: 'Please God, make it so that a fire should not, God forbid, God forbid, break out.'

When an alarm was given – in the old days, a bell would be rung, or a trumpet was sounded by Yankl'eh *Rofeh* – and immediately the fire fighters would be seen rushing with buckets of water. At their head would be A. Shiflinger. Who was this A. Shiflinger? – He was the 'Be all and do all' of the city. He was the Head of the community, and had complete and free access to all of the influential people in the town. His principal responsibility was for the Fire fighting brigade. He sunk a great deal of energy and money into it. During festival parades, and days of celebration, he would adorn himself with the fire fighting medallions, his ample middle protruding, and stride with pride and an air of importance at the head of his brigade. Did I say at the head of the brigade? – not exactly. He was second, because in first place was the *Komornik*, a gentile, despite the fact that he was short on skill in fire fighting and in his commitment to the brigade. Shiflinger was his adjutant, because a Jew was not permitted to have access to being head of the brigade.

Turn to the right, and let us enter the marketplace. The buildings are laid out in the form of a horseshoe, with even the 'Halles' built to be a center of commerce. There were many different kinds of stores in it. Here is Ber'keh'leh's store. He would sell overcoats and jackets that were ready-made. The jacket, by him, always was appropriate for the buyer. A bit tight? – He would push the belly inward, while saying, 'See my dear madame it is like custom made.' Too long? – 'But, my dear and honorable lady, don't even think of changing this jacket that you are buying for your son, he will grow, and it will fit hm perfectly.'

Over on the second side – the store of Rachel 'Lilik,' She is a hard-working woman. Her husband is preparing work for The World to Come, with his studying, and she rules in the store. She used to say that she never even had the time to wash her hands, without which it is forbidden to even take bread, and if this is the case, did she not eat? No, because all day long she would be nibbling on cake and crackers, which do not require the ritual washing of the hands.

And here is the store of Ber'chli'kheh: A store under duress. If you looked in it there was nothing. What does she sell? –???– security. She extracted her living from this store, preparing for Sabbaths, raising children and marrying them off. How? – Either this was a miracle, or the assurance of the town.

Yenta Fyvel's walks by, holding on to the large pot of warm peas, pouring out a glass for a groschen, 'Take, Yankl'eh, take.' You don't have a groschen? No matter, your mother will owe it to me and pay.'

And here comes blind Zippora, with her bleary out eyes that have no lashes. She weaves with amazing speed. Until the eye spots something, and a shawl or a sock is produced. She weaves as she walks, or sits. While sitting – she raises her dress, with some compromise to her modesty, and puts a pot with glowing coals underneath, to warm her body.

Do you see, my daughter, this one who stands and stomps in one place without stopping. Don't be frightened. He would not harm even a fly. This is 'Blind Nahum.' Even in his blindness, he will tell you the exact time, and he will recognize who you are by your voice, who your parents are, brothers, sisters, and will precisely articulate their names to you.

And this old man, of venerable visage that you see, this is Aharon Kiezel, of the sharp mind. What deeds – If a man is in need of someone to mediate (a sort of lawyer) in a dispute with a neighbor or a business partner, he invites *Rav* Aharon Kiezel in the sure knowledge that he will pronounce a judgement that will liberate him from all complexities.

We are approaching the ambit of Baylah Mekhalis. Inside, the foot of a man does not enter either by day or by night. One person is waiting to be taken to the train, while his comrade is returning from it. In the meantime, before going to her house, he will warm himself with a warm drink, and snack on a '*bruss*' that is, a sort of thick cracker, that melts in your mouth like honey.

We are on the Lwowska Gasse. This is the longest and most beautiful street of all. Here are the magnificent stores of the rich: Yankl'eh Lederkremmer, Itcheh Bernstein, and Leibusz Bekher. On the sidewalks of the street, groups upon groups of young folk, of both genders, promenade with the composure of *balebatim,* and would gather, chit-chat and carry on happy conversation in a loud voice until they would reach the house of the Starosta, that is, the edge of the sidewalk. Then they would descend onto less well-appointed streets, raising their voices in joyful song.

We will not tag along behind them. Let us go up, rather , on the narrow sidewalk next to Baylah Mekhalis, and we will reach the Synagogue. A minute, my daughter – let us not walk there directly. Let us make a slight detour. Why? – Come, and I will tell you, even if I am a bit embarrassed: this sidewalk passes by the living quarters of the '*Panovikl*'[109].' This is a habit from my childhood. When I had to pass by this place, I would go to the side. You are no doubt curious to know the reason for this, so come, I will tell you: The '*Panovikl*' (His real name is not known to me, and everybody called him this), was a dwarf with the head of a giant. He had big hands and feet, and in walking, he made use of crutches.[110] Because of this, his appearance instilled fear in us children. Whether he was born this way, or how this happened to him, is not known to me. One story about him goes like this: On the occasion of one *Sukkot* holiday, a great *Tzaddik* came to the city. The '*Panovikl*' was passing by the *Sukkah* of the *Tzaddik*, and when hearing him reciting the *Kiddush* over wine, screwed up his face and clenched his hands. Upon sensing this, the *Tzaddik* cursed him, and the curse of the *Tzaddik* was immediately realized, and he was transformed into the cripple that he was. It is further told, that after his death, a rooster tore the linen cover and spilled out the cup of water that stood on the window sill, that had been set there, according to the accepted custom of mourning, during the period of the '*Shiva.*'

It was known that the *Panovikl* had a good mind. He was the leader of the *Bundists* in the city. It was customary to gather at his house on Saturday nights, hold discussions, singing, smoking cigarettes, and engaging in all manner of 'sins.' Nevertheless, when I grew older, when I would stop off at his place to buy cigarettes – he would support himself by hand-rolling cigarettes – he would envelope them in his crooked hands, and his voice was soft when he spoke, and the fear would leave me, but the habit remained a habit. May he pardon me for intruding on his rest.

We are approaching the sacred places: the large building with the double roof, that rises so high and proudly, is the Great Synagogue. It is the pride of the Jews of the city. It is standing for over 500 years. The two great fires that occurred did not affect it. One enters the sanctuary through the 'polish' [sic: antechamber. In the center of the sanctuary, the *Bima* rises with stairs on both of its sides. On the west side there is a balcony for the choir and the women's section. Opposite it, on the east side – the Holy Ark along with its doors, covered by a woven velvet curtain. Large candelabras were hung from the high ceiling, To a child's eyes, the ceiling was the wonder of the building. I constantly wanted to investigate how it was that the ceiling could stay up, because it did not rest on pillars. On the surrounding walls, artistic representations were drawn of the signs of the Zodiac, the months of the year and the four seasons, running like a deer, strong as a lion, etc.

The Synagogue was enveloped in an air of mystery and sanctity. It was known to all that every night, the deceased came there to gather, in their burial shrouds, and to pray. And if someone passes by, he would be invited in to take an *aliyah* to the Torah: 'Let so-and-so ben so-and-so come up for an honor to the Torah,' and woe be it to the man would declined to enter, and woe to the one who did. As you can understand, my daughter, I did not examine the veracity of these claims, but to be sure, no man had the nerve to pass by the Synagogue in the middle of the night, and even we, the *Heder* children, before nightfall on our way back home, would give the place a wide berth. Opposite the Synagogue stood the *Bet HaMedrash*. It was there that R' Nahum *Shames* ruled with an iron hand. However, he, was not enveloped in mystery and holiness, like the Synagogue. He was more secular, and exuded warmth, like a steam cloud emanating from its entrance on cold winter evenings. Inside, there were always to be found people who were studying *Mishna,*

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109 This appears to be a diminutive from the Polish, that might mean 'The Little Master.'

110 This description suggests that the individual may have suffered from acromegaly.

Eyn Yaakov, or just whiling away the time in political discussions, the state of the economy, etc.

At this time we have entered into the heart of hearts of the Jewish community: to – the Praga. The neighborhood of poverty and want, the neighborhood of the 'common folk' who toil from morning to night to bring a slice of bread home to their young. This is also the place where the 'ritual servants' reside.

But what is this silence that emanates at this time from the neighborhood? – We are at the third watch of Thursday – the day of the market fair. Where, then, are all of those who usually rise at this hour? Where are you, you Jews! Come, rise to do your duty before The Creator, rise to your daily business and business. Don't you require earnings for the needs of the Sabbath, for this is the market fair day.

Where is Moshe Itcheh Wolf the butcher, who brings his wagon at this hour to the slaughterhouse, where is Itcheh Bertik, the horse trader, who will drive the mare to the market? Where are the robust sons of Shmuel Liblis, who have to prepare carbonated water and ice cream for the farmers from the surrounding area, who will be coming to the marketplace? We also do not see Chaim Yitzhak, the musicians with his *kapelye* returning sleepy and tired from a wedding, Aykhem Bezheh, Zalman Schnur, and Mordechai Sofer, continuing on to the *mikva* and the first *minyan*. What has happened to you? You have become indolent, you have fallen asleep, the sleep of the righteous, or, God forbid – – – – – come my daughter, I don't get it, I don't understand what has happened here, where are my Jews, where are they? Come, let us approach the cemetery, let us prostrate ourselves on the graves of my parents and relatives, let us ask them, and perhaps in that way we will come to know what has happened to the Jews of Tomaszow.

From here, we descend. On the right can be found the well beside the Bolakh ??? Here is descent. In the autumn rains, one would slog through the mud up to one's knees, and in the winter, with the coming of the ice, it was necessary to be very, very careful to carry a walking stick, present company excluded. Because of this, during the summer, the fragrant scent of orchards and fields would be carried here. We continue. Here we are at the bridge that spans the river by the cemetery. Let us go from here, a short distance to the cemetery. But – what is this, I do not see the fence that surrounds it, and I do not see a single headstone. Do you not also see? Have I perhaps made a mistake? – No, no, I am not mistaken. For we are on the bridge. What happened here, so frightening a misfortune? Did they not spare even the dead, did they disinter them as well, disturbing their eternal rest, not leaving a memory or a trace? Woe, let us flee from this Hell, my daughter, from this awesome Vale of Tears. Give me your hand, hold onto me, come let us flee, let us flee to our home – – – – – – – –

Yes, Shoshana, Abraham, my children, to our home, to this tiny sliver of the earth that we have taken hold of, because in it, and in you, in the youth coming to maturity in the freedom of this ancestral land, that has remained to the survivors, it is in you that the sweet sense of security lies, assuring that which is forbidden will not re-occur, that what happened to Tomaszow, and a thousand other cities like it, will never occur a second time.

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The Life and Death of Our Shtetl, Tomaszow Lubelski

By Y. Schwartz

A Jewish life burgeoned in Tomaszow, where old traditions were linked with the newer times, where among ourselves we consummated business transactions, settled affairs, dealt with one another, lent money, etc. The Jewish population consisted of small businessmen, craftsmen, merchants and a bit of professional intelligentsia. For many in the shtetl, the capacity to make a living was rare, and poverty, need, and a state of [sic: economic] distress were frequent guests. There were also many idle people due to a lack of work. Despite this, the Tomaszow Jews were active and creative, and developed a variegated cultural life, and were dedicated heart and soul to their community, economic, religious, cultural and philanthropic activities. The Jewish Free Loan Society, which had done so much: Libraries, the Hebrew School, [political] parties from the extreme right to the extreme left, youth organizations, Jewish banks, Rabbis, a beautifully constructed Synagogue, houses of study, *Heders*, sport organizations, professional unions, and a Jewish dram circle. There was a Jewish youth that seethed with energy and joy. Tomaszow Jews put a great deal of heart and care into these very institutions, in order to improve their lives, and to make them more comely. It was in this fashion that Jews built, created and wove their dreams for a better world and a better tomorrow. How many wondrous treasures were passed down from one generation to the next, up to the generation of the Holocaust, when the German Beast put its brutal hand on the body of Jewry, and on its soul, and eradicated everything. The sun has set on our little *shtetl* of Tomaszow, of light and life. The sky is drenched in blood, bloody tears roll over the orphaned houses, which will never be wiped away. And the streets, where my mother and sisters and all of my townsfolk walked, are ruined, and the walls say a silent *Kaddish*. Destruction, a wasteland, a cemetery without grave stones. A permanently extinguished candle....

With whatever strength I can muster, I would like, here, to recollect those shining personalities and community activists who were active in all of the community cultural and religious institutions.....

The Gabbaim in our Beautiful Synagogue

Page 473: *Shimon Reis, Gabbai*

The German murderers did not content themselves with the slaughter of millions of the Jewish people. With their satanic impulses to erase every possible trace of our people, they poured out their wrath on all the Jewish sacred places that they encountered along their criminal journey. The murderers especially allowed themselves to put their bloody hands to the destruction and burning of Jewish synagogues, and also burned our synagogue, which was such a beautiful one. As it was told, this synagogue was close to six hundred years old, but it still remained fresh and new. Built like a fortress, high, and with thick walls. The windows were quite high with stained glass windows. Also the doors were thick , heavy and armored.

Who does not remember the image of Yom Kippur in our *shtetl*, when the Synagogue was filled to overflowing with Jews wrapped in their prayer shawls, covering their faces, totally disconnected from the realities of the world around them, with sweet, heart quickening tones tearing themselves from the lips of the Cantor leading the High Holy Day services: 'May our beseeching go up to you at evening...' and it always seems to me that I hear the moving melodies and prayers of that sacred congregation from our little shtetl

of Tomaszow, that once was, but is now no longer here.

In the last times, the *Gabbaim* were: Chaim Putter ז"ל, Meir Hubar ז"ל, Shimon Reis ז"ל, Wolf Zilber ז"ל, Shlomo Lichtenfeld ז"ל.

The Jewish Community

Page 474: *An announcement for a memorial gathering in honor of Shlomo ben Joseph who was hung by the English in the Land of Israel [sic: Mandatory Palestine].*

Page 475: *A call to the Jewish community to assemble at the time of the death of Marshal Josef Pilsudski.*

The first democratic Jewish community was established in Poland in 1924. There were community representatives before this, called *Dozors*, but not in the same sense as the communities in Western Europe.

The first community representative group consisted of: R' Eliezer Lederkremmer, R' Pinchas Goldstein, R' Benjamin Weinberg, R' Aryeh Heller, R' Mikhl Yehuda Plug, R' Mendl Reichenberg, R' Yitzhak Borenstein, R' Hirsch Meir Cyment.

Apart from this, there was an advisory committee that consisted of: R' Nathan Greenwald, R' Sholom Szpizajzen, R' David Weitzman, R' Chaim Yaakov Shenner, R' Nahum Schuldiner etc. However, in the course of the first tenure, many resigned.

The second committee, which was elected, consisted of: R' Shmuel Shiflinger as the President, R' Shmuel Meldung, R' Baruch Szparer, R' Joseph Geld, Hirsch Meir Cyment, R' Chaim Joseph Lehrer, R' Moshe Blonder, ans R' Meir Blumer.

The third committee consisted of: R' Chaim Joseph Lehrer as the President, R' Aryeh Heller, R' Yud'l Ader, R' Fishl Fish, R' Noah Herbstman, R' Nahum Schuldiner, R' Moshe Blonder and R' Yaakov Schlagbaum.

The Free Loan Society Bank

The Free Loan Society was a very important institution, where the representatives worked with their wholehearted commitment without taking any compensation. The poor craftsman or small businessman would be able to borrow a hundred or two hundred zlotys without interest, and was able many times to rescue himself, and get himself back on his feet again. The representatives were: Chaim Fershtman, Rabbi R' Abraham Goldschmid, Yaakov Minkowsky, Sinai Lichtenfeld, Hirsch Meir Cyment, Meir Blumer, Nahum Schuldiner, Yitzhak Bornstein, Yitzhak Lederkremmer, and Jonah Zilberstein.

The City Council

Shortly before the outbreak of the war, the Jewish councilmen had a very difficult struggle in defending Jewish interests. [There was] the anti-Semitic politics of the Polish Sanacja regime. The practical

extermination politics accompanied by picketing with '*Nie kupuie o Zydy*,'[111] etc. Representatives came from all of the parties.

From *Mizrahi*: R' Chaim Joseph Lehrer, R' Yaakov Arbesfeld. From *Agudah*: R' Yitzhak Karper, R' Alter Stahl, R' Neta Heller, R' Ephraim Ruv, R' David Schwindler. From the General Zionists: R' Itcheh Lederkremmer. From the manual trades: R' Shmuel Shiflinger, Hirsch Meir Cyment. From *Poalei Tzion*: R' Fyvel Holtz, R' Moshe Blonder. From the *Bund*: R' Nahum Schuldiner, R' David Geyer, Leibusz Kaffenbaum.

Keren-Kayemet

Page 477: *A Picture of a Keren-Kayemet Bazaar in Tomaszow in 1935.*
From the Right: *Schlagbaum, Lipa Goldman, Shimon Laneil*

Those who collected on behalf of *Keren-Kayemet* had to withstand difficulties more than just once. However, they undertook everything on the basis of love, because each groschen for *Keren-Kayemet* was considered sacred and valuable.

The representatives were: Fishl Fish, Fyvel Holtz, Israel Wertman, Shlomo Kessler, Y. Arbesfeld, Abraham Meklung, Lipa Goldman, Moshe Unterbuch (Lerner), Itcheh Schlagbaum, Shimon Laneil, Asher Herbstman.

Keren HaYesod

The people who dedicated themselves to *Keren HaYesod* were loyal and committed and offered a great deal of time. The representatives were: Shmuel Shiflinger, the Chair, Yaakov Minkowsky, Vice-Chair, and Chair, Fishl Fish, Moshe Baretsky, Chaim Joseph Lehrer, Yitzhak Borenstein, Meir Blumer, Eliyahu Shtruzler, Israel Greenbaum, 'Srol'ki Greenbaum, Fyvel Holtz, Koppel Kalenberg.

Volks-Bank

The *Volks-Bank* was literally a safety net for the craftsmen and small businessmen where they could borrow several hundred zlotys, or discount a check. The representatives were: Shmuel Shiflinger, Meir Blumer, Hirsch Meir Cyment, Israel Leib Schmutz, Eliyahu Shtruzler.

The Merchants Union

A substantial activity ent on in the Merchants Union, where effort was made to assure that no merchant would be allowed to go under, or as it was called 'bankrupt.' Rather, as far as it was possible, an individual was supported, and permitted to go under. The representatives were: Yaakov Minkowsky, Chair, Shlomo Pearl, Vice-Chair, Yitzhak Borenstein, Ber'keh Tregerman, Jonah Zilberstein, Abraham Pfefferman, Yitzhak Lederkremmer, Abraham Schwindler, Shmuel Herring, Moshe Baretsky, Shlomo Goldzamd, Joseph Friedlander (son of Yerakhmiel).

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111 Do not buy from the Jews.

The Manual Trades Union

The representatives of the Manual Trades Union were: Shmuel Shiflinger, Israel Leib Schmutz, Moshe'leh Hubar, Hirsch Meir Cyment, Meir Blumer, Yaakov Schmutz, Abraham Bret.

Competitors

It was possible to see competitors in Tomaszow: Doctor Shulman, Doctor Fruchtman.

The Fire Fighters

Page 479:	***The Leadership of the Manual Trades Union***
Standing, from the Right:	*Pinchas Barass, Shlomo Malerman, Gulia Dornfeld, Meir Blumer, Wolf Leichter, & Y. H. Winder*
Sitting:	*Moshe Blonder, Anast, Shmuel Shflingter, Hirsch Meir Cyment.*
Below:	*Adam & Rivka Shiflinger*

And Jews could also be seen among the membership of the Fire Fighters Brigade – [treated] with great respect. The Polish leadership treated their Jewish counterparts with great respect and deference: Shmuel Shiflinger and Yaak'leh *Rofeh.*

The Bund

The beginning of the activity of the *Bund* organization took place in 1917, and the class-consciousness of Jewish Labor grew strongly. The exceptional activity on the political front that the *Bundist* proletarian party, conducted in a faithful and committed fashion of the Bundist traditions, very strongly became entrenched. It had its own beautiful library, also containing many translations of Tolstoy, Emile Zola, etc. They also had a special library for young people, where youth came to drink in knowledge. They continuously organized political and literary evenings. They conducted a variety of outings, and also the so-called joint outings, etc.

The first leadership was: Leib'l Szerer, Nahum Schuldiner, Mordechai Weissberg, David Geyer, Koppel Szpizajzen, Peltik Lederkremmer. Afterwards: Yaakov Yehoshua Grohman, Mott'l Lerner, Joseph Meldung, Itzik Zygielbojm, Mindl Meil (Zygielbojm) – Shevakh Kornworcel, Shimon Leder, Elazar Lieber, Abraham Szerer.

The Drama Circle

For a number of years, the Tomaszow Drama Circle put on a series of very talented presentations, with great dedication and love for the Yiddish theater. It is worth becoming acquainted with which social walks of life the members of the Drama Circle were recruited from. As was characteristic of that time, of the rising labor movement, the largest part was from the working masses, and apart from the previously mentioned goal of disseminating culture among the Jewish working masses, the Yiddish amateurs also wanted to use the theater as a means of developing their general awareness, and elevate their political and social level. Among the first were: Chaim Michael Horn, Abraham Shmuel Knopf, Nahum Schuldiner, and also, Sufolior, Mordechai Weissberg, Shayndl Bliank, Leah'cheh Szur, Miriam Szerer, Meir Blumer, Meir Baum, Avigdor Zucker, Afterwards: Mindl Meil, Itzik Zygielbojm, Azriel Tsan, Shevakh Kornworcel, and Shimon Leder.

Among the first pieces that they presented were: '*Die Seder Nacht,*' by Lateiner – '*Gebrokhene Hertzer*' by Z. Libin – '*Der Yeshiva Bokher*' by Zolotarewski – '*Die Grineh Felder* by Peretz Hirshbein, – *'Chana'leh die Naytorin* by ? — '*Der Dorfs Yung* – by L. Kobrin – '*Der Fotter,'* by Strinberg – '*Die Mishpokhe,'* by H. D. Nemberg – '*Der Yiddisher Koenig Lear,*' by Yaakov Gordin – '*Got, Mensch, Tyvl,*' by Yaakov Gordin – '*Tevye Der Milkhiger,*' by Sholom Aleichem – '*Dos Groyse Gevinss,*' by Sholom Aleichem – *'Die Tsvay Kuni Lemels,'* by A. Goldfadn – '*Die Shekhita*' by Yaakov Gordin.

Tomaszow exhibited a great deal of understanding for Yiddish theater, and for Yiddish cultural presentations....

All of this was destroyed, and was wrecked in the frightening and dark period of the extermination of the Jews in that 'civilized Europe' where the Jewish people, were the ones who were bled the most in The Second World War, not only in terms of murder, but in torture prior to death. The terrifying crimes which causes one's blood to congeal and one's hair to stand on end – with a cry that is choked back, I undertook to take down stories and experiences from the very few, who by a miracle, were among the Tomaszow people who were saved, and recorded what, pitiably, they went through.

The manner in which the German murderers, utilizing all of the methods from Hell, tortured, abased, abused, and spat upon the broken individuals who remained alive, some externally, and some internally, having their nerves shattered. Those martyrs who were not slaughtered, whose nights are still filled with nightmares, and can no longer find any solace in their lives. They are broken, alone, full of eternal longing for their tortured families. Each of them carries, in their heart, tens of graves – graves of children, of a father, mother, of sisters and brothers, who were so cruelly cut down, with the most terrifying and frightening forms of suffering that has no equal even in the annals of Jewish martyrology. Being stripped barefoot in the freezing cold; being driven naked on their last way; the extraction of teeth from their mouths; the denial of even so much as a drop of water to moisten cracked lips before execution; burying little children alive, or smashing those small infant heads against boulders, or walls, and letting their brains made the walkways slippery. The music orchestra that played every morning at Auschwitz, under whose melodies our dearest and nearest were driven to the gas chambers, and then went up in smoke. The terrifying torture of the castrated men, the frightening experiments on the bodies of young women. The casting of the wounded together with the dead, the murder of the sick and the aged, the groaning coming up from the pits of those who were buried alive, the wail and screams of the small children toward the black-clouded skies, when they were torn away from their mothers, and no one knows where their remains went to. They float between heaven and earth, in the smoke of the crematoria, in the ash that was sown and spread over fields and forests, and over the seas.

It was upon this frightening disaster, to this terrifying torture, to this, the greatest of all Jewish destructions, that the world looked on in silence, while observing the mass slaughter of defenseless people. The Jewish people in its capaciously rich history, was cut down, exterminated and incinerated by the German murderers, who for all time to come, have extinguished the shining personalities of hundreds of Jewish settlements in Poland, upon whom the curse of Sodom and Gomorrah descended. That mighty oak, of Polish Jewry, was excised by the taproot. Cities and towns were annihilated by fire and sword, in those terrifying years, and among them, our full-hearted little *shtetl* of Tomaszow that once was, but will be no more. Let my memoir, here, be a memorial over the final resting place of that sacred and martyred Tomaszow community, in order that our children and children's children might know and discharge the behest of the Pentateuch: **'Remember what Amalek did to you...'**

(P.S. If I have omitted the name of someone that should have been included, or a fact, I beg your pardon. This did not occur because of any ill will on my part).

Yaakov Schwartz – Member of the Committee of the Organization of Tomaszow Emigres in Israel.

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Little Jewish Snows

By A. H.
Wroclaw

Dedicated to Gutayn... and all little children of
Tomaszow who were killed in Sanctification
of the Name.

Once, little snows,
Small white flakes,
Fell and covered the little side locks,
Of little Jewish boys.

Little snows, little heads,
With glistening clothing,
Covering the forelocks
Of little Jewish girls.

Little snows, little birds,
Wondrously tiny,
Sprayed into little eyes
So black and pretty.

Little snows. Little breezes,
Like silvery little twigs,
Whipping little noses,
Pulling at little hats.

Little snows, little bits,
Dead little souls,
Caressing the little cheeks,
Flaming and reddened,

Those little side locks are no more,
Forelocks, so wondrous,
Little Jewish snows,
Little Jewish children....

Portraits

Names and Personalities

From the Past That Has Been Cut Down

Shmuel Meldung

By Sh. Licht

Page 487: Abraham son of Shmuel Meldung in the Year 1932

Head of a *Hasidic* household, a respected merchant, intelligent, wise and gifted. People counseled with him on all matters that were complex.

A community leader who was honest, and innocent of any bias, an activist, man of conscience and responsible. A continuously serving officer in the office of taxation. He was a loyal representative of his constituents there, where he conducted a difficult and unceasing battle against the predations visited upon the Jews. He fought against the raising of taxes at the expense of Jewish merchants, and in general, he looked out for the interests of the Jewish populace. He served the community with wisdom and loyalty. And was beloved and respected by everyone.

He fled to Kulikow next to Lwow, and afterwards in the city of Ozerna near Tarnopol, where he met his end together with his family. Of his sons, Joseph remains, who emigrated to Argentina, and Shammai, who presently is in New York, and he is one of those working among the new arrivals, and he has an important part in the production of this Yizkor Book.

David Schwindler

By Dov ben David
Israel

He was a Torah scholar, and a follower of the Radzyn *Hasidim,* an aggressive man who was action oriented, one of the founders of the Agudah Heder, '*Yosdei HaTorah,*' about which he was concerned for all the days of its existence. He was also one of the founders of the Bet Jacob School for Girls, and looked after its expansion. He worshiped in the Radzyn *shtibl*, but he sent me and my little brother Mordechai ז"ל to study at the Sanz-Cieszanow shtibl which was the center of Torah and *Hasidism* in our city.

He was a member of the *Agudat Israel* our city for fifteen years. He was accepted by everyone, because not only was the welfare of his group always before his eyes, but so were all of the needs of the city, in general, and that of the Jews in particular. It was not only once that it happened after he spoke on community issues, or a need for support, that everyone followed his lead, even the *Bundists.*

He was also a member of the Assistance Committee in the city. In his hands rested the twice-yearly distribution of heating wood, and potatoes to the poor. As a result, we didn't lack for outrages in our house. He would stand by his views firmly, that assistance was due only to the neediest, and he was prepared to take a great deal. And those who did not receive anything caused a riot in our house. My mother, ע"ה begged him all of these years to stop doing this, however, the involvement was like a nourishment in his blood, and he continued doing it all of the years. He was an alert and understanding person, to whom people would come for advice.

At the outbreak of The Second World War, he did not want to leave the city, giving the excuse that he knows

the Russian from the First World War yet. On Yom Kippur of 5704 (?) [1944] he and his son Mordechai were taken out in the middle of praying, and killed by rifle fire in the Baretsky Forest ה"ש. May their memory be for a blessing.

Noah ben Abraham Herbstman

By Asher Herbstman
Israel

He was born in 1901 and educated in a rigorously observant Belz Hasidic home. I do not recall his childhood. In the year 1920, when the *HaShomer HaTza'ir* movement was established in our city, he was one of the founders. He met and then married the member Esther Stahl, had they had a lovely son and daughter.

He also applied his hand to matters of community activity. He was elected as a Dozor of the municipal council. When the Zionist Histadrut in Poland split into '*Al HaMishmar*' and '*Ayt Livnot*' he was one of the spokespersons for '*Ayt Livnot.*'

When the awful war broke out, he and his family went over to the Soviet side, meaning Rawa Ruska, and it was their that he was killed along with his wife Esther, and their children.

'Woe to those we lost, and we will not forget them.'

In Memory of my Son, of Moshe ה"ש

By Zusha Kawenczuk
Haifa

Page 489: *Moshe Kawenczuk*

He received his education at the Mizrahi '*Yavneh*' school in Tomaszow, and afterwards studied at the Novardok Yeshiva where he completed his studies in the Talmud. He was fluent in the *Tanakh*, which he knew by heart. The wondrous teachers in the Kuzmir *shtibl*, [such as] R' Israel Garzytzensky ז"ל, R' Lipa Honigsfeld, ז"ל, and R' Kalman Ehrlich, ה"ש, when they would search for a line from the Tanakh, and did not know the source, would call to Moshe and ask him. He would answer immediately, citing chapter and verse. He was beloved by all the people, and those who knew him. One time, the *Va'adat HaTarbut,* in Warsaw, published a contest, indicating that whoever wanted to submit a fine composition on the *Tanakh*, and could be judged to receive a first, second or third prize. My son Moshe sent them a composition on the Tanakh, and was privileged to receive the first prize. When the prize reached him from Warsaw, his joy was boundless. He was a teacher in Jozefów, Komarow, and afterwards in Warsaw. When the terrible war broke out, he reversed his tracks, and under great danger he reached the town of his birth in Tomaszow, where he was appointed as the community secretary. At that time, the Chair of the community was Yehoshua Fishelsohn, and it was already known what had happened to him, having been martyred in public.

The Nazis demanded that he provide them with 300 Jews for deportation to Belzec, and when he found out what was being done to the Jews that were sent there, he lost his mind, and ran about like a man gone insane.

And when the Nazis came back, again, and demanded an additional 300 Jews, he replied by saying that you return the first Jews we gave you, then we will give you new ones. I am able to give you only three souls - myself, my wife and my son. It was in this fashion that the Nazis shot them right on the spot. After that, they executed all of the people of Tomaszow together with the community, among them my beloved son, Moshe. The thread of his life was abruptly stopped in his prime.

My son, my son Moshe!
How you were cut off from your family
Even a grave in the earth
Did not remain for you
With your body a sacrificial offering
You were sacrificed and martyred to heaven,
Your pure and sacred soul,
Flew off to the Garden of Eden,
May your soul rest, bound up
In the bond of life, there.

Tearfully written by your bereaved parents.



Avigdor Eidelsberg

By Sh. Zamoyski

A scion of Zamość, the son of a respected family, he was greatly influenced by the Enlightenment in Zamość, and he traveled to study at the Yeshiva of Rabbi Reines in Lida. He was a creative man, alert and wise. He excelled especially with his pointed speaking, and drew on many sayings, aphorisms and proverbs from the Torah, with which he was able to persuade the masses who heard him. He was an Enlightened Zionist, and was devoted to the movement with all the ardor of his soul. His outstanding oratory, and his powers of persuasion was very great, and is on his account that we were able to raise the level of the Zionist ideal to where it was, in our town. He was a community activist, and participated in all walks of life. He participated in every meeting and gathering of the important people in the city, and worked towards national revival. He was the leader of the Zionists in the city for a long time. And he served as the Head of the community for many years. He was a folksy speaker, well prepared, and there hardly was a public function of a party in which he did not participate. However, this did not diminish or compromise his character. His son, Moshe, was one of the heads and leaders of the revisionist Zionists and one of the heads of Betar. His entire family was wipe out in the Holocaust. May the Lord Avenge Their Spilled Blood.



Shlomo Goldzamd

By Sh. Zamoyski

An Enlightened Torah scholar of dignified appearance, with the appearance of an intelligent Jewish man who had already absorbed the teachings of the *Haskalah*. He worshiped in the Husyatin *shtibl*, but the Hasidim harmonized after him, who had been caught up in his ideas....he loved to offer a word of Torah, explaining it first literally and simply, then with the Ibn Ezra commentary, in a more difficult manner. He

possessed the power of being able to explain something, and had a practiced tongue. Everything that he did was done pleasantly and with dedication. He was a footwear merchant, and was considered to be among the revered of the community. Some time back, he was the Chair of the Merchants Guild in our town.

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Moshe Reichenberg

By Sh. Zamoyski

Page 491: ***The Leadership of the Zionists in Tomaszow***
From the Right: Hirsch Zilberberg, Yitzhak Levenfus, Moshe Reichenberg

Or as he was known by the name Moshe'leh Bal'tcheh's, since his mother was the owner of a hotel and restaurant, a respected and well-received woman in the city. He is counted among the first of the young people in the town that disseminated the Zionist-pioneering concept. He invested a great deal of energy and spunk into the organization of the Zionist *HeHalutz*, and to the winning over of the hearts of Jewish youth to its ideal. He also worked hard to implant the fundamental idea of Jewish nationalism among [all] Jews. He was one of the carriers of the Zionist torch with pride, and national stalwartness. In time, he became the representative of the Zionist party to the municipal council. He made aliyah and lived there for a period of time. Because of difficulties in acclimatizing himself from a social standpoint, and because of longing for his family, he returned home. He then joined the TzAH'R movement, and was one of its leaders. He was killed along with all of his family. May the Lord Avenge Their Spilled Blood.

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Pinchas Goldstein

By Sh. Zamoyski

A Chelm Hasid who was a venerable Mohel, respected, who performed his service without pay. He was a modest man, that did not mix into political matters, and was beloved by all. His son and grandchildren escaped to Russia, and there are some of them that are today found in Israel.

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Gershon Brand

By Sh. Licht

Page 492: *Gershon ben R' Sholom Zalman Brand, phot taken in the year 5694 [1934]*

He was the son of Rabbi and Sage, R' Shlomo Zalman, the oldest son of Moshe Mendl ben Getzel Brand. He was wealthy, but a simple man. Zalman occupied himself with the study of Torah, and with fearing his God. Because of this, he negotiated a marriage with a family that had pedigree, and took as a wife the daughter of the Rabbi R' Zvi Epstein, the Chief Rabbi and Bet Din Senior of Magierow, the son of the *Gaon* R' Joseph Epstein [himself] the Bet Din Senior of Ozerna, the author of '*Genizei Joseph*,' on a general introduction to the fruits of the *Maggidim.*

From early childhood, Gershon was endowed with exceptional intellectual skills. He was sharp-minded in his studies, and was excellent in his capacity to grasp material both quickly and in depth. On top of all this, he was blessed with a phenomenal memory, and an enormous diligence. When he finished *Heder*, he entered the Cieszanow shtibl, and there, completed his studies in Torah and the precepts of *Hasidism*. He was raised and educated with the sons of the Rabbi, and when they traveled to Yeshivas, he also traveled to Tarnopol where his uncle the Rabbi Tzaddik R' Meir Rokeach lived, who was the Bet Din Senior of Kozlow. There, he studied with the Bet Din Senior of that place, the *Gaon* Rabbi David Menachem Manish Babad ז"ל the author of the Responsa, '*Havatselet HaSharon*,' and he was one of his outstanding students. Analytical, and a master of Talmudic casuistry, when he returned to Tomaszow, he was one of the shining lights of the Cieszanow shtibl, and the Cieszanow Hasidim. Before the war, he married a woman from Izbica, and he was killed there together with his family, may their memory be to the good. Also, his younger brother, Yud'li, who was a wonder at Torah study, and a stutterer, and also one of the Hasidim of the shtibl, and the entire family of his father, the dear ones, and the unblemished, were all lost. May the Lord Avenge Their Spilled Blood.

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Ary' Heller

By Sh. Licht

[He] was one of the wondrous and gifted personalities of our generation, in whom Torah scholarship and greatness were united in one place. He was born in the city of Frampol, to his father, the Rabbi and *Gaon*, the *Hasid* R' Yeshaya Zvi Heller, one of the most important Rabbis of his generation, a scholar, an intelligent man, and having a distinguished pedigree, being the grandson of the author of '*Baruch Ta'am*,' and '*Zikhron Shmuel*,' of Przemysl, continuing back to the *Tosafot Yom Tov*, and the author of '*Megaleh Amukot*.' He married a woman from Tomaszow, Mrs. Chana Sarah, who was a Woman of Valor in the full sense of the word (daughter of the wealthy man, and Hasid, R' David HaKohen Goldstein, who was called Reb Dud'l Chay'tcheh's, of the Husyatin *Hasidim*, who took him on as an outstanding young man). As was the custom in those years, he was supported at his father-in-law's table, he whose roots were from the Sanz-Gorlice *Hasidim*, and attached himself to the Rabbi *Tzaddik* R' Yehoshua'leh ז"ל, and studied and worshiped in his *Bet HaMedrash*. Afterwards, he opened an ironmonger shop, succeeded at it, and rose higher and higher. His wife, Chana Sarah was renown as a very capable woman, and helped him a great deal. He had the capacity to set aside study periods during the day, on a regular basis, morning, afternoon and evening. He had thirteen sons and daughters, and ever time an addition came to the family, his wealth increased. He educated them all strictly according to the Torah, and *Hasidism*, without compromise. All of his sons and daughters were outstanding in their adherence to tradition, not touching their beards, and [the daughters] shaving off their hair after they married. In the year 5683 [1923] he was one of those who brought the Rabbi *Gaon* and Tzaddik, R' Ary' Leibusz, the Rabbi of Cieszanow זצ"ל to Tomaszow, and was one of his supporters and ardent *Hasidim*. He, and his sons, did not miss a single *Tisch* on Sabbaths and Festivals. He was one of the leaders of the *Agudat Yisrael* movement, and helped establish *Yesodei HaTorah*, and *Beth Jacob*. He married off his sons to the families of important Rabbis and *balebatim*, and to families with good pedigree throughout the length and breadth of Poland, and all of them became prominent people. His house was always wide open, and if he was a member of the leadership of the Jewish community, as well as the town itself, and one of the heads of the Agudah, nonetheless he strove to maintain a modest profile, and fled from fame. When the war broke out, he and some of his sons fled to Lwow, to his son, the Rabbi and Sage R' Moshe הי"ד the son-in-law of the Rabbi Tzaddik R' Yaakov Yitzhak, son of the Rabbi Tzaddik Ber'eli זצ"ל, the Chief Rabbi

of Tsaritsyn[112]. From there, the Russians exiled him to Siberia, and he died there in 5703 [1943] in Kazakhstan. Of his sons, R' Isaac, R' Baruch, and R' Yekhezkiel Schraga Heller survived, and his daughter Hadassah with her husband Henoch Adlervogel, and his son-in-law Nathan Goldstein, with his son, and son-in-law R' Aharon Kalter.

Yaak'li Lederkremmer

By Sh. Licht

He was one of the respected nobility of the city. He was the son of an illustrious family, that was one of the most ancient in our city, a Torah scholar and a Husyatin *Hasid*, wealthy and philanthropic. He received all people in a most cordial manner, was of good heart, and alert to all matters of philanthropy, radiant in his Zionist posture, an activist in community affairs, and earned a respected position in the entire city. He was at one with his world, and was gifted in establishing good relationships even with his opponents, and also to guard his position of prestige. He was one of the very few who traveled outside of the country, and everyone related to him with eagerness. His home was wide open, and he participated in all charitable initiatives, generously and with a philanthropic spirit. Of great help was his wonderful help meet and wife, Mrs. Esther ה"ד who was genteel and of a good heart, and to whom everyone related with a sense of endearment. He, his wife, and his issue, were killed in the Holocaust. Of his sons, only Mr. Yitzhak survives, may he live and be well.

Yitzhak Karper

By Sh. Licht

He was one of the *balebatim*, a Torah scholar and a Radzyn *Hasid*, and was considered among the educated because he spoke the language of the country. He was born in Tarnogrod in 5631 [1871] and was one of the important members of the *Bet HaMedrash*, and studied with the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Bunim Sofer, the son of the *Gaon* Rabbi Shimon Sofer of Cracow. He married a woman from Tomaszow, and was a respected merchant, and was selected from among the strictly observant Jews of the city for the municipal council.

He married off his daughter, Shoshana, to R' Bezalel Bizinsky of Wloclawek, one of the leaders of Mizrahi in Poland, who later made *aliyah*. There [sic: in Israel] he is one of the leaders of the Worldwide Mizrahi. He was taken to Israel before the war.

In the last twenty-four years of his life, he lived in Jerusalem, in the home of his daughter and son-in-law. There, he continued his study of the Torah, as he did in his youth, because he was not busy with commerce, and he was able to study swiftly. The *Daf Yomi* was his daily bread and butter. He was a man shot through and through with Torah and courtesy, and a man of pleasant discourse. It was a pleasure to be in his presence, because on every occasion, he would bring up pearls from the treasure chest of Torah, and would tell stories from his memory of life in Poland. He died at a venerable old age in the month of Iyyar 5719 [1959].

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112 This would become Stalingrad after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and then Volgograd, after Stalin was discredited as a leader.

Sholom Singer

By Sh. Licht

He was born in Grabowiec, who lived in the village of Rachanie close to Tomaszow, and took up residence in Tomaszow in the year 5691 [1931]. A phenomenal Torah scholar, Hasid, and God-fearing man, who also possessed gentility of spirit. He embodied in his personality the form of a genius that almost had no equal. He owned a flour mill and dealt in flour, and because of his business, spend almost the entire week traveling to Lwow and Drohobyc. Despite this, he set aside time for Torah study, and never missed a day of prayer with a minyan. He took no compensation for community service work, because he considered the time set aside by for this as sacred. He was laconic, and avoided controversy, yet he was wondrously philanthropic, and in receiving guests into his home His home was open to anyone in need, or who required a consideration, whether for a loan or for a favor, or for charity. He never sat down to a meal, in which he was not accompanied by the floating jetsam of paupers of which there was no shortage throughout all of Poland. He made a special point of taking in those who because of their poverty and wanderings were not welcome by anyone else, and he gathered them all into his home, and would host them every Sabbath and on Festivals together with the members of his household at one table.

He gave his soul to the education of his sons and grandsons, and it was because of them that he left the city, where he was set up with a steady income that bestowed wealth on him. Yet no work, or money was sufficiently valuable to him, if it stood in the way of educating his sons in Torah and *Hasidism*. With this in mind, he selected the Cieszanow-Sanz *shtibl* as his house of worship. This was despite the fact that he was subjected to great pressure on the part of the Hasidim he belonged to from his dwelling place, who wanted him to join them. But he did not pay attention to anything, and he said to them, 'I had the gumption to abandon my livelihood, and to take up residence in Tomaszow, in order to give my sons the appropriate education. I see no other place for me except to spiritually affiliate with, and pray with the Chief Rabbi of Cieszanow, whose place is a place of Torah and *Hasidism*, which makes me certain that my sons will be set on the right path.' His sons were outstanding in Torah study and their fear of God, and among the more important members of the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Sanz *Hasidim*.

He, his wife, and sons, Jonah and Peretz, and daughters Malka and Bal'tcheh, and son-in-law R' Yerakhmiel Steinberg from Chelm, all were killed and died in Sanctification of the Name, ה"ש. Only his son, Abraham Zvi survived, by a sheer miracle, and is found in the Land of Israel.

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Yaakov Moshe Guthartz

By Sh. Licht

A Torah scholar as a young man, and a Kuznitz *Hasid*, full of energy and a man of action, vibrant and full of life. He was constantly on the move, doing things, and pursued those deeds that would strengthen and disseminate faith and Torah study.

He was not a scion of Tomaszow, and did not even take a wife from the daughters of Tomaszow. Only his father-in-law, R' Mordechai Samit from Chelm, and one of the elders of the Radzyn Hasidim, took up residence in Tomaszow, to conduct his business. He had received permission to open a tobacco store, and immediately integrated himself into the coterie of the spiritual nobility and *Hasidism* in the Sanz *shtibl*. With

every fiber of his soul, he cleaved to the Chief Rabbi from Cieszanow זי"ל, at whose place was the focal point for the raising of the cause of the Torah, and the improvement of the conditions of the strictly observant in the city. He entered the field of education of the Agudah, and helped a great deal with the establishment of the Beth Jacob School for Girls, and he directed the young men, assuring that there should not be any difficulty for them to approach an objective that was elevated and sacred. He was a model for them, in this regard.

He was quick and light in his touch, but deep in his thinking, and quick to act. All these traits served him immediately in the first rank of those who were pioneers in the brigade of Torah study. He was one of the pillars of strength of the Agudah, and the young people, and he helped a great deal in strengthening and girding the strictly observant in the city. Community issues, and the considerations of the Bet HaMedrash were more important to him than the needs of his own simple home.

When the war broke out, he left our city, along with his father-in-law, and took up residence in Ludomir, in Wolhynia, and there, they were killed in the Holocaust. הי"ד

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Shlomo Akst

By Sh. Licht

He was a scion of Tarnogrod who married a Tomaszow woman, Dobra bat Odel. From early youth, he circled in the shadow of the Holy Rabbi, the author of '*Divrei Yekhezkiel*' of Sieniawa, and afterwards, in the shadow of his son, the Holy Rabbi, author of '*Divrei Simcha*,' of Cieszanow. He was one of those who brought the *Gaon* and *Tzaddik* Rabbi Ary' Leibusz זצ"ל the son-in-law to the Head of community from Cieszanow, to take up residence in Tomaszow, and was one of his very ardent disciples and worshipers at his *Bet HaMedrash.*

R' Shlomo Akst was an honest, God-fearing man, and his integrity and fear of God were a wonder. He was privileged to have sons who became great Torah Sages, all of them beloved, *Hasidim*, and men of action. It is worth recollecting his son-in-law, R' Yekhezkiel Schraga Putter who was called Yekhezkiel Zikhri's. Who was a young married man, and a formidable Torah Scholar and a genuine God-fearing individual, one of the most important in our city. Also, his sons, Rabbi Moshe the son-in-law of the Rabbi R' Yoss'leh Ratenberg of Sikali, Yehoshua, Yekhezkiel Schraga, Baruch, he was a formidable and very profound Torah Scholar. He studied with the young men in the Sanz Bet HaMedrash, without financial compensation, and his youngest son, Nathan David, and another daughter all were killed in the Holocaust. Only the eldest son, R' Joseph Akst remained as a survivor, and is located in Israel.

He was a success in his business, building a flour mill, and he also had a butter factory. His home was wide open to the doing of good deeds and charitable undertakings. After R' Nahum *Shames* was killed, the only remaining minyan in the city was held at his house, up to the point that the Jewish community was entirely destroyed in Tomaszow. Part of his family hid in a bunker that was revealed by their Polish neighbors [sic: to the Nazis] a scant few days before the liberation, and all of them were killed right there, on the spot. הי"ד

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R' David Weitzman

By Sh. Licht

He was born in the year 5615 [1855] and from childhood on, he was a master of excellent acuity and a very great learner. He was born into a Hasidic family, and traveled to the Holy Rabbi in Izbica, the author of 'Bet Yaakov,' זי"ל, and waited to become one of those who brought back the lore he had learned at his table. The venerable Hasidim would ask of him to repeat the sayings of the Rebbe for them, because he had a wondrous memory, and he retained every word in his mind, forgetting nothing. (It is worth recollecting at this opportunity, what was said by the last Chief Rabbi of Radzyn, the martyr, Rebbe Shmuel Shlomo Leiner הי"ד who wrote these passages on his last visit to Tomaszow in 5699 [1939]: Oh, we know that David has not forgotten a thing of what he learned, even the innovative things from his earliest years he has not forgotten, all of which are etched into the folds of his awesome memory). As the Chief Rabbi of Radzyn שליט"א once told me, the texts of the portion of Noah in the book, *Bet Yaakov* were published from his writings. In the time that he studies with his son, the Gaon, Rabbi Gershon Henokh זצ"ל, the author of '*Arukhot Chaim*,' he studied with such regularity and was considered to be his student, and was devoted to him with all the attributes of his soul, and he recorded all his issues and deeds in detail as clear as the blue sky, as if it were a diary (lost during the Holocaust period).

He married a woman, Chava Weitzman of our city, and for a number of years, he was supported for his meals and was completely dedicated to Torah study, which he learned with great love. When he departed from his father-in-law's table, he opened a store as a market, succeeded, and became one of the big merchants. Yet, he did not stand in the store and sell merchandise. He turned over the management of the store to his wife, a Woman of Valor, and he did not cease his studying. It was only once in two weeks that he would travel to Lublin to buy merchandise, and that was all. (He told me, that at the beginning of his business, when there were many buyers, his wife wanted to get him involved in the store, because the home and the store were in the same, one, building, with one room on the inside, and one out. When he saw that this was interrupting his studies, and lessons, he would take a bottle of oil to pour a small container, and it fell from his hand, from that day forward she no longer utilized him to sell in the store, and he was free to engage in Torah study).

He was a formidable *Gaon*, and he was especially expert in the order of *Taharot* [sic: ritual purity] and he assisted a great deal in the organizing the writings of the books on the order of *Taharot* for publication by his great teacher, the *Rebbe* of Radzyn. In his old age, before the war broke out, he completed the arrangement of the tractate of *Mikvaot* [sic: the ritual bath] that the last Chief Rabbi of Radzyn began to publish. He was a fastidious linguist and he had a grasp of the rules of grammar regarding every syllable, its root and origin, which he would derive from just two letters, and he had put together a substantial piece in writing about this. He was a master of mathematics, and as a young man had developed a formula for calculation for which he received a commendation. Also, Chaim Zelig Slonimsky[113] wrote in praise of this piece of work. All his writings went up in flames in the fire of 5678 [1918], and from that time, he declined, God spare us, and he had many family troubles. At the end of his life he lived in a small house, plagued by troubles. He was confined to bed, and despite this he did not cease from his routine of daily and nightly study, and did not put down the pen from his hand, and wrote in an innovative manner on all subjects in the Torah, insights, and disquisitions on the *Zohar*, which he sent to Rabbi Reuven Margaliot of Lwow, and he publicized them. Also one responsa by him was published in the writings of '*Khazon Nahum*,' to the *Gaon*

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113 Chaim Zelig Slonimsky (1810-1904) of Zabludow was a renown scholar who favored the study of mathematics and engineering. His imprimatur would be considered important in this regard.

R' Nahum Wiedenfeld of Dabrowa. When The Second World War broke out, he was transported, with a chest of his manuscripts to the home of the Hasidim in Radzyn, and he lived there for some months, and died approximately in the month of Kislev of the year 5700 [1940].

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R' Ben Zion Faber

By Sh. L(icht).

He was born in 5669[1909] in Rodziele Gorna, in the Limanowa area, and was raised in New Sanz. There, he studied at the *Hasidic Bet HaMedrash.* He was blessed with exceptional intellectual faculties, which he dedicated to learning. Being a great student, he grew up to be a great Torah Sage, and a God-fearing man. When the Rabbi of Lublin, Rabbi Meir Shapiro ז"ל visited Sanz, and had a conversation with individual scholars about study, he especially was impressed by Ben Zion's deep-seated understanding and grasp of the process of study.

The *Rebbe* of Glusk played a very important part in his intellectual development, as did the Sanz *Rebbe,* Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Halberstam ז"ל.

He got married in Tomaszow, to Mal'ya, the daughter of Yoss'leh and Tobeh'leh Friedlander.

Being a brilliant man, with a warm Jewish heart, and also well schooled in secular knowledge, he was greatly beloved in the city.

In 1940, along with many other Polish Jews, he was sent off to Siberia to do forced labor. Under the most difficult circumstances, he made strenuous efforts to live in accordance with the precepts of the *Shulkhan Arukh.* On the Sabbath, when he was forced to go to work, he carried no food with him, in order that he not carry on the Sabbath. Also, at the most difficult work in the forests, he also distinguished himself with his skills. On time, a thick and really ancient old tree swayed in the wrong direction while being cut down, and it fell on him and killed him on the spot.

R' Alter Ben Zion son of R' Ze'ev Faber was thus killed at an early age in the Altaic regions of Siberia of the Krai Tobolsk Region, on 11 Shevat 5701 [Saturday, February 8, 1941, *Shabbat Shira*].

His wife, Malya'leh and her two children later made *aliyah* to Israel.

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Benjamin Weinberg

By Sh. Lamed (Licht)

Page 499: R' Benjamin Weinberg

He was born in Krasniczyn, raised and married in Zamość. Despite the fact that he was raised in a very strict *Hasidic* surrounding of Trisk *Hasidim,* modern worldly Zamość and the well-to-do home left their mark on him. He mastered the Russian language both in word and in writing. He was counted among that type –

intellectual – an aristocratic *Hasid*, with a one hundred percent traditional dress from his little cap and fine black woolen little jacket, but kept his beard trimmed, and kempt, and had a knowledge of worldly matters.

He came to be in Tomaszow as a contractor for an entire Russian division that was stationed in the city of Tomaszow, Janów and Bilgoraj. Apart from this, he conducted a large scale business in Forests and land, and he had connections to the larger firms, which helped him a great deal in achieving his success.

His house was a noble, Hasidic house, open to any and everyone who was needy. His noted wife Sarah, was special in giving it color, because of her charitable nature, which she showed with a generous hand, but who tragically died at an early age, and was replaced by their eldest daughter Rivka'leh.

R' Benjamin was the President of the Kopiecka Bank, which was of great help to the smaller merchants in sustaining and growing their stores and places of work.

He was drawn into general community life in he First World War, at the time of the occupation by the German-Austrian military.

According to his daughter, Rivka, it happened as follows:

When the first fighting erupted, he went off, with his family, to Zamość. His residence (which was one of the most beautiful in Tomaszow) at Mr. Markowsky on the Szkola Piekarska *Gasse*, or as it was called in Poland: 11 Listopada *Gasse*, was requisitioned for use by the military officers, and von Papen stationed himself there.[114]

On one occasion, his daughter, Rivka'leh, came to Tomaszow to dispose of something. At that time, hunger and pestilence reigned, the death rate was increasing at a frightening rate, especially among the younger children, and when Rivka'leh was at the Markowsky's she cried very intensely out of her aggravation regarding the great troubles that she saw. Von Papen then asked: '*Was ist ihr geschehen*?' Accordingly, they presented Fraulein Weinberg to him, and communicated to him what the situation was like in the city. Von Papen then expressed himself as follows: If I had a knowledgeable and upstanding man, who can engage in managing an operation, I would organize relief through him, for the poorer elements of the population.

Mr. Markowsky then replied: You will not be able to find any better or more skilled man that Herr Weinberg. Accordingly, he immediately sent her back directly to Zamość with a military escort, with an order to Mr. Benjamin Weinberg to come, and take over the position of chief of operations. Thanks to this, much of the need among the populace was alleviated, that was under the occupying forces. This, also, led him into public life. He became a *Dozor* and also a councilman.

In his later years, he felt physically weak, and drew back from community affairs. Despite this, Jewish people would still come to him for advice.

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114 It is not clear who this is. History does not indicate that Franz von Papen, who later engineered Hitler's rise to power, served this far to the East during WW I.

R' Shmuel Putter ה"ד

By Leah Moskop (Friedlander)

Page 503: *Shmuel Putter, his wife, Chaya, their son Yehoshua, and his wife.*

If we wish to portray the personalities of the city, it is not possible to overlook the figure of R' Shmuel Putter ז"ל. Both in the early years, while still in the times of the Czar, and in the later times, when he took up residence in Polish Lemberg, the name of Shmuel Putter was known widely beyond the boundaries of our city.

His energetic character, his force, propelled him to the highest levels of the social ladder, in the Jewish as well as the non-Jewish street.

At the time when Tomaszow bore all of the signs of a small, out-of-the-way town, with its unpaved, muddy streets, and poor residents, R' Shmuel Putter moved to open a modern business with shining gas lighting on the Kiri Highway, which one would normally encounter only in a large city. At that time, people came to stare at it out of wonder at the various appointments of this place of business. And it was possible to buy anything there that the mouth would only utter. His customers consisted mostly of the wealthy class of Christians and [sic: military] officers. He treated everyone with integrity and with helpfulness. It is possible that the officers, being satisfied with the way they were treated, led him to become a provisioner of products for their division of Cossacks which was stationed in town. This raised him in his career, because apart from wealth, this afforded him visibility among the Christian intelligentsia, as a very intelligent, honest, wealthy Jew. It is interesting that he had a '*Perveh Geldeh*; and for his honest punctilious conduct as a contractor, he received a medal for outstanding service from the Czar. But his energy was not depleted by this. He opened up a mill and afterwards an agency for Singer's new sewing machines in Tomaszow and in Zamość, which made the work of tailoring in the area much easier.

And he did not stop with this. He begins to import agricultural machinery from outside the country, for the nobles to work their extensive land estates. This literally introduces a revolution in the practice of agriculture in the entire region. He also does not forget the poor peasant who owned a rather limited tract of land. He brings smaller implements and threshing machines and sells them to the peasants on a credit plan that permits them to pay off the purchase over two years. The name, Putter, becomes the symbol of the solution of problems in all of the villages far around Tomaszow.

Also, in Jewish Tomaszow, R' Shmuel Putter is a very popular person. Following in the tradition of his grandfather, R' Sinai Putter ז"ל, he is one of the leadership figures of the Jewish settlement. Namely, he is one of the three *Dozors*, that lead in connection with Jewish community life in the city. And in the event that a effort has to be made, in presenting a case to the government, it is he, naturally, who is trusted with the charge to do so.

He has a human and friendly relationship to his employees, the commanding tone being alien to him. He gives them increases to their wages even before they ask for them. His point of principle was, that one cannot ask for more from a satisfied worker. And he would say that this principle never betrayed him.

In his own home, he was indeed strict with the children, giving them a worldly and religious upbringing. For

a period of time, his oldest son Hirsch'l studied with the Cieszanow *Rebbe*, who felt himself to be close to them.

His wife, Chaya, a good-hearted genteel soul, conducted her home with a generous hand, as befitted a wealthy *Hasidic* home with a pedigree. Her father was the brother-in-law of Rabbi of Chrzanow, Rabbi David Halberstam, who was a son of R' Chaim of Sanz זצ"ל. They entertained guests of a variety of character, who came and went, including those who came to still their hunger, with a meal taken in the home of a wealthy family. Their house obtained a reputation in the city. People from near and far come for help, for donations, charity, some with – and some without – pledging security. It was then that R' Shmuel surveyed his whereabouts and observed that something needs to be done for those suffering deprivation. He opens a bank, which disburses loans of up to 200 rubles for very little interest. Jews, poor storekeepers and tradespeople, were literally put back on their feet. 'Shmuel Putter's Bank,' that is what it was called, while officially its name was '*Sudazbieragatalniya Tovarichestvo*,'became the most popular institution in the city, which helps out the poorest part of the populace in a dignified manner. The bank existed up till the outbreak of The First World War.

With the outbreak of the war, Shmuel Putter and his family leave the city, and take up residence in Russia. After the end of the war, he returns to Tomaszow, where he expands his machinery business with branches in Zamość, Chelm, and in Lipsk. He then moves his central business to Lemberg, where from a large beautiful building, the sign 'S. Putter i Synowie' shined down on Grudetska 95.

He takes up residence there, in Lemberg, with his family, where he lives to the end. In that large city, as well, his name becomes popular as a big businessman, and at one of the large fair exhibitions, known as eastern fairs (in Polish: *Tragi-Wschodni*) that took place in Lemberg, he is awarded the title, 'King of the Machines.' He is active in Jewish community life in Lemberg. He, and his sons, are very active in the Zionist movement. His oldest son, Hirsch'l ע"ה settles with his family in Israel with the purpose to transfer his businesses to the Land of Israel; however, Hitler's satanic assault on Poland disrupts all their plans.

Living in Lemberg, he does not forget the Tomaszow community. When he hears that the Righteous Teacher, Rabbi R' Nachman Neuhaus זצ"ל is critically ill, he brings him to Lemberg, and has him attended by prominent doctors and specialists. After all these give up all hope, he sends him back home, accompanied by a doctor. Do understand that this entails great expense, which was entirely covered by him.

R' Shmuel was of above average height, nicely built, and always well groomed with a nice well kempt beard and smiling blue eyes. His dignified mien, and high position, elicited a loving respect towards him from everyone. He was also accorded a special respect in the Husyatin *shtibl*, where he worshiped.

So much for the persona of R' Shmuel Putter as we see him. However, what is the origin of this noteworthy personality? Or, from which family did he come?

R' Sinai Putter זצ"ל

As far as we know, the Putter family was widely branched in and around Tomaszow. It is interesting that, in the city, there were two other families with the same name that did not have any connection with this Putter family. Little is known about R' Shmuel's father, but by contrast, his father's father, R' Sinai was known by everyone. It was known that this R' Sinai was at one time the leader of the community of the city,

who engaged in community life with a firm and strong hand. He constantly stood to protect the poor at every opportunity. He never permitted any indirect taxation for a variety of community needs that the wealthy aspired to, despite the fact that he, personally, was wealthy. He kept the butchers under strict surveillance, to assure that they would not raise their prices for meat, in order that a poor person may have the pleasure of enjoying a small piece of meat, especially for the Sabbath. Many stories and anecdotes are told about him. [It is told that] the Rabbi was on his side regarding any number of community issues against the will of other *balebatim*, and the Rabbi, in his time, was Rabbi R' Moshe Rogenfish ז"ל, the father-in-law of R' Yisroel'i Garzytzensky, of whom it was said, 'Moshe received the Law from Sinai.[115]' He had a very strong opposition in the city, but it was his word that was always the deciding one. What we also know, is that the *Rebbe* of Kotzk, R' Mendl'eh Morgenstern זצ"ל was an uncle of his, and that the *Rebbe* of Belz would always sit him next to himself at his *Tisch,* on those occasions when he came to visit Belz.

He, R' Sinai, had a surfeit of sons and daughters, who took up residence in a variety of cities and raised the most respected families there. His youngest son, R' Mendl הי"ד lived in Tarnogrod. He was a great scholar, and a very respected Jew in that town. It was ordained that he would take part in the dark fate of the remaining European Jews in the Hell of Hitler. R' Shmuel's father, R' Yoss'l was one of R' Sinai's sons, who left seven sons and a daughter, Baylah Shapiro הי"ד, who was called Baylah Putter in town. Her only son, Yoss'l, came to Lemberg with his entire family. The oldest of her sons-in-law was R' Sholom Zilberman הי"ד. He was a grandson of the Rabbi of Bilgoraj, the Genius of Tomaszow, Rabbi Yaakov Mordechai ז"ל. He was a great Torah scholar, and a doer of good deeds. He, his wife Mal'ya Mindl, and several children were executed by the Nazis ימ"ש. One of her sons-in-law, R' Yekhezkiel Hochman was the *Dayan* of Bilgoraj. He was also executed with his family. Another son-in-law Rabbi Sholom Joseph Engelsberg, is today a Rabbi in *Hadar Yosef* in Israel.

One of R' Sinai's daughters, Leah, was the mother of my father ע"ה.

We can assess the importance of R' Sinai from the fact that there were many people in Tomaszow with the name, 'Sinai,' which came from one source, this very R' Sinai Putter, because after he died, many families, who were not even related, gave their newborn boys this name in his memory.

A character trait that runs like a red thread through the weave of this family to this day, is the inclination and involvement in community affairs.

Here, in America, you encounter it in my husband, Yoss'l, in Shmuel Putter's daughter Balt'cheh, who lives in Lakewood with her husband. She takes an extraordinarily active part in community life, in many areas, in New York and in New Jersey. Also, the brothers Moshe, Sinai and Pinia, the sons of R' Mendl Putter from Tyszowce occupy a visible place in the Zionist Organization in New York.

The great Holocaust perpetrated by Hitler which devastated and eradicated the large and small Jewish settlements, along with their people, from the face of God's earth, also did not spare the well-connected and wealthy Putter family. R' Shmuel, his wife Chaya, their son Yehoshua with his wife and child, their son Joseph, were executed by the German murderers. R' Shmuel's brother, Sinai, who, at the last also lived in Lemberg, was able to kill one member of the Gestapo before he, his wife Sarah'leh, with their two children were shot. May their memory be sanctified.

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115 A humorous quip based on a modification of the opening line to the '*Pirkei Avot*,' which states that 'Moses received the Law from Sinai.'

Yekhezkiel Lehrer and the Krasnobrod Gasse

By Eli' Lehrer

Page 509: Yekhezkiel Lehrer and his wife, Itta'leh

A white stone house, with a large yard, at Number 28 Krasnobrod *Gasse,* was the place where Yekhezkiel Lehrer and his wife, Itta and family ז"ל lived.

R' Yekhezkiel was a very well-known person. He was a prominent forest products merchant, and a councilman at the municipal council, the Chair of the Education Committee of the *Yesodei HaTorah Heder*, and directed the construction of the city *Bet HaMedrash*, which had been burned down during the First World War. For a period of time, he was the only *Mohel* in Tomaszow, and most of the boys in the shtetl entered the Covenant of Abraham at his pristine hands.

R' Yekhezkiel, his wife Itta ז"ל, their four sons and five daughters and their family members, lived a dignified middle-class life. They helped poor people. R' Yekhezkiel conducted Torah courts in instances when the two sides could not effect a compromise on their own, and was in general highly regarded in the town.

Life proceeded normally up to September 1, 1939 when the great Jewish Holocaust began, with the beginning of The Second World War.

This very house was destroyed and burned in the middle of a clear Thursday, September 7, 1939, by German bombers, along with hundreds of other houses, and also several hundred people were killed.

As a consequence, Yekhezkiel Lehrer and along with his family wandered from village to village, hiding themselves from the German murderers. At the end, they were in the ghetto in Hrubieszow until the bitter decree of *Judenfrei* came on October 21, 1942, at which point half of his family had already been killed by the Nazis. His son, Yeshaya was the first victim on 7 Tishri [September 20] 1939, at the time that the German Army marched into Tomaszow-Lubelski. A daughter, Jocheved, and family, a son, Shlomo and family, fled over the border into Russia at the end of 1939, however, in 1942 they were killed by the Germans at the time that they captured the Russian-occupied Polish territories. A daughter, Chana, and her family, a son Leib'l, his wife and two children, fell victim to the Nazi murderers in 1942.

I had the opportunity, to grab and bring to Tomaszow, the youngest son, Eli' Lehrer, who remained with my father and mother ע"ה, up to the last minute of the '*Judenfrei*,' in Hrubieszow. This was the summer of 1941, and the time to see the 'destruction of Tomaszow-Lubelski.'

The town was half burned down, and the huge walls of the burned out synagogue stood in destruction, and almost all the other walls had been taken down and used for paving stones by the few remaining Jews who were pressed into forced labor by the SS Police to do so.

After several days of being in Tomaszow, I took a glance at the cemetery, the torn up pile of books, and half-

torn Torah scrolls, which were scattered around on the ground at the entry gate to the cemetery.

I was seized with a shudder, and immediately went away. On my way to the *Judenrat*, which was located on the Zamość *Gasse*, I met Nahum *Shames*, Abba Bergenbaum, as the Chair of the *Judenrat*, Neta Heller, Secretary, and a few other Jews. We talked about the explosions that we heard in the city. These were dynamite explosions, implemented by the Poles, under the oversight of the SS, to blow up the burned out synagogue. It didn't fall to their hands easily. It took days, and weeks, until they were able to bring down the thick walls with the very thin soffit which was one brick thick. It was then discussed with the *Judenrat* that the soffit of the synagogue had been glued with egg white, and that is why it was so strong, causing the Germans to use their most potent dynamite. The stones of the synagogue were used to pave the muddy [streets] of Tomaszow.

I traveled back to Hrubieszow, and remained there with my parents in te ghetto until October 21, 1941, up to the *Judenfrei* edict. I hid myself in the cellar of a Polish policeman. My parents hid themselves in an attic in the ghetto, however, tragically, the Nazi murderers found them only after a few days, and led them in licked chains to the Hrubieszow cemetery, and with the words '*Shema Yisrael*' on their lips, Yekhezkiel Lehrer and his wife Itta fell in Sanctification of the Name,

22 MarHeshvan [November 2] 1942
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה

at the hands of the Nazi murderers, may their name and memory be erased for all time.

By a sheer miracle, I was fated to be saved from their murderous hands. At night, I fled to Sokol, and I remained there until February 13, 1943. At that time, when the Sokol ghetto was on the verge of being exterminated, I fled at night, on foot, back to Hrubieszow, because I had notification that in Hrubieszow, a forced labor camp of 60 Jewish men and women had been created there. And, indeed, it was at this forced labor camp that I was, until September 12, 1943, until we were taken to the larger camp in Budzyn near Lublin.

In February 1944, a group of us, with me among them, were transferred to the concentration camp at Mielec near Cracow.

When the Russian Army drew near to Polish territory, on June 12, 1944, we were taken away from the work, and all of us were taken to Wieliczka near Cracow. Remaining there for a few days, until July 20, 1944, a group of us, with me amongst them, were taken to Flassenberg in Germany. Two weeks later, my eyes red from the smoke of the day-in and day-out cremation of hundreds of Jews, who were no longer able to perform labor, I was taken to a stone quarry in Hersbruck in Germany.

On January 3, 1945 the entire Hersbruck camp , and again, me among them, was vacated to Kochendorf. Several weeks later, from Kochendorf to Flassenberg, and from Flassenberg, on March 2, 1945 again, a group of us were taken to Zwickau near Leipzig where we worked in underground halls where missiles were manufactures. In the middle of a clear day of work, all of us, escorted by SS camp guard police, were driven for 2 weeks during the day and night, without food or water, through fields and forests, until out of more than 800 of us, only fifty percent remained. The rest of us [either]expired, or were shot. I was barely able to drag my feet along, and decided at that time to attempt to flee into the forest. I hid myself in the forest for over two weeks, reviving myself with a little bit of snow, and leaves from trees. Up to a certain day, May 10, 1945,

coming out of the forest, I went into a Christian to plead for food, and he explained to me that the war had ended with the German defeat.

In the street, I saw how the German military was discarding its arms into a yard, dousing them with benzine and igniting it, and hanging out white flags.

A few minutes later, I observed the American troops marching in.

I ran over to a freight truck loaded with food. Who is it that can imagine my appetite. In short, I paid no attention to my digestion, and via the Red Cross, I was taken to a hospital in Carlsbad. I was there for four months, and underwent an operation.

My new life began again on October 2, 1947 when I came to America.



My Father, R' Shabtai ז"ל

By Moshe Friedlander
Netanya

Page 515: R' Shabtai Friedlander and his wife, Malka

My father, R' Shabtai Friedlander, or as he was once called, *Sheps'l Yerakhmiel's* was one of the important people of the city, loved and respected by all circles of Jewish Tomaszow. His comportment, his sense of right and wrong, with which he approached all matters that came to his hand, elicited respect for him everywhere, especially in the learned Hasidic circles, who knew him more closely and also knew of his distinguished ancestry, namely: His father's mother, Rachel was the daughter of the Rabbi of Plotsk[116], R' Leibusz Tsintz זצ"ל known as R' Leibusz *Kharif* [117] who in his last years, lived in Warsaw, who was renown throughout the scholarly world by his status as a *Gaon*, with his approximately thirty publications on a variety of subjects dealing with Torah and *Halakha*. Also, my father's mother, Leah, was a daughter of R' Sinai Putter ז"ל whose personality, in his time, transcended the borders of our city, being its community Head and its leader.

After his boyhood years. My father was very much beloved by R' Yehoshua'leh זצ"ל, who most times took him along on his trips to various cities. In his younger years, my father would travel to the *Rebbe* of Sieniawa זצ"ל, the author of '*Divrei Yekhezkiel*, and also to his brother, the *Gorlicer*, the son of the Rabbi & *Tzaddik* R' Chaim *Sanzer* זצ"ל, and later on, he was a very ardent disciple of the *Rebbe* of Cieszanow, the author of '*Divrei Simcha*,' זצ"ל. As with his pedigree, so it was with his *Hasidism*, he did not aggrandize himself before other people, rather, he carried it within himself like a secret talisman.

Despite the fact that he was not wealthy, or meddlesome in community affairs, he nevertheless contributed his part to public affairs in his own unique and modest way. Apart from the *Hevra Kadisha*, where he was active for so long, as all of us remember him, he didn't like to mix into municipal affairs. Despite this, deep inside him, he carried a feeling of responsibility for all matters that related to Jewish life in the city. Only in rare instances, when he felt that his intervention was absolutely necessary, did he accept a position. It was in this manner that, after The First World War, he saw that the Talmud Torah in the city had become neglected in the city, and that the poorer children were not receiving any education, that intervened with R' Yisroel'i the *Rebbe's*, the president of the Talmud Torah. The latter answered him: On the contrary, do something about it, and I will definitely give you my consent. My father ע"ה, then took the initiative, and in a matter of a few weeks, the Talmud Torah, again, began to function. For a stretch of years, my father ע"ה was its loyal supporter, and he would provide the *Kiddush* for the *Gabbaim* of the Talmud Torah, in his house, on the Sabbaths from the portion of *Yitro* and *VaEtkhanan*, when the story of the receiving of the Torah is read, and also the *Melaveh Malka* of the Sabbath eve of the portion of *Yitro*.

A similar plight existed immediately after the War. At that time, a children's kitchen , with American products, functioned in the city. Such products, also unprepared, were distributed to the poorer part of the populace. At that time, the Jews of the town utilized small containers of American milk as if they were *parve*

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116 Spelled *Plock* in Polish. We retain the Yiddish spelling because of its familiarity.

117 A Hebrew appellation indicating that this was 'He of the sharp mind.'

and as a result, mixed them with meat products. At that time, my father ע"ה intervened with the Rabbi, but he, the Rabbi, took it on as a vegetarian milk. At that time, my father asked in a letter to his brother Leibusz ע"ה in New York, and the latter replied with an enclosed letter from an American Rabbi, indicating that the milk is the milk of a cow. Then, the Rabbi permitted an announcement to be made in the *Batei Medrashim*, that the milk is a natural product, and those that had mixed it with meat comestibles should make an inquiry regarding the preparations. My father did not take any public pride in this, and very few people knew that he had a hand in disclosing this matter.

My father, himself, was a good-hearted and well-tempered individual, and when it came to him to do a good deed, nothing could restrain him. Not even a Thursday market day, when he would have to stand in his place of business, or even in the middle of the night. He felt an inner satisfaction in helping someone out, with whatever he was able to do, an achievement of a sort of inner tranquility in his own life, which was full of troubles. Yet, in his own house, he was very strict, especially in questions of ritual conduct and in raising children. In these areas, he did not relent so much as an iota. One could not discern any attempt on his part to strive for riches; his ambitions were pointed in another direction, namely: to raise his children in the spirit of his ancestors. Regrettably, he achieved few of his goals. Only his older son, Sinai ע"ה (who died in Russia) satisfied im fully in an spiritual sense, being a Torah sage, a *Hasid*, and a God-fearing man. By contrast, his younger son, Yoss'l, on whom he had placed even greater hopes, disappointed him painfully, when in a dramatic fashion, he broke with his traditional past.

My father did not have much *nachas* in his life. On *Shabbat HaGadol* 5 Nissan 5676 [April 8, 1916],[118] his oldest unmarried daughter Mal'ya Mindl died at the age of twenty-one. In the summer of 1918 he is burned in the great fire of the city [of that year], after which, it becomes difficult for him to get back on his feet. And, in the middle of the decade of the thirties, he becomes completely ruined by the fantastically high taxes that the government finance department imposed on him.

The outbreak of the war in 1939 finds my parents in a very difficult material circumstance. The Germans occupy the city, and robberies and murders are committed against the Jewish population. Our house is burned down in the arson fire perpetrated by the Germans. My parents move to the house of my sister Frieda ה"י, who was located in the house of Yehoshua Blonder. Young people, especially women, hide themselves with the appearance of any German. Suddenly, such an individual appears in the house, and demands of my impoverished parents that he should be provided with a 'woman.'

Seeing my sister Rachel's underage girl, he accosts her. No outcry, that she is only a child, helps. He threatens her by pointing his revolver at her. My father then interposes himself between the child and the revolver, and says to the German: Shoot me, but you may not have the child. In that instant, the little girl vanished, and the German ימ"ש, was then promised that a woman would be found for him, in the span of less than one hour, under the threat of having the house burned down. All those who were present then abandoned the house, and never again returned.

Before the second occupation by the Germans, many Jewish families abandoned the city, together with the Russian Army, to Rawa Ruska. My parents, Frieda, her husband and two children remained in Tomaszow; The remainder of our family fled to Rawa [Ruska]. Remaining behind in Tomaszow, my father gave his

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118 The calendar says that *Shabbat HaGadol* that year was on April 15, 1916. Accordingly, the reference is not clear.

poverty as an excuse, and like many others, he did not correctly assess the depravity of the Germans. It is also possible that another hidden motive indirectly motivated him to this, namely: in his deep subconscious, with support from a feeling that the spirit of his great-grandfather will serve to shield him in a time of trouble. And also...possibly, this feeling did not deceive him completely, and as a result, he managed to get through the dragnet of the *selektions,* and the crematoria, and not to have The Unclean Ones to look upon in his final minutes.

In Bayrakh'eh's Mill in Belzec

The last time I saw my parents, was on a Hanukkah day, in Bayrakh'eh's mill in Belzec. It was as follows: At the beginning of October 1939 I, and my brother Yoss'l, arrived from Warsaw to Rawa [Ruska]. Many refugees from Tomaszow congregated there, whose plight was very extreme, because Rawa [Ruska] was not capable of absorbing such a large number of refugees, and the Rawa [Ruska] residents were not psychologically prepared for these new circumstances, and did not manifest any special hospitality to their fleeing neighbors. A desire began to develop among those who fled, to return home: here, people are illegally crossing the border back and forth, on a continuous basis, bringing soothing news from Tomaszow 'seemingly, we are not being touched,' 'seemingly things are a bit easier,' etc.

Suddenly, we hear that on the eve of the prior Sabbath the Tomaszow Jews were summoned to a gathering in the Ludowy, and there, they were beaten murderously, accompanied by a variety of abuses and sadistic acts, which made one's hair and nails stand on end. After this, they received an order to leave the city, and to go to Russia. The Jews obeyed the order, and headed for the Russian border which was located on the other side of Belzec. However, the Russians did not permit the Jews across. At that point, the Jews wandered about under the open, rainy sky. In accordance with an order from Hitler, the peasants in the surrounding area were not permitted to let them into their homes, and also not permitted to sell them any food. After several days of getting soaked in the rain, they were quartered in Bayrakh'eh's mill (this was how the mill was called, which belonged to R' Bayrakh Kessler ה"ד). A delegation from the Tomaszow refugees intervened with the commandant of the Russian border guards, but without success: by contrast, the officers of the border guard kept assuring that the border would be open in a few days, for the expelled Tomaszow Jews.

At that time, I crossed the border illegally, to be able to visit with my parents. A frightening sight assaulted my eyes when I arrived at Bayrakh'eh's mill. The people there went about as if enveloped in a living mass of lice. I could not understand how these people were still alive, how they eat, and how they are not embarrassed in front of each other. Several families lived in one small room. They counted out sixteen people for me that sleep on the bare floor, pressed one against the other, and even in this way, I could not comprehend how sixteen people could fit into such a small room. My father slept on the cold, bare, and open attic. I talked to them about crossing the border illegally, but they received this plan apathetically: what is the point of stealing off in the night empty-handed, when in a day, or another day, we will be able to cross freely, with at least a bit of our belongings. Yes, the liberators promised and we believed. Tragically, their hope was in vain. For the unfortunate, homeless Jews, the border was not opened, and after a while, they returned to Tomaszow, where inhuman torture awaited them, and suffering which in the end led to gas chambers in that very same Belzec.

My father fell ill in Bayrakh'eh's mill and struggled this way, with suffering and hunger, until he surrendered his holy soul on 18 Adar II 5700 [March 28, 1940] in the presence of my mother and my sister Frieda ה"ד, in Tomaszow. And even though his death appeared to be natural, it was brought about as a direct result of the murderous handling of the Germans. In other words: they murdered him with a lingering death.

Writing these lines, about my father ז"ל, I am not attempting to portray him as an exceptional figure in his milieu: on the contrary, in these lines there will be found yet other people, who like my father, carried on a self-effacing, decent life. People, who like him, bloodied themselves for their livelihood, and literally breathed their love of Israel. Who, like him, shared their sustenance wit the poor: there were times, when properly preparing for the Sabbath became equivalent to parting the Red Sea, but despite this, a guest would often grace his table. He would set aside specific time for Torah study, and he would study for an hour before dawn, every morning. Nothing could take him away from that, and also on the Sabbath, after noon.

May the memory of such shining personalities be a Pillar of Fire in our ongoing saga of life, for the continuation of Jewish identity and spiritual inspiration. Let these very memorial stones awaken in us the feelings of vengeance against the German murderers and their Polish accomplices, for the inhuman torture, for the spilling of innocent blood of such genteel good-hearted people who were the essence of innocence themselves.

My mother, Malka, my sister Frieda Yehudit with her two little children, Shlomo Elazar and Zlata'leh ה"ד, were, in due course, executed in the ovens of Belzec.

It is worth recalling the exceptional good deeds of my mother, ה"ד. In her entire embittered life, he never had any complaint, not to God, and not to humanity. Since the death of her daughter Mal'ya, she never evinced a smile on her face. Silently, and tearfully, she showed a superhuman tolerance for all of her many troubles. She would be the first to arise, very early, and without making noise, opened the store, managed to fit in the recitation of a day's worth of Psalms, between one customer and the next. In this way, she would sneak in one fast day after another, and in the evening, never took anything to eat. She never was cross with my father, despite the fact that he let the soda stand stay unattended on a hot summer day, and had to go off with the *Hevra [Kadisha]* to attend to a deceased person. One could barely discern a hidden form of protest when my mother would, once in a while, hit one of the children. This, it appears, was very difficult for her to do.

For her entire life, she dedicated herself to her children, leaving herself out of the reckoning. This was also the fashion in which she approached dealing with an unexpected guest at a meal, giving away her portion, and allocating an empty plate to herself, so that no one would take note that she had skipped herself. How is it possible that a hand could be found that would raise itself against such a pure human life?

In writing these lines, her persona lives before my eyes. I see her in her shining Sabbaths, as she is serving the table, or in the reading of the portion of the week with a tasteful, resonant intonation, from her *'Teitch Chumash.*,' [119] and also in her sorrowful middle of the week days. I see her in her fallen condition in Bayrakh'eh's mill, her question at that time: "Children, with whom have you left me?" This question flays strips of skin off my flesh to this day. In my imagination, I see her in her starved, exhausted condition, tending my sick father ע"ה and escorting him to his final resting place, with envy that he had already achieved an expiation and was freed from the unclean cannibals. I see her on her last death march to Belzec. I see and hear her imprecations and curses at the murderers, her prayers for the children who might possibly still be alive. Her behest, never to forgive the bestial dogs that have the chutzpah to call themselves 'human beings.'

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119 A Yiddish Translation of the Pentateuch, especially prepared – and favored by – the womenfolk. It also goes by the name *'Tzena U'Re'ena.'*

The recollection of this pure persona, who was my mother, fans the sparks of fiery vengeance against that nation that spawned such unspeakable evil, who in such a gruesome manner, tortured, abused, and robbed millions of innocent and pure mothers of their lives, along with their graceful little children. May the fire of vengeance burn for all eternity in our hearts, and in the hearts of our children, and children's children, so long as even one member of this unworthy people walks on God's [green] earth.



Gut'sheh the Widow

By Rachel Lehrer-Fust

Page 519: Gut'sheh Schwartz

I became closely acquainted with Gut'sheh in the year 1918. This was after the [Great] Fire, when the majority of people were left homeless, me among them. Our house was burned down. We had no place to stay. Anyone who had so much as a little corner to rent out, had it immediately rented out. It was precisely in that critical time, that Gut'sheh rented me a bit of a place.

Gut'sheh had a big house with three windows. A 'Spanish Wall' divided off a bit of space where the kitchen was. The kitchen was near the door. It was through this little kitchen that one entered her living quarters. That is where we lived.

My father, Getz'l Pinia's ע"ה was then in America. My mother Chay' Nekha ע"ה had passed away the year before. Three children remained: Myself, Moshe, and the youngest, Eliyahu Ben Zion, five years old. The little brother was very sick. In Gut'sheh's small kitchen, I saved the life of my little brother.

Gut'sheh was at that time a young woman of thirty-seven years of age. Out of piety, she always wore a kerchief. None of the hair on her head showed through. On her face, a feeling of empathy was manifest for the poor.

Gut'sheh's husband, Meir, was lost in The First World War, and so she had to support herself, and her four small children. Despite this, she found the time to help the needy.

In Gut'sheh's house, under her motherly oversight, we felt like we were in our own home. Despite the fact that it was crowded, we didn't feel it, because of her devotion.

Gut'sheh's goodness garnered her a reputation: she helped the poor, sick and the solitary. Not only did she share her meager food with the poor, but also would share with a shirt, with a garment to cover one's skin.

She would provide assistance clandestinely. If one found out about it, it was through happenstance, because she did not publicize it. By the time something was conveyed, she had already done quite a bit of good. She already knew which people could assist her , in order that she could then help the needy. Not only did she help Jewish people, but she even helped the gentile poor, who were in need.

We children lived with Gut'sheh for two years, until we emigrated to America in 1920. In the course of those two years, I marveled at her refinement and good character.

Years later, I remembered Gut'sheh, and hoped that, once again, I might see her and her children. But, just then, The Second World War came upon us. Gut'sheh lost her daughter Mireh'leh, Mireh'leh's husband, and a child.

Along with the other children, she was flung far into various places, until, finally, along with the children, she arrived in Israel.

When we inquired, we discovered that wherever and everywhere that she went, she manifested her humane character. In Israel, just as in Tomaszow, she helped poor people, and assuaged the pain of the sick.

Esther Gut'sheh Schwartz daughter of R' Yitzhak Hubar passed away in Israel 15 Nissan 5717 [April 16, 1957]. Honor her memory.



R' Tevel ז"ל

By Israel Zilberman
Haifa

When the name, R' Tevel was mentioned, among us in town, everyone knew that this was Tevel the Pious, who sits day-and-night, studying Torah in God's service, in the *shtibl* of R' Yehoshua'leh, or afterwards, in the *Hasidic Bet HaMedrash.*

There were many men named 'Tevel' in the *shtetl,* but if one spoke of R' Tevel, this was the pious R' Tevel, the ascetic. This was how popular this person was, without exception.

To tell the truth, R' Tevel was the complete antithesis of popularity. His entire appearance was one of self-effacement, modesty, retiring, and distancing himself from acclamation as if it were fire. He most certainly would have been happier if he were completely unknown, constantly shrinking himself, and hiding in a corner. He was lower than grass, and weaker than a fly, satisfying himself with a dry piece of bread and water, which were provided to him by good people. He slept his brief slumber next to the stove in R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl.*

R' Tevel's origins were from the simple folk, lacking any family tree of pedigree from Rabbinical families or from *Rebbes.* Rather, he was a scion of a family of tradespeople from the very impoverished little *shtetl* of Jarczow. Also, he assumed his ascetic way of life when he was already the father of several children.

The motivation behind R' Tevel's radical approach was not known, because not every day does it occur that someone abandons one's family, wife and children, and goes off to an unfamiliar city, and assume the life of an ascetic. R' Tevel himself rarely talked about his own person, and in general, spoke very little. This is not to say that he was mean-spirited. Rather, f he were asked, he would answer in a friendly way, and express himself affably. However, he regarded this as lost time: 'The day is short, and there is much work to be done,' and the Gemara awaits, as do the books of tradition, and other sacred writings, and it is necessary to catch up to that which was missed in past years....

Very little is known about R' Tevel's family circumstances, but one thing is certain: that is not the place to search for R' Tevel's fateful decision to vacate his old way of life, and to begin a new one, a rather difficult one, according to our grasp. Of primary importance, he had concluded that everything is, as the Sage of Ecclesiastes said, 'Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.' The sole thing that a man can – and must – do in this world, is only to serve the Master of the Universe and bee concerned with the World to Come.

With is strong will, R' Tevel makes everything possible, to one hundred percent. And once having crossed the threshold int the *shtibl* of R' Yehoshua'leh, he no longer saw Jarczow again. His wife, it would seem, was a Woman of Valor, since she then demonstrated that by herself, she could support and raise the children.

But it was not only in Jarczow. It was also in Tomaszow that R' Tevel was not seen outside the walls of R' Yehoshua'leh's courtyard. R' Yehoshua'leh's courtyard, which consisted of a block, containing a number of dwellings for the family members, a *shtibl* for prayer and study, and also a *Bet HaMedrash,* which was called the *Hasidic Bet HaMedrash,* in order to differentiate it from the large, general *Bet HaMedrash.* The block was surrounded by thick walls made of stones, sunk in, and low, with a dark corridor of sorrowful appearance. In general, it looked like an ossified medieval sanctuary. Such synagogues have been written up

in Sholom Asch's '*Kiddush HaShem*,. Peretz's '*Bei Nacht oyfn Altn Mark*,' or in I. J. Singer's '*Yoshe Kalb*.'

The accommodations exactly suited to the residents. In this *shtibl*, where the walls were covered from ceiling to floor with sacred texts, R' Tevel was the greatest of all the constant studiers, the last to retire, and the first to arise. R' Tevel divided up the hours of the day for the purpose of Torah study, and for prayer. And R' Tevel learned in all of the books, including *Kabbalah*, which the *Hasidim* hold greater, and the *Gemara*, to which the *Mitnagdim* give preference.

R' Tevel did not exhibit any special great intellectual talents. He was not know as such, and did not leave behind any writings. He also did not carry on any discourse with other people who were learning in the *shtibl*, as others were wont to do, this was not his objective. He was not interested in presenting his knowledge, he studied [solely] because the Torah was to be studied, but not for the purpose of becoming a scholar. By contrast, however, he was known as someone who was formidably well-versed, meaning that he recollected a great deal.

On the outside, R' Tevel was an entirely sympathetic man. Of medium height, with a finely formed Greek nose, dark brown eyes, an ashen-white complexion as if he didn't have a drop of blood in him, a unkempt beard, full of tangles. His back was slightly bent from always being seated. He wore a long gray overcoat, which had long ago lost its color, tied around with a sash. He wore a pair of high boots both in summer and winter, and also warm clothing under his overcoat. His head was covered by a velvet Jewish cap, but the velvet was no longer visible. To the extent that I can remember, he never changed his clothing.

As for the women in our city, R' Tevel was the symbol of idleness and uselessness, someone who lacks success, etc. It is possible that this assessment was influenced by the fact that he had abandoned his wife and children, and left them, as they say, on the water, and did not mind. However, I believe, that we, who are born of woman, are not mature enough to completely understand this matter, and we should leave this to The Master of the Universe. Despite the fact that when these very women, when their husbands did not succeed in making a living, or in other aspects of life, they would give him the nickname 'Pious Tevel'eh,' R' Tevel nevertheless remained a noteworthy personality. There is yet much more to write about him. I recall, that about twenty years or so ago, when I had just arrived in the Land of Israel, and visited the Holy City of the Kabbalists, Tzfat. I wandered through the side streets looking for Kabbalists, and my first impression was that Jews like R' Tevel would be hard to find, even in a city of Kabbalists like Tzfat. And that is what I wrote to my parents and others.

And I mean to say that we can be proud of our city which had such a R' Tevel'eh, and also the many, many other personalities that were produced.

Rabbi Dov Ber'l Fershtman הי"ד

By Sh. Licht

Page 524: *Rabbi Dov Ber'l HaKohen Fershtman*

Page 525: *The Frontispiece of the Monthly Journal, 'Unzer Gajst'*

A scion of Tomaszow, his father was R' Moshe Fersht הי"ד, or as he was called at home, Moshe Raphael's, was one of the most respected of the Jewish people. His mother, to be separated for long life, Eidel Fersht, was a very well educated woman from the Friedling family of Zamość[120], [and was] the sister of the rabbis, Zvi Hirsch Friedling of Biskupice, the author of '*HaBe'er*,' and of Yekhiel Friedling, the Rabbi of Zakowiec. Her sister was the last *Rebbetzin* of Rabbi Zvi Yekhezkiel Mikhlsohn, Plonsk, Warsaw. This very same pedigree from his mother's side, helped him a great deal in his career. When he grew up, he went off to his uncle in Biskupice (who was childless), and completed his studies there. He especially derived nourishment from the work of establishing relationships with the broader world, and the work of writing, such that, in the year 5688 [1928], he began publishing a monthly journal for purposes of strengthening Torah [scholarship], called '*Unzer Gajst*.' which initially appeared in Zamość, and afterwards in Warsaw, where, with the assistance of his uncles, the rabbis Mikhlsohn and Friedling, he organized the '*Mitzpei Torah VeHaDat*,' and institution for the dissemination of Torah and *Yiddishkeit*, and a publishing house.

He had also prepared for printing, the book called '*Otzar Hadaranim*,' which contained the summations of the most important rabbis in all of the dispersed communities of World Jewry, that were presented at the first round of completion of the portion in a *Daf Yomi* class.[121]

He was very well known because of his considerable talents. He married the daughter of the Rabbi of Grodzinski in Tarnow, the Holy Man Rabbi Elazar Hurwitz, from the Ropszic family root.

Tragically, his young life was cut short by the German murderers, הי"ד.

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120 The presence of the Friedling family in Zamość, and their noteworthy rabbinical scions, is readily found throughout *The Zamość Memorial Book*.

121 They are called '*Hadaranim*,' (as a plural) because there is an Aramaic statement at the end of each portion of the Talmud that begins with the words, '*Haradan Eylayikh*....' meaning 'We shall return to you....'

The Dornfeld Family

By Leah Dornfeld

R' Yaakov Mordechai Dornfeld ז"ל

Page 526: *Yaakov Mordechai Dornfeld*

Page 527: *The Dornfeld Family*

Those who remember my grandfather, R' Ary'leh Dornfeld, know for sure what kind of a family he raised. He was one of the common Jewish people, God-fearing, and was a good brother to everyone. He was not learned, and supported his family by the labor of his own hands. He sewed and repaired the boots of the Cossacks who were stationed in Tomaszow. One wishes to believe, that when he sat by the study of the Mishna – or learning from *Ein Yaakov*, that he understood the material very well. This is why he raised sons who were scholars and enlightened people. Without a doubt, that if they would have had the means, many of them would have become outstanding personas among the Jewish people.

The younger generation from Tomaszow most certainly recalls my father, R' Yaakov Mordechai Dornfeld. He was practically the first one to organize young people for [*aliyah* to] the Land of Israel, out of which the *HeHalutz, HaShomer*, and *Tze'irei Tzion* later grew. Despite the fact that he was left to support and raise his two young children, who were orphaned, and also was the secretary of the municipal council, yet he found time to devote to the young people.

He gave courses in Tanakh, Hebrew and Yiddish History, and the Geography of the Land of Israel. He spoke a fluent Hebrew. He was so thoroughly familiar with the geography of the Land of Israel, that it was as if he were born there.

There was nothing that could match his love for Israel. My father's single striving, was to make aliyah to Israel, but regrettably he did not succeed to go and settle there. However, he did live to see the establishment of the Jewish State. He died in New York, on 1 Elul 5713 (August 1953)

My Father, R' David Tevel Nat, ה"יד

By Ephraim Fishl Hammer

Page 529: *Tevel Nat and his wife, Rivka*

Why was my father called Tevel'eh *Madior*? Because he married an Hungarian woman (his second wife), and that is why he got the second name added: *Madior.*[122] Well, a nickname in Tomaszow, as was the case in many other small towns of the Poland of those times, was practically an inviolate rule. The people already knew how to assign a name, to one by his trade, such as: Yaakov the Baker, Chaim the Watchmaker, The Dairyman, etc. Many, according to their appearance: The Blind One, Yoss'l the Deaf One, The Hunchback, The Crooked Head, and others, according to their standing or nature, for example: The King, The Pious Tevel, and once someone was tagged with a nickname, not only he, but his children were stuck with it.

My father was, actually, not native born to Tomaszow, but rather from Laszczow. He came as a son-in-law to Tomaszow. For a while, he also lived in the village of Rachanie, and for this reason, he was called Tevel'eh *Rachaner.* Our house in Rachanie stood at the splitting of the road in four directions, and as a result, our house was a way station. Many Jews would travel through every day of every week, some going to a market fair, others for commerce. Almost all of them would stop by us. My mother, Chana ע"ה despite her frail health (my mother died at age 27) attended to everyone by herself. No guest ever left hungry, whether they paid, or even those poor people who had to be given something to take along on their travels. My grandfather once told that he remembered that his grandfather did not speak Yiddish, but [rather] Spanish mixed with Hebrew, and that the family was descended from Sephardic Jews who came from Portugal to Poland, and that the family [name] was Don NAD. 'Don' is a noble title, like 'Sir' in English. However, in wandering from land to land, the name was ;lost, and the only thing that remained was the name, 'Nat.'

The peasants burned our house down in Rachanie on a Saturday night, and we barely got out with our lives. Only the Sabbath Cholent was not burned, which was inside the oven that remained intact through the fire. We were left naked and barefoot.

The Russo-Japanese War breaks out, and my father, being a reservist, flees to America, where he stays for six years. My mother dies, and my father marries an Hungarian woman, and comes home with her to Tomaszow, before the First World War. My stepmother, Rivka ה"יד was a modest woman, good and possessed of good qualities, just like my own mother, and was very good to me, so that I could not ask for anything better. The neighbors had only good things o say about her.

My father was a completely God-fearing man, a man of integrity and simplicity, and wanted for me, his only child to be the same.

I was with my father for only a few years. Already, at the age of three years, I was sent off to my grandfather in Tomaszow, because a young boy of three was already supposed to be able to go to *Heder* to learn. I came home to Rochon only for the Sabbath.

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122 One might surmise this to be a Yiddish elision of the word, Magyar.

Well, for the six years that my father was in America, I was also at my grandfather's. From Bar Mitzvah to age 17 I sat and learned in R' Nachman's *shtibl*, and also in R' Yehoshua'leh's *Bet HaMedrash*. By the age of 17, I was already in Lemberg, and afterwards emigrated to America.

People who knew my father, and did business with him, have only praises to sing of his honesty. This was especially true of the *landsleit* who came to America after The Second World War, who had only good things to tell me about my father. He transformed his home into a guest house, and took in impoverished itinerants.

From my father's last letters to me, he had a great interest in making aliyah and establishing residence in the Land of Israel. However, he was overtaken by the Dark Catastrophe which put an end to his dream. The Nazi beasts ימ"ש immediately transported my father, and my good stepmother, along with all the other elderly Jews of Tomaszow, straight to Belzec and murdered and incinerated them. הי"ד

My Grandfather and Grandmother ז"ל

By Ephraim Fishl Hammer

Page 532: R' Chaim Yochanan, his wife Feiga, and their son, Ahar'tcheh

My grandfather was named R' Chaim Yochanan Sobel, but only, the letter-carrier knew the name Sobel, because everyone called him R' Chaim Yochanan. My grandmother was named Feiga, but she was called *Die Chaim Yochan'teh.* An me, the writer of these lines, was called Fishl, Chaim Yochanan's grandson. As was the practice, this was the way many families were addressed in all of the little towns in Poland, and it was only the very few that were addressed by their family names, such as Goldstein, Szparer, Lehrer, etc. When I came to my grandfather and grandmother's home as a young orphan, they were already at an advanced age. My grandfather was a handsome man, of distinguished appearance, with a good-looking white beard, a tall man of distinguished appearance, a smiling man, much beloved by old and young alike. I never saw him angry. He prayed at the Great Synagogue where he was always among the first of the worshipers. I never saw when he got out of be., No matter how early I would get up, my grandfather was already at the *Bet HaMedrash*, or the Synagogue. The sweet-sounding melody, of his recitation of the Psalms, rings in my ears to this day.

My grandfather would tell that his grandfather told him that according to his calculations, the family resided in Tomaszow since the time the town was established.

My grandfather was not any *Rebbe's Hasid*, however, when a *Rebbe* would come to the city, he was among the first who would hasten to greet the *Rebbe.* 'I am a *Hasid* of The Master of the Universe,' he would say.

The Sobel family grew into many large families. The Herbstman family is descended from my grandfather's sister, known as Tzip'eh the Park Baker. The sam is true of the Fang, Baum and Greenbaum families, and a number of other families that were added after my departure fro, Tomaszow.

My grandmother Feiga ע"ה, as it became known to me later, when I was a grown boy, and had left home in Lemberg (Galicia), that my grandmother was a favored daughter, a 'granddaughter.' She came form the family of R' Simcha Bunim of Przysucha זצ"ל. When I was still a little boy, she would tell me many stories about her prominent grandfather that her father would tell her, and also about R' Mendele Tomashover זצ"ל (the *Rebbe* of Kotzk) who was a son-in-law who came to Tomaszow, and also lived in Tomaszow, until he was revealed to the world, and then took up residence in Kotzk, closer to Warsaw. 'The Pharmacist' would occasionally quip to my grandfather ' How can a pharmacist become a *Rebbe*?' – 'Here you see that, indeed, a pharmacist became a great *Rebbe.*?' My grandmother replied immediately. As was known, that before R' Simcha Bunim זצ"ל was revealed as the *Tzaddik* of Pszczew, he was a merchant, a writer and also a pharmacist, up to the time that the *Hasidim* appointed him as their Leader, known as the *Rebbe* of Pszczew R' Simcha Bunim. My grandmother Feiga was a chaste woman, fasting on all appointed days, Mondays and Thursdays, and the fast days associated with the destruction of the Temple; the Yahrzeit days of parents and those of her children that passed away while still young, and also every eve of a new month. 'Fasting is for me only, grandmother would say, ' but poor people need to eat, poor children need to have a piece of clothing, a shoe,' It was to this purpose that she, and one of her friends would go around every Thursday, to the stores and homes, gathering donations, and immediately distribute these funds to poor people for the

[coming] Sabbath. She knew the Psalms and prayers practically by heart (she had very bad eyes). I would always be hearing her praying, or reciting the Psalms.

My grandfather R' Chaim Yochanan and grandmother Feiga attained a venerable old age. Following my grandfather's funeral procession, was an orphaned son, age 72 years. Their children in America supported them with dignity till the last days of their lives.

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.



My Unforgettable Friends

By Y. Liebowitz

Moshe Szparer

Born in 5648 (1885) in Tarnogrod, his father Abraham was a scion of Tomaszow from one of the deeply rooted old Jewish families in Tomaszow, a brother of Mordechai Joseph and Pinchas Szparer and Pearl Szpizajzen, the wife of Sholom.

Abraham died at a very young age, and his wife, Gitt'l, of the Goldbaum family remained solitary and impoverished with her small children, who were taken into the house of the *Rebbe* of Sieniawa, R' Yekhezkiel Halberstam, because they were relatives. His father, [author of] the *Divrei Chaim*, of Sanz, was also from Tarnogrod, and closely related to the Goldblum family, and it was there that Moshe was raised.

Moshe married his wife, Chana, the daughter of Wolf Lieberman (Madiner). Moshe immediately began to do business in wood products, in partnership with his father-in-law, Moshe Lieberman, and they succeeded. In later years, together with other partners, they bought out Blonder's factory, and became substantially wealthy.

Moshe was a Radzyn *Hasid*, and one of the most prominent of the balebatim in the city. He was a very quiet man, and never wanted to mix into community affairs, but rather generously partook of every possibility of doing a good deed. He was a very smart and calm individual, and many people came to seek his counsel.

At the outbreak of the war, he and his family went off to Rawa Ruska, and from their, along with his entire family, he was sent away to Siberia. After the liberation, because of the amnesty (in accordance with the agreement of the Sikorski government in exile), he lived in Biysk. His home was open to its fullest extent to all those who found themselves in need.

Moshe died in Germany after the war. His wife, Chana, ע"ה with her children Pearl Esther, Herschel and Chanina, live in Brooklyn.

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Mihkl Reis

He was born in Tomaszow in 5648 (1888), studies at the *shtibl*, married Feiga Shayndl, the daughter of Aharon Woldman of Hrubieszow, of the prominent *Hasidim*. As was the custom in those years, he was subsidized by his father-in-law for a number of years, until he was drafted into the military, where he was designated as 'fit for duty.' He was required to serve three years in the Russian military in Jaroslawl. During that entire time, he strictly avoided forbidden foods, and was discharged in the year 1913. Because of the severe economic conditions, he went to America. In the meantime, The First World War broke out, and he remained there [sic: in America] until after the War. Not wanting to bring the family to America because of *Yiddishkeit* for the children, he came back to Tomaszow, and opened a shoe store, which was mostly run by his wife, a true *Woman of Valor*, while he himself took up hospital work in Warsaw.

Merchants accorded him the greatest sense of trust, because he always met his commitments faithfully. His word was honest, and his dealings correct. Even the non-Jews dealt with him, especially the pharmacist

Franko who was a business partner of his.

Mikhl was a Belz *Hasid,* and Torah scholar. When he only had time, he would study Mishna, a Hasidic exposition, a Hasidic book. He never wanted to socialize, or get involved in community business. An exception to this was the *Agudah Heder*, and *Beyt Yaakov*, where his children studied. There, he was a member of the leadership, and the Treasurer, because his entire striving in life was to have Jewishly educated children. Because of this, he worked a great deal to help in the assurance of the existence of religious institutions.

The *Rebbes* of the Belz dynasty would have guest lodging at his home, such as the *Rebbe,* R' Pinchas Twersky, the *Rebbe* of Usytyl, *Rebbe* Nahum Rokeach, the *Rebbe* of Magierow, and others.

At the outbreak of the War, they were flung to Kovel', and later sent to Ural, and after that, Central Asia, where he lost his wife. In 1946, he returned with his family to Poland, from there to Germany, and afterwards to America.

His oldest daughter, along with her husband and children, died in Kovel'. His children Hirsch and Asher, who are active in the Yizkor Book Committee, and take part in the Tomaszow Relief, and the daughters Toba and Chana, with their families, live in Brooklyn. His Yahrzeit is 25 Shevat.

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Henikh Koch

His full name was Henokh Henikh ben R' Shlomo Koch. He was born in Zamość.[123] His father was a Radzyn *Hasid*, and he married the daughter of Mordechai Joseph Wertman (The Dairyman) who was one of the closest of the adherents of R' Yehoshua'leh and took him along to Sanz, and afterwards to Sieniawa and Cieszanow.

Reb Mordechai Joseph was a fiery Jew, with the true ardor for Yiddishkeit. When a certain Maiman from among the Zamość *Maskilim*, who lived in Tomaszow, organized a library, R' Mordechai Joseph forcefully entered the city *Bet HaMedrash* with a loud alarm, proclaiming, '*There is a Fire!!!*' The congregation became frightened. He shouted out that it is not wood that is burning, but rather Jewish souls. '*Come to the rescue before your homes are exterminated by the library.*' Afterwards, he entered the library with another couple of Jews, and destroyed it. When the windows of the library were later knocked out, he said it was proper to do this, so long as the fire was extinguished....

Henikh Koch received his schooling at the home of his father-in-law, and indeed, he too, was a warm Jewish man, full of joy and ardor. He would make merry at every Festival holiday and Purim. He would solicit funds for Jewish causes, took home guests for the Sabbath many time more than his financial circumstances might otherwise allow.

He had a long, large beard, and when the Hallerists entered Tomaszow in 1919, he risked his life not to cut off his beard. Also, in the time of the Germans, he was the solitary Jew who remained in the city with a beard.

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123 A 'Koch' family is referenced in *The Zamość Memorial Book*.

He died in the home of Shlomo Akst, while studying a book. His wife, and his daughter Yuta were killed by the Germans in Lemberg, Leibusz by the Russians. Yitzhak and Chana survived, and they live in Brooklyn.



Hertz Feldsehn

The son of Aharon Feldsehn, a Husyatin *Hasid.*

He was a partner with his brother-in-law, Yisroel'keh Lehrman, and were the wealthiest people in the city. Despite this, he remained a man of the people, not putting on airs, rather, opting for simplicity, helping those who were in need, one with a donation, another with an act of charity.

Because of his health situation, he did not take part in community affairs. The exception was the *Agudah Heder*, *Yosdei Torah*, where his children were schooled, and where he was one of the foremost leaders. He gave much financially to assure the existence of the *Heder.*

He suffered from hear trouble, and died at a young age, in Lemberg.

His wife, and daughter Malka, were killed by the Germans. Itcheh remained in Russia, and Jonah and his family are to be found in Brooklyn. Jonah is one of the organizers and leaders of the Relief Committee.



To the Memory of My Acquaintances

By Sh. Khanowich

Moshe Weissleder

Or as he was known, by the name 'Dark Moshe. [He was] a religious Jew who wore the authentic costume, and [had the] authentic appearance, but had an understanding of the demands of the new era. He was a merchant and an honest man to the extreme, a truthful man, who unhesitatingly confronted everyone face-to-face, with the truth.

Along with his family, he rescued himself by going to Russia, and then making Aliyah to Israel, together with his family, where he passed away. His children are found in New York: Yehoshua, Mir'l, Feiga, Shlomo, and their families who play an important part in the activities of the organization of new arrivals.

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Elazar Ader

[He was] a scion of one of the oldest and most respected of the Tomaszow families from generation to generation. He would travel to the *Maggid* of Trisk, and later to the '*Divrei Yekhezkiel*' of Sieniawa, and his son, '*Divrei Simcha*' of Cieszanow. He worshiped in the *shtibl* of R' Yehoshua'leh, and led the *Musaf* services there on the High Holy Days. He was a Hasidic Jew with a very good voice. He had a very large family, and part of his children assumed the leadership of the Jewish community. His son, Yud'l Ader possessed great wealth from a partnership in a factory. [He was] one of the principal leaders of the *Hevra Kadisha,* and a *Dozor* of the Jewish populace. The second son, Moshe'leh, was one of the prominent *balebatim,* and a Hasidic Jew. His son-in-law Avrem'eleh Gutwein, who is a Trisk *Hasid,* is today found in the Land of Israel. His son-in-law Raphael Bergstein who was one of the wealthy *Hasidim* of the city, a partner in a large factory, was killed in Zlakowo together with his son Avrem'eleh and family. His sons Yeshay' and Ber'l survived; Elazar's sons Yitzhak Mordechai of Warsaw and Yekhezkiel of Tomaszow were killed.

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Abraham Sztajnworcel

He was called Abraham *Nagid.* He received the nickname '*Nagid*' [sic: A nobleman] when he won a lottery back in the Czar's time, and overnight became rich. He opened a printing shop and bought a large beautiful house on the Lemberg *Gasse.* Dr. Shulman lived at his residence. He was a Hasidic Jew, and knew Russian and Polish. He was a beautiful writer. In Poland, he specialized in notes and wrote applications from which he made a living. He, and his entire family were killed in the vicinity of Tarnopol.

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Yaakov Arbesfeld

His father, Itcheh'leh, son of Munya, was one of the ardent Hasidim of Belz, and as such, he gave Yaak'eleh a very strict religious and Hasidic upbringing. However, the new winds, that The First World War brought with it, tore him away from his circle, and he went over to the 'Mizrahi,' where he became one of its most loyal soldiers, and afterwards, one of its leaders. He especially dedicated himself to Mizrahi education, and it is to his account that one can lay the success of the Mizrahi *Heder* in Tomaszow. As a teacher and principal, he put his mind and energy into [assuring] the existence and success of the Mizrahi Heder, which grew in strength day to day.

He would take part, as the representative of Mizrahi in municipal institutions, but he was not an aggressive party individual. By his general nature, he was a quiet individual, a gentle person, and this is the way he was in the party. Tragically, along with his entire family, he was killed by the Germans.



Dr. Shulman

He was a physician who came from Lemberg, and was the first Jewish doctor in the city since Poland became independent, and as such he became beloved in the city. He did not belong to any political party, and was not active in the community, however he loved to make a handsome contribution. He was dedicated to his profession.

He was mobilized into the Polish Army and fell into Russian captivity and was killed in the well-known Katyn Forest.[124]



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[124] Katyn Forest is a wooded area near Gneizdovo village, a short distance from Smolensk in Russia where, in 1940 on Stalin's orders, the NKVD shot and buried over 4000 Polish service personnel that had been taken prisoner when the Soviet Union invaded Poland in September 1939 in WW2 in support of the Nazis. This number includes some 300 doctors.

In 1989, with the collapse of Soviet Power, Gorbachev finally admitted that the Soviet NKVD had executed the Poles, and confirmed two other burial sites similar to the site at Katyn. Stalin's order of March 1940 to execute by shooting some 25,700 Poles, including those found at the three sites, was also disclosed with the collapse of Soviet Power. This particular Second World War slaughter of Poles is often referred to as the "Katyn Massacre" or the "Katyn Forest Massacre".

Shabtai – Good Morning to You

By Sh. L.

R' Shabtai was descended from a very respected family. Personally, he was a lettered and intelligent man, with very refined manners. He would greet everyone with a hearty good morning, accompanied by an affectionate nod of the head. However, he was not especially successful in business. Several times, he put his place of business under, and somehow he was not capable in this respect. He was always nicely dressed, and never complained to anyone. Nevertheless, he elicited sympathy towards himself. A little at a time, he worked his way into the mind of community as an unsuccessful person (God forbid this to us). Regardless of what he engaged in, it always went bad. This reputation grew so widespread, that people believed that he interfered with the success of everyone with whom he came in contact. It got to the point where people were afraid to accept his 'good morning' greeting. People simply avoided him, because it was believed that after receiving a 'good morning' greeting, from R' Shabtai, the day would not be a fortunate one. Towards the end, he had a small store in the Halles, as many others did, and as it happens, he was not the poorest of them. Despite this, he was very indebted to the people of the city. It got to the point that when one person wanted to incite another, he would curse him by saying: 'R' Shabtai should only come in your direction.' Despite all this, he was very much beloved by everyone.

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Advocat Mandeltort

He was a young man from Zamość,[125] who practiced law in Tomaszow. He, too, did not get involved in community affairs, but rather dedicated himself to his calling, but he had nationalist sympathies.

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Itcheh Bernstein

The son of Elazar Bernstein, who considered themselves relatives of the Radzyn and Izbica coterie. In his youth, he was a Hasidic young man, and married into a genuine Hasidic family in Lublin. He even put on a *shtrymel* for the wedding. However, the new movement of The First World War transformed him into a cosmopolitan young man. He also became one of the substantially wealthy people in the city. He owned a clothing store that was one of the largest in the vicinity. He was also one of the Zionist leaders and the first representative to the municipal Jewish governing body, however, his temperament was not that of a political partisan. He would partake in all of the Jewish social institutions through generous contributions. His chaste wife, Min'cheleh, who died at a young age, helped him a great deal, and transformed his house into an aristocratic house, and also exerted herself to preserve her spiritual legacy, despite the fact that their children attended gymnasium, they were of the modern religious persuasion. Their oldest daughter Baylah, became the daughter-in-law of Yaakov Lederkremmer, one of the respected people of the city. Tragically, none of them survived, only his former son-in-law: Yitzhak Lederkremmer.

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125 The Mandeltort family is referenced in *The Zamość. Memorial Book*.

Eli' Shtruzler

He was a man of the [common] people, a master builder, a very good craftsman and a wise and decent man. He studies only minimally as a youth, but he possessed an inborn intelligence and self-education. He was one of the most important activists in the Manual Trades Union, and was recognized and beloved in all circles and walks of life in the city, as a decent, righteous and upstanding man who is worthy of respect.

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Ary' Levenfus

He worked, as an employee in the city council, during the first years of Poland's [newly-found] independence. From the time of the election of the new independent Jewish community, he served as its secretary, where he held that position until Poland was dismembered [sic: in 1939]. He was one of the leaders of the Zionist movement in the city.

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Yekhezkiel Kaffenbaum

A carpenter by trade, and a typical craftsman of the period, with a beard and side locks, an observer of the Torah and its commandments. He was one of the most important representatives of the Manual Trades Union in the city's social institutions.

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Eliezer Dorenfeld

Secretary of the municipal council (a position that was one of the few in Poland which was occupied by a Jew). At the time of the establishment of Poland, this position was occupied by Yaak'leh Dorenfeld. He immediately went to America, and [as a result] he [Eliezer] took it over, and held the position until shortly before the War, when because of the politics of the AZAN, he was cashiered. His son, Leib'l, was killed by a German bomb on that Bloody Thursday. He, and his family, went away to Rawa Ruska, where they were killed.

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Fyvel Holtz

A founder, and one of the principal leaders of the *Poalei Tzion* movement in the Tomaszow area.

He was born in 1894 in Tomaszow, to parents from an observant family of *balebatim*. He received a strict religious upbringing, studying in private religious *Heders*, as was the practice in that era. By the end of The First World War, he was one of the first pioneers to disseminate the Zionist concept among the awakening Jewish youth. And it was with the total fire of his young, full and roiling soul, that he threw himself into the

ideological work and founded the *Poalei Tzion* movement, and remained one of its dynamic leaders to the last day.

The party always pushed him out in front, to partake as its legitimate representative in all community and social institutions, where he distinguished himself as a representative to the municipal council where he was respected also by the non-Jewish councilmen.

He was regarded as his party's ideologue in the city. He would often appear to give an ideological speech. In this his acuity and sparkling thoughts were of considerable help to him, to interdict opposing speakers, which in the years of trial and stress, occupied a major place in the activities of Jewish youth, in the provincial towns.

He committed his force, blood, mind and full energy, for the party, for which he was very highly regarded.

During the German occupation, a couple of days after Rosh Hashana of 5700 [1939], the Germans took Fyvel and his two sons, and Yuda Goldman's two sons, Leibusz Berik's son-in-law, and Lipa'leh Kershiver, etc., into custody. They led them out of the city along the Belzec road, and regrettably, they never came back. The circumstances under which they were killed by the Germans is not known ה"ד.



Abraham Yitzhak Blonder

A prominent Jew who was the son-in-law of R' Israel Sinai, and one of the activists who was a community representative to the Jewish council, and a community activist. He succeeded during The First World War, and built up the factory that was known up to the Holocaust as 'Blonder's Factory.'

His son, Moshe, today in Israel, was one of the revisionist activists, and their representative to the community. He remains a community activist to this day.



The City Elders

By Sh. Licht

Old Heschel

This the way R' Abraham Yehoshua Heschel Schlagbaum was called, who had the name of the Rabbi of Opatów who was a lover of Israel. He was a taciturn and respected Jewish man. He would travel to the *Rebbe* of Neszczyn R' Itzik'l and to the venerable older *Maggid* of Trisk, and afterwards to the *Rebbe* of Kuzmir, R' Mordechai'leh.

He had two sons. R' Shmuel, whose children today are found in Israel, and in America, Daniel Schlagbaum, and Yaakl'i Schlagbaum, with the son, Yitzhak Schlagbaum, who are located in Toronto. They were among the important Hasidim of Kielce, and prominent *balebatim* of the city.

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Old Yaak'leh

Or as he was called, Yaak'leh Brafman, of the Radzyn Hasidim. He, already, would read the Yiddish periodicals, and take an interest in the news of the world. His children had a saloon on the Koscielna [Gasse] and were prominent *balebatim.*

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Old Shmuel Mikhl'eh's (Bodenstein)

He was a Belz *Hasid,* who despite his very advanced age, still voyaged to Belz, in his nineties, by wagon. His son, Mekhl'eh was killed on the Eve of Sukkot by an electrical storm, and the youngest, Isaac is in New York.

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A Headstone for Acquaintances and Friends

By Sh. Licht

Page 546: Alter Stahl and His Wife, Sima

Alter Stahl

One of the prominent *balebatim,* a Belz *Hasid,* and fishmonger. He was involved in community affairs, a member of the Talmud Torah Committee, a representative of the Agudah in the City Council. He was enamored of doing people a good turn, and would lend to other Jews gratuitously, for which he kept a separate account.

Many *Rebbes* took their lodging with him, especially the Belz Dynasty, such as the Rebbes of Magierow, R' Ary' Leibusz Rokeach of Rawa Ruska and his son, the Rebbe Nahum Aharon of Lemberg. He was one of the prominent Jewish people of the city, and also very close to the Hasidim of Cieszanow. His son, Ozer, who belonged to the '*Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael,*' is found today, with his family, in Haifa, in Israel.

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R' Nathan Neu

He was from the elite of the city, a scholar and perceptive man, who was very wealthy and philanthropic. He was a Ger Hasid, and a relative of the *Rebbe* of Kotzk. All of his children were scholars and studious. He was the source of nourishment for the entire city.



Shmuel Lubert

He was born in Brisk, and was a son-in-law to Nathan Neu. He was a Jewish man with a sharp mind, a considerable scholar, and a Ger *Hasid.* After the First World War, he became impoverished, but despite this, remained an active leader in the *Agudah.*

When the Novardok Yeshiva came to the city, he pursued them, until he expelled them. He was asked: How can it be, why? To this, he replied: Because they are *Litvaks,* and a *Litvak* carries a crucifix in his heart. – [He was asked] R' Shmuel, from where do you come to know this? To this, he replied: I am a *Litvak* myself, and so I know it to be so first hand....



Eli' Chaim Gershon's

A very lofty Belz Hasid, someone who engages in good deeds and pursues justice. He was among the very few important people in the city. He was a big fanatic, who fought against every minor deviation from the Jewish path or tradition. He was a great man of deeds, and was respected by the entire city.



Mendele Tepler

A Ger *Hasid,* who spent the entire week praying and who studied in the Great *Bet HaMedrash.* He was the principal provider for the acquisition of books, and a very lovely man. His smile constantly shone on his face. His wife, Rachel was the mistress of the house, and the principal merchant, and he occupied himself with Torah and charitable works. He was an unusual man of good deeds, never participating in any quarrel, or politics in the city.

His sons, Gedali' Sholom and Yisroel'keh were respected Hasidic *balebatim,* who followed in their father's footsteps. Thanking God, their children survived and they can be found in America and in Israel, and they occupy a respected position among the survivors from Tomaszow.



Dud'l Goldstein

One of the Husyatin *Hasidim.* A very respected and decent man. He was successful in commerce, and had very talented children, and married them off to rabbinical families and prominent Jewish families in the

country, procuring refined sons and daughters-in-law. His children and grandchildren were among the finest people in the city, wealthy and Hasidim, people involved in the community and people of action. His sons [were]: Yeshay' Yaak'li, Yisrael Hirsch, and to be set apart for long life, R' Baruch Goldstein, a Jewish man who was a scholar, a Hasid, and a wondrous soulful leader of religious services. [He lives today] in Brooklyn, and R' Nathan in Israel.

His sons-in-law: Ary' Heller, a son of the Rebbe of Frampol, Lipa Honigsfeld, a student of the *Ilui* of Macew, and himself a great scholar, Mott'l Hochman, a scholarly Jew, and Yaakov Weisser. There children, also, were among the most respected of the *balebatim.* Among them are the familiar R' Chaim Joseph Lehrer, the well-to-do longtime Mizrahi activist, and past president of the community, today in Israel. A portion of their grandchildren were saved, and find themselves in America and Israel.

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Reuveh'leh Chay'tcheh's (Gartler)

A Jewish man who worked very hard to make a living, but worked even harder in *Yiddishkeit.* He would rise each day before dawn, and go to R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl* to pray and to study. He was a Jew who was contented with his lot. He threw his entire energy into raising his children, in the contemporary Hasidic tradition. And this, indeed, worked out well for him. His two sins, David and Yitzhak Gartler, were young folk deeply steeped in the *Hasidic* tradition, as Cieszanow *Hasidim*, with a genuine *Hasidic* ardor, which meant that apart from studying and *Hasidism*, nothing else interested them. The already had young boys as children, sprouting like flowers, who studied continuously in the Sanz Synagogue. Tragically, not one of them was saved.

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Pesach Putter

He had a small food business, but he dedicated little of himself to it. It was his wife, Yehudit, who concerned herself with making a living, and later his children. He traveled to Sieniawa to the '*Divrei Yekhezkiel,*' and he would reside there for months at a time, and later, he would do the same in Cieszanow, to the author of '*Divrei Simcha.*' During the time that he was at home, mostly he spent with Righteous Rabbi R;'Yehoshua'leh and his son, R' Joseph Leibusz ז"ל, and he went after money only in connection with Jewish matters. He was the personification of goodness. His two laughing black eyes shined like those of a young boy. He was a Jewish man of good deeds who was always involved with Torah and worship. On his children, part are in America, and part are in Israel.

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Yisroel'keh Lehrman

A Jewish man from among the *balebatim*, a Belz *Hasid*, full of energy and native intelligence, with a warm, Jewish heart. He, and his brother-in-law, Hertz Feldsehn, whose sister Yakhid (Yocheved?), was Yisroel'keh's wife, were among the wealthiest people in the city. The succeeded very well during the First World War. They had the biggest colonial business in the entire province, as well as building together [in partnership], the mill in Belzec with Birkh [sic: Bayrakh} Kessler.

Despite his considerable wealth, Yisroel'keh remained a simple Jewish man of the people. He maintained a good fraternal relationship with everyone. He always liked a clever saying, even if he was prompted with one. The important thing, was the comment needed to be sharp and to the point....

He did not want to assume any official positions, which understandably, were presented for him to consider. He detested mixing in groups. However, he had a profound understanding for individual cases of need, personally helping out a fellow Jew with a handsome donation, or a special consideration.

He fell suddenly ill as a result of a stroke. The first thing he did, was to order that all assets he had taken as security were to be returned without charge. When the *Rebbe* of Cieszanow came to call on him while he was sick, he cried: *Rebbe,* pray that I shall live, and not die – I want to continue to live, because people will yet stand to benefit from my living. However, regrettably, he died in his early fifties.

His children were saved from the Holocaust: Pesha, and her husband Hirsch Melech Glantzer, with their children Shlomo'leh and Jonah who in his early twenties, left his father's fortune behind, and went to the Land of Israel as a Halutz, is today in America. The youngest, Shmuel, saved himself from the Germans by escaping into the forests, and is today in Vineland [New Jersey] in America.

Yisroel'keh Lehrman was quite the person in Tomaszow, and everyone intensely mourned his early demise. The entire city accompanied his remains during his funeral, as well as many people who came especially from the surrounding areas to pay their last respects.

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Anshel Szur

He was born and raised in Tomaszow. From his earliest years, he had an inclination to oratory. He would ascend the speaking podium of the shtibl, wrap himself in a prayer shawl, and expound in the authentic tone and style of a *Maggid.* He would say, to his childhood friend, Mikhl Yuda Pflug, 'when I wrap myself in a prayer shawl, I see, in my fantasy, a house of worship, or a *Bet HaMedrash,* packed with hundreds of listeners.'

The boys would throw towels at him, but this did not restrain him from developing proficiency in his oratory, as if some inner impulse impelled him to the *Bima.* He did not grow up to be a particularly impressive scholar, but oratorical skill manifested itself in him. In general, he was quite handsome, tall, and a very solidly built man. In America this would be called a 'personality.' He married [a woman from] Bilgoraj.

With the outbreak of The First World War, he went off deep into Russia, where he became active in the various societies for providing assistance to displaced persons. It was there, that he came in contact with the modern Jewish world, from which he learned modern rhetorical skills. In him, was created a synthesis of the motif of the *Maggid* and [modern] orator, perhaps better described as a 'modern *Maggid.*' He did not become a 'journeyman *Maggid,*' but rather a propagandist for the Agudah, who paid him a steady sinecure to travel around to the small Polish towns, to organize branches of the Agudah. Later on, he became the official emissary of the '*Mesivta*' in Warsaw. Who was sent abroad to raise money. Later on, he traveled in this way, on behalf of other institutions. He was, by that time, referred to as the Rabbi, Anshel Szur. He always had great success from the speaker's platform.

In a private conversation, he said that for this, he was grateful to the podium of the shtibl in Tomaszow, with the young lads, despite the fact that they threw towels at him...

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Eliezer Bergenbaum

He was a deeply rooted Tomaszow scion, going back many generations, wealthy, a philanthropist, and one of the most respected of the *balebatim* of the city. He was among the numbered few important people in the city that was not affiliated with any *Hasidic shtibl*. He worshiped at the Great Bet HaMedrash, but took place in every worth event that was carried out by the other houses of worship. He was a very quiet man, one of the greatest grain merchants in the area. He was an aristocratic man, and he had children who became important.

His son-in-law is the well-known community activist, and long-time president of the community, Mr. Shmuel Shiflinger. He, together with his brother-in-law, Yaakov Bergenbaum, and their children, are to be found in America.

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Shtibl Youth

By Sh. Licht

Mott'l Fish

He was the son of Moshe Lehrer's, who was the *Shames* and Alternate Cantor in the Great Synagogue. R' Moshe Lehrer's was a gentle Jewish man, and had dear children. His son, Mott'l, was especially gifted. He was smart and handsome, with a sharp mind, a dedicated student and *Hasid*. He studied in R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*, and was one of the members of the guard of the *Rebbe* of Cieszanow. He was counted among the best of the young men. He was married in Karczyn, where he occupied an important position in community life. It was there that he was exterminated along with his entire family.

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Yekhezkiel'i Zekhari[ah]'s

The son of Zekhariah, and the son-in-law of Shlomo Akst. He was one of the few of those numbered young men who remained true to the ways of the Torah and *Hasidism*, after the First World War, not being influenced by al the new 'solutions' and winds that blew in, even into his household, where his sister Gitt'leh was a fiery Zionist (the wife of Fishl Flaumenbaum). He was one of the most important of the trained *Hasidic* young men in R' Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl*, and very directed. After his wedding, he worshiped at the Cieszanow shtibl, where he was counted as one of the most important of the young people.

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Yoss'li Gelber

Page 553: Little Yoss'li; his Mother and Two Sisters

When Little Yoss'li was already a grown young man, with whiskers, and among the most prominent of the young men in R' Yehoshua'leh's shtibl, he was still called 'Little Yoss'li,' because he was, indeed, short, and of small physical stature, but great in his deeds and actions. He was a great scholar, a great Hasid, who was God-fearing.

Born to poor parents, he never had enough to eat. But in the same way, he was unsatiated in Torah study. No mater how much he studied, it was insufficient for him. He literally swallowed whole pages of the *Gemara*. The balebatim in R' Yehoshua'leh's shtibl donated meals for him on a daily basis, and he grew, not physically, but spiritually. He would slake his Hasidic thirst at the Tisch and the worship services of the *Rebbe* of Cieszanow, as he would also periodically travel to Belz. He married in Karczyn in Galicia, where he was exterminated with his entire family.

Sinai Friedlander

By Leah Hertzig
Toronto

One of the Scholarly Young Men of the City

Born into a prominent, but poor home. On his father's side - a close grandson to the Rabbi & *Gaon* the Righteous Rabbi Leibusz *Harif*, known as the Rabbi of Plotsk זצ"ל.

From childhood on, he demonstrated a penchant for study. In the first yeshiva, he stood out as one of the best students of R' Nathan Melamed, at the great municipal examination that took place at the completion of a tractate of the Talmud [e.g. a *Siyyum*].

In those few years, of The First World War, when education almost entirely came to a halt, he threw himself with equal focus into the modern Yiddish literature. He almost is reckoned as someone 'lost' by his parents, meaning that he has strayed from the true path. However, he finds his way back to the study of Torah, and becomes one of the most profound of the *Hasidic* young men, which, towards the end, could only be encountered rarely. His piety and adherence to *Hasidism*, distance him from the seething environment around him. His place is always in the shtibl of R' Yehoshua'leh, by a *Gemara* or by a book. He also helps out in the soda business run by his parents. By nature, he is mostly a well-tempered individual. I do not know of any instance in his life when he ever got into a argument with anyone. In general, he was someone who did good deeds, and went out of his way for everyone.

He married into a more prominent family from Tyszowce, (his father-in-law R' Elazar Lerner, was a scholar), where he took up residence. In Tyszowce as well, one can find him in the *Bet HaMedrash* beside a *Gemara*.

In the time of the Hitler occupation, he leaves his wife Chava'leh and his little daughter in Tyszowce, and he flees to Rawa [Ruska] to the Russians. From there he is sent away to the far north, where the toes of his feet are frozen off, in the forests of Archangelsk, at work.

After the liberation from exile, he comes to the Shymkent region, in Central Asia, in a weakened state, to the town of Lenger, where he expires in the hands of his older sister, Rekhil, on 2 MarHeshvan 5702 [October 23, 1941].

The collective farm where he worked, allocated four lengths of earth for his interment, where he lies, thousands of miles from his birthplace, and those of his kin that survived.

When the Day of Vengeance arrives, let this young life, cut off prematurely, also enter into the reckoning.

Frieda Tyerstein

By Rekhil Friedlander
Toronto

[She was] the daughter of R' Shabtai Friedlander. She was honest and followed in God's ways, and possessed a deep understanding of modern Yiddish literature. She attached herself to the Zionist organization, from the outset, when it was established in our city. After her wedding, she runs a soda and tea business with her husband, David, in the *Halles*. During the war, her husband flees to Rawa [Ruska] from which he is sent to Siberia. Alone and abandoned, he later dies of hunger and disease, in Samarkand, in Central Asia. She, Frieda, remained in Tomaszow, with her two little children, Shlomo Elazar and Zlata'leh, together with her parents. From there, she was forcibly driven to Cieszanow, and afterwards to Belzec into the gas chambers. No trace remains of the children.



Sarah Dvora Friedlander

She fled the Germans, going to Rawa Ruska. There, she married Joseph Laneil. Both were killed there by the German cannibals.



Meshullam Borg

By Y. M.

Page 556: *Meshullam Borg*

Born in Tomaszow in 1910 to very poor parents, he was taught as a child by private teachers in *Heder*. Because of poverty, he begins to work in tailoring while still young. Being sensitive and dynamic, he throws himself, with the entire ardor of his young soul, into social partisan conflict, first in *HeHalutz*, and later among the ranks of those who came to believe that the liberation of all humanity was through social revolution.

In 1939, he emigrates with his mother to the Ukraine to find work. After Hitler's attack on Russia, he voluntarily joins the Red Army in Kherson, to fight, with his own life on the line, against the Hitlerist beasts. In 1942, he falls in battle at Rostov-on-Don.

Being someone of good nature, whether it was private, or public, he lived for others before he lived for himself, until the evil Germans cut his young life short.

He ended his life with a martyr's death.

Let his memory be held sacred.



Personalities

Yoss'l Wassertreger

By Sh. Licht

His real name was Yoss'l Scheiner (a brother of Yaakov Scheiner, one of the rich people who made their fortune after The First World War, and a Kielce *Hasid*). Yoss'l Wassertreger[126], a tall, and broad-boned young man, dressed in the full Jewish garb, with an unshorn beard, long black garments, with a black Hasidic cap on his head.

However, with this, he was not an exception among the water carriers, because many of his colleagues, in this trade, dressed in the same way. However, Yoss'l was an exception in the degree of his honesty, and the fidelity with which he did his work. He was simply a full-hearted and honest person in the extreme, and spoke infrequently.

He was especially careful not to permit, God forbid, a lie, to escape from his lips. Many times he suffered on account of not willing to permit an untruth to escape from his lips. He also paid very intense care, to assure that his water pails should be filled to the brim, and that no excess should spill from them along the way.

In the wintertime, when it was slippery, and it was not possible to carry two full vessels of water, or if some of the contents did spill along the way, he would deliver the difference at no extra charge. And when the balebatim would want to pay him for the extra delivery of water, he would not take it under any circumstances, and he would argue: 'a measure of righteousness,' is a special *mitzvah* in the Torah, and if one transgresses in this respect, the penalty is severe.

Every day, he prayed morning and evening with a minyan, supplementing his prayers with recitation of the Psalms. In the most sever weather, rain, snow, mud, and slippery conditions, he would discharge his labor faithfully. He was good-natured, and he was never seen to be angry. In the most difficult times, his good-natured smile could always be seen on his lips. He would save from his own meager provisions, in order to provide sustenance to the needy.

On the Sabbath, he would worship in the Kielce *shtibl*. And spent the entire day in study and recitation of Psalms.

His honesty and dedication was always a source of great wonder to all of the Jews of the city.

126 This is yet another instance of a 'nickname' taken from the individual's trade: a water carrier.

The Matchmaker with the Crooked Head

By Ephraim Fishl Hammer (Nad)

Page 559: *Moshe Goldbaum*

The crooked head — that is what he was called in Tomaszow. Why 'the Crooked Head?' – It is easy to understand, because his head, indeed, was tilted to the side (as you can see from the picture). Nevertheless, he put together good matches....and indeed, many of them. It was said of him that he could pair off two walls together [if need be].

It was rare for someone to know his [real] name, which was: R' Moshe Goldbaum ע"ה. He was the matchmaker to mysainted parents, and he would have been my matchmaker as well, but I managed to slip out of his hands.

I am certain that many readers of these lines will also be reminded of this particular type of matchmaker, and entirely possibly that he was also the matchmaker of their parents, and possibly even their own matchmaker. And if you have no regrets over the match...you will remember him to the good. May his memory be for a blessing.

Nahum the Blind One

By Yaakov Schwartz

Page 561: *Blind Nahum*

Blind Nahum was a 48 year-old bachelor, stretched out, and as thin as a rail, possessing an aquiline nose, with a light yellow goatee of a beard, and two tiny eyes that barely could detect the light. He sidled along, exactly like a person trying to squeeze himself through a small door. He wore a greasy little Jewish cap, and on his body, only a faded torn robe, and if there was no breeze blowing outside, people did not see his private parts. He went barefoot summer and winter, because he could not get shoes for his large, swollen feet. He ate whatever people gave him, but he was perpetually hungry, and his face evinced a deep sorrow, such that it elicited sympathy from everyone. He was descended from a very prominent family. His father R' Moshe Graff ז"ל was a *Gabbai* of R' Yehoshua'leh זצ"ל, and had the reputation of being a substantial scholar. His mother ע"ה, who also was barely able to see light, was called 'Rasheh the Holy Righteous Woman' – a name that she fully earned, because she carried the burden of every poor household on her shoulders. To one, she would carry *Challah* for the Sabbath, to another, she would anonymously slip a couple of Gulden that she had scraped together on her own – and for everyone – she had a comforting word to say. She was respected and loved by everyone. Even while still small, Nahum demonstrated great talent for learning. His father ע"ה retained the greatest teachers for him (as he, himself, told me). Up to the age of 17, they lived in a village, until one time when Nahum was bathing in a river, until a gentile woman, who was called the witch, grabbed him by the hair. He struggled with her for a long time, and it appears that he was profoundly frightened, and returned home frighteningly deranged. He began to bark like a dog, such that all of the dogs in the vicinity came running to where he lived. His family, who suffered frightful tribulations as a result of this, traveled with him to a variety of *Rebbes* and Good Jews, abandoning their food store, and moved to Tomaszow. A goodly number of years passed, and Nahum got better, but... there were sufficient eccentric traits that remained with him. For example, for hours on end he would spin around in a circle, or shout out 'He-He-He,' or stamp with his foot. And during that time when this 'attack of insanity' would not seize him, when he became normal, then it would actually be a genuine pleasure to talk with him, or listen to him talk about something. And he always had a great deal to tell. His anecdotes, aphorisms, witticisms, that he would tell about *Rebbes*, and take from books, was literally a delight to mouth and ears. During the summer, he would sleep in the shtibl of R' Yehoshua'leh ז"ל, and in the winter, in the *Hasidic Bet HaMedrash*, under the heated oven, on a bare bench. And woe betide the pauper that would wander through Tomaszow all day, begging at the houses, and at night seeking to find some rest for his broken bones in the *Bet HaMedrash* at night, only to encounter Nahum, who would become possessed in the middle of the night, babbling from the stands, or stamping his foot, or shouting out 'He-He-He,' ceaselessly – at times like this the hapless pauper would flee to the land where black pepper was grown.[127]

On our street, Nahum was also known to us as "The Living Calendar." He could tell you when the time was for candle-lighting, when it was permissible [sic: after the Sabbath] to light a candle, and when it was the beginning of the New Month, and the New Moon, on what day a Festival would fall, etc. Nahum was known by almost the entire city, young and old, small and big, gentiles, the police, and even peasants from the village. Everyone knew that one could get the exact clock time from Nahum, and he would answer everyone in a good-

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127 A reference to the faraway Asian places where black pepper was grown. This was a common Yiddish metaphor for anywhere that was really far from the present location.

natured manner, telling them how late it was, and simultaneously be able to identify who asked him the question by the sound of the voice. Nahum also knew how old everyone was, and knew who had *Yahrzeit,* and before he would disclose this, people would give him a groschen. Nahum was also very useful to those who ran illegal places of drink, to which the host would retire to from the synagogues and various *Batei Medrashim,* after the Sabbath prayers were concluded. They would go to the saloon keeper, and one might take two shots of whisky, another four, and yet another five, simultaneously along with a variety of snacks. Many, and indeed, many people would indulge in this way at the end of the Sabbath, or a Festival Holiday, and at that time, Nahum would already be seated at the saloon keeper's, and precisely, without the slightest hesitation, would give him an accounting for sometimes seventy, and sometimes fifty or more men, who partook of everything, and the saloon keeper would affably write this all down. Nahum was also a good singer. His heartfelt monotonic tunes penetrated every part of the body. Nahum was also a composer. On summer night's by the light of the seasonal moon, he would conceive of a variety of melodies, with rhyming words from the *Gemara.* Most of all, he loved to relate sayings from the *Rebbes* about love, and at the time of doing so, would sing along, using a tune from the *Gemara*: R' Mendele *Kotzker* has said that 'Love id life; the soul is nourished by love; indeed, love is not bread, but it is certainly the wine of life, and from it one can become strongly intoxicated.'

This reminds me of the considerable extent to which he had a sharp mind. He had asked me to write down a congratulatory message to a family of his, that was having a wedding in the *shtetl* of Tarnogrod. He dictated, and I wrote:

Congratulations

May your new path forward shine like roses
And may your nights and days be filled with gladness;
May your future bloom like flowers
And may your life's song evolve like pure notes;
Let your new morning be woven from good fortune
And may all your old worries vanish away;
May you always enjoy what is good and beautiful
And my you always be greeted by the bright world;
I give you my blessing from the depths of my heart
And wish that the seed of good fortune take root and blossom with you.

I wish you all this with great respect –
Nahum Graf

In the first days of the German attack, a German S. S. murderer saw him standing and tapping with is foot on the stairs of the Belz *shtibl.* In a thunderous voice, he asked him: *'Jude hast du hunger?'* When Nahum shook his head in assent, the murderer put his revolver into Nahum's mouth and pulled the trigger. With a strangled exclamation of '*Shema Yisrael,*' he fell down off the steps, and gave up his holy soul.

Honor his memory.

"Blind Nahum"

By A. H.
Wroclaw

To the Memory of My Friend Sh. M.

Half-naked, overgrown, scrawny, bent over,
He raises his two blind eyes to the heavens,

And looks over the rim of his cap,
Barefoot, he twirls about and dances, as if in a fever.

He taps and twirls himself, step after step,
And he dances himself away wildly as if in a pageant.

That's how he dances and spins himself, standing in his place,
Until his nerves quiet down, and get synchronized...

And yet, this crippled one sometimes manifests wonder
He is known in the shtetl as '*Nahum the Blind One.*'

Try him, ask him: What time is it now? —
His eyes sparkle and he answers right on the dot.

'Seven after Eleven,' I think. Yes. It's good –
And always he gets it right to the minute.

If someone forgets the *Yahrzeit* date of his great-grandfather,
It is '*Nahum the Blind One*' who reminds him that Frieda

His youngest daughter (he remembers this by heart)
Was fourteen years old when she stood under the wedding canopy,

Your great-grandfather was then seventy years old,
So the *Yahrzeit* falls on the ninth of Sivan...

And thousands of pieces of data, names, birth dates
He will tell you speedily, like someone dealing cards,

What day (a good trick)
That the New Month of Tammuz fell on eleven years ago.

Novel interpretations of the Torah to him
Engender answers quickly, no matter how difficult.

All know that '*Nahum the Blind One*'
Is a *Gaon*, a genius, a scholar...

It is sufficient for him to just hear someone's voice,
It is sufficient for him to recognize that individual.

Who that person is, and who his father is,
That had made a fortune from a Tatar,

What he dealt in, and what going on in the world,
And suddenly everything got capsized.

The War arrived, crisis and then,
Died as a pauper, a poor man...

All that transpired many years ago already,
Are stored in the municipal dossier: his memory.

He is still known for his poems,
Composed in appropriate rhymes.

Welded together with quotes from the Talmud,
And wherever there is festivity, Nahum is a guest.

And if he comes to attend a wedding,
He is honored with some whisky and wine.

Then he becomes merry, he rhymes for everyone,
For the parents and the bride and groom.

For all the young men, and the Jewish daughters,
And the guests almost burst from laughter.

And though he is brooding and lives like a crawly creature,
He gets respect, and is accorded dignity.

He sleeps in the *Bet HaMedrash*, living on minimal rations,
When he gets an attack, then he creates a tumult.

He taps and he twirls himself around in a spin,
Ever hastier, faster, step after step.

He murmurs and buzzes, just like a bee,
And shakes himself, turns himself, hither thither and yon.

Children and adults all stand around,
They shout at him, *Nahum!* – but he remains dumb.

He taps and buzzes, so long and so wide,
Until a stretch of time goes by,

Until his nerves quiet down,
And he is left standing quiet and tranquil.

A group of youngsters returning from *Heder*
Shout: *Nahum! Tell us what time is it?*

Tell me to whom I belong, and who am I?
What is the night, and what day will begin? –

He answers them all, and recognizes them all,
Whom they belong to and who they are.

They push a few groschen into his hand,
He blesses them in rhyme, wittily and nicely.

For he knows the *shtetl* from beginning to end,
Just like everyone in Tomaszow knows him...

He lived his life like he always had
Until the Hun came into the city.

Before his eyebrow even flickered,
He fell in Sanctification of the Name.

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Crazy Tema'leh

By A. H.
Wroclaw

And lo, she makes herself visible, walking gently,
Right there, in the middle of the street,
She cracks thin candies,
Her face somewhat pale.

Big eyes, wild and black,
Black, wild tufts of hair,
Such that it seizes you by the heart,
Insane, low and extreme.

When she starts to curse – you may know,
She screws up her left eye,
"May you be sliced up, torn apart;
Go to Hell and bake bagels."

"Get burned and get buried,
An intense and really distasteful misfortune,"
"May your mother have after you –"
And so forth, and so forth....

And also Franck the Pharmacist,
Asks her in as his guest
A whole coterie comes along
To joke with Tema'leh.

And she is able to flatter well,
She is rather good at praise
Oh, are you talented! Oh, you're so beautiful!
You are as sweet as honey, chocolate...

"You look good! You fixed yourself up
"You glisten like a licorice candy,
You made yourself rosy cheeks,
"Give me a candy....

And should it happen that someone tricks her,
She becomes red with anger,
You are a bastard, you are a lout,
You are as repulsive as death itself...

And in guarding the hitch
For Pinchas the wagon driver,
That is when she starts
The real wailing.

One pushes the wagon off,
A second spooks the horse,
She starts to curse them and hurl imprecations,
Such that she becomes red with anger.

Pinchas! – she calls out, screaming so it is a fright –
"Beat it you bandit, murderer!
One pulls the horse from a side,
They are making merry.

She grabs the whip – I'll give it to you:
"Oh – I would grind you up —
For Pinchas, she would not
Give away a sack of borscht.

She curses and shouts at the top of her lungs,
"Beat it , you wicked dog,
And the gathering dances with joy,
Practically bursting with laughter.

No monies are denied to her,
She collects a nice heap,
She has the biggest collection
Of crazies in the world.

She talks and smiles like a child,
She is loved for that
A quote of hers is bruited about:
"Every buffoon is his own fool..."

And so, this is how she trundles along gently,
A bit out of it,
She goes, and cracks thin candy,
"Crazy Tema'leh"

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Destruction and Annihilation

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Tomaszow-Lubelski

By Yaakov Schwartz

(On the Occasion of the 17th Yahrzeit of our Annihilated Shtetl)

Silently, and alone, I pour out the fiery ember of prayer –
Of an entire community.
Years have already passed, and as if nothing ever happened –
It is seventeen years since I have seen my *shtetl.*

I would certainly not recognize my shtetl –
Because everything has vanished, everything has been consumed in fire.
The sorrow and pain for a mother with a heart –
That was holy and dear, gone away with the flames.

The Jewish businesses in the city are no more —
Those dear Jews of the city no longer run to the baths.
On Friday, the *Shammes* no longer bangs out the call '*to Schul*' anymore –

The Brown-Shirted Hooligans shot, burned and strangled them all.

The way to the synagogue is overgrown with grass –
No roof, no doors, the windows without panes of glass.
The holy walls have been orphaned –
That which was dearest, robbed and desecrated.

Men, women, tall as beams –
Expired from hunger, thirst and torture.
That Jewish youth, with is burbling happiness, is no more –
Their ashes are sown and spread over the fields.

Every week, bitter decrees and frightful slaughter –
And the world stood silent at our great calamity.
The market day in Tomaszow is still on Thursday to this day –
There are no more merchants after the bloody slaughter.

One no longer hears the sound of singing, or of childish joy –
Lekon and Zabruki have spread through the Jewish businesses.
Crooked Juzek, as tiny as a mouse –
Thinks nothing is good enough for him, except Borenstein's house.

Noszynski the pig farmer is the owner of the Jewish mill –
He achieved his objective at the expense of our great pain.
Janek the shoemaker and Wojciech Bartyk –
Are the managers of the Jewish factory.

Our dearest are no longer here, where are their bones –
In forests? On the steppes? – Nobody knows.
No gravestone on the cemetery, dark and gray –
Who is to recite '*El Maleh,*' if the *Shammes* is not here.

We recall our Jewish heroes with trepidation and respect in this tragic moment
When the Hitler beasts sowed annihilation, broiling and burning.
It is difficult – very difficult – to find a consolation –
Their ghosts fly about wherever you stand or go.

We will not forget that frightening hour –
Your father, your mother – the home that is no longer there.

My sister, remember your children!!! Their last cry from the fire and flame –

God of Vengeance – – — And let their blood be avenged.



At the Outbreak of the War

By Shammai Drilman

The extermination of our people began in actuality when Hitler ימ"ש with his accomplices gathered for the first time in a cellar in Munich, when the Nazi Party was created.

When the first anti-Semitic appearances took place, and the student meetings that openly called for exterminating the Jewish people, none of our Jewish leaders, or leadership institutions, foresaw the black cloud that was approaching us, because no logically thinking person could imagine that, in the twentieth century, that a human mind would be capable of conceiving so grotesque an initiative as extermination.

It is no shame to admit, that many of us, upon reading the frightening news in the press in the years between 1933 and 1939, did not take seriously enough, the events that were then taking place in this connection at that time in Germany. [This was the Germany] that was still living at peace with the rest of the world, and was a member, along with other nations in a variety of world organizations, demanding justice and righteousness, in connection with its own demands, while at the same time conducting a genocide against our brethren inside of its own land.

We can firmly submit, that when the first, and later the larger masses of refugees began to pour over the western Polish border, as uprooted and expelled, a feeling continued to prevail, that the tocsin of distress brought to us by the press, was not yet so terrible, and the world is not yet disintegrating... that is the polemic that many of us voiced. In passing, it is noteworthy to mention that as the refugees came to us, naked and barefoot from Germany, where all had lived for the last generations, and it is well known that Polish Jewry, from small to large, with no difference based on political persuasion, did everything that was only possible to provide support. And at this opportunity, it should also be said, that Polish Jewry exerted itself beyond its capacity, and at that once critical time, created the necessary assistance, which provided a great deal of help for our oppressed brethren.

Even at the time when it was really close, when the Nazi murderers fell upon the world like a horde of locusts to enslave humanity, and one of us, a great thinker and politician, went around with a cry that he foresees a genocide, and proposed that the only way out is to enter into negotiation with those regimes in power at that time, about the evacuation of European Jewry, it went so far, that a variety of Jewish political parties and their leaders not only shouted this project down, but also to our greatest sorrow and shame, responded with the filthiest names from the newest forms of expression.[128]

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[128] The author clearly refers to the attempts by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky to devise an evacuation plan for European Jewry. Here is a summary of his endeavors and the reactions it provoked:

The Jews in Europe were in danger, and Vladimir Jabotinsky was determined to save them. Europe, according to Jabotinsky, was a ""zone of incurable antisemitism" (Schechtman 124). Jabotinsky viewed certain countries as "zones of danger" to Jews (Schechtman 334). He prophetically remarked that "time was imperiling the very existence of millions of European Jews. . ." (Schechtman 334). However, he was hopeful that he could convince large numbers of people to emigrate before it was too late. The first zone of danger he turned his attention to was Poland, a country with a ten percent Jewish population.

The Polish government didn't want the blood of innocent people on its hands. Rather than give into existing anti-Jewish

This demonstrates how unbelievable and ungraspable the impending bitter Holocaust years were in the fantasy of our people in that time.

However, this didn't last very long, and, indeed, in the first days of the war, the residents of our city, Tomaszow, near Lublin, came to the realization that the unbelievable is possible, and murder knows no boundaries, and that war in modern times, in the year 1939, is not just a [military] battle, where only soldiers fight one against the other, and they are the only ones who die.

Tomaszow is a *shtetl* that finds itself on the principal route between Lublin and Lemberg (Lvov).

Traveling on the main highway south of Lublin, the last city before Tomaszow is Zamość, the city where I. L. Peretz was born and also lived. Incidentally, in our town, it is told that the great Yiddish writer I. L. Peretz was in love with a girl from Tomaszow.[129]

In leaving the city, only eight (8) kilometers on the way to Lemberg, one finds the tragic little town of Belzec, which before the First World War, was the border point between Czarist Russia and Austria. And in the years from 1918, when Poland got back its independence, until the year 1939, the outbreak of the Second World War, Belzec played the role of a tiny railroad station, that serviced our city of Tomaszow with the facility

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sentiment, the Polish government would, according to Jabotinsky, support "a Jewish-initiated scheme of large-scale orderly and voluntary evacuation." A public declaration in 1937 calling for evacuation set off a storm of anger, even though Jabotinsky had always called for massive immigration movements to Israel (Schechtman 340). The message was not a new one by any means; it was stated with newfound urgency. Yet it ignited the passions of the left wing Jewish community both in Europe and the rest of the world. In a highly ironic twist, the mainstream Jewish community (that would later sit contented in the face of death) reacted in harsh anger to Jabotinsky's pleas. They literally threw stones at him and mocked him as a fascist (Schechtman 340-341). A paper formerly aligned with Jabotinsky declared, "blood will flow if evacuation propaganda be permitted in the Moment"(Schechtman 340). *Davar,* a leftist newspaper out of Tel Aviv commented, "the Führer Jabotinsky. . . concluded a pact with the Polish Government to deport Jews from Poland in yearly installments" (Schechtman 341). Condemnation of the evacuation proposal wasn't voiced uniformly throughout the Jewish population, but those who did criticize didn't spare a bit of venom.

These underhanded attacks on Jabotinsky's character were both unwarranted and unfounded. He was a major proponent of rights for Jews in Diaspora; he was not advocating the total abandonment of Jewish life outside of Israel (Schechtman 344). His impassioned pleas and efforts directed to moving Polish Jews to Israel stemmed from the fact that he knew their lives were in jeopardy. Jabotinsky got such a rude reception because he was contending with the firmly entrenched ghetto mentality of the Jew. Those who suffer from the ghetto mentality are unable to cope with reality; they hope that by giving into the will of authority, they will be able to avoid punishment. The Jews of Europe were unable to deal with their fate, and they took it out on Jabotinsky. The Zionist Organization of America took a highly contradictory approach by first condemning the plan and then admitting "logic may be with Mr. Jabotinsky" (Schechtman 341). Some individuals had the capacity to understand the situation, yet they still couldn't take the necessary actions and get out of Europe; those who did soon realized how lucky they were. Years after the war, leading literary figure Shalom Asch announced, "I deeply regret that I had fought against Jabotinsky's evacuation plan" (Schechtman 341). The course of history would have changed if more Jews recognized the truth.

See: Schechtman, Joseph B. *Fighter and Prophet: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story.* London: 1961

[129] There does not appear to be any indication in the Zamość Memorial Book that such a romance took place (which does not mean it didn't happen!)

of an open channel for the transportation of wood products and grain, which occupied a major position in the business dealings of many Jews. It also provided an opportunity to travel to the larger world, when it was necessary to do business in other cities.

This same Belzec, where in the final years before the Second World War, there lived several tens of Jews, is today well known over the entire world. This very same, tiny Belzec, was transformed into vale of skeletons by the German beasts. [Here lie] the bones of hundreds of thousands of innocent murdered Jews, driven together from every corner of Europe, and killed in this little place, Belzec, gassed alive. An injustice occurred on every blade of grass in the surrounding fields and forests. A murder was committed on every patch of sand. If one gathered all of the rocks from miles and miles around, the collection would not be sufficient to place a marker for each of the hundreds of thousands of martyrs who were killed by the accursèd Germans and their murderers in Belzec.

There, in Belzec, to this day, can be found one of the largest cemeteries in the entire world. And among these unidentified bones and burned ashes, can be found our tortured Tomaszow martyrs ת"ו.

Tomaszow was not an industrial city. The Jewish residents derived their living partly from commerce, and partly from trade.

Jewish youth in Tomaszow, in the final years before the Second World War, was already well developed both physically and spiritually.

The many political organizations, where lectures and debates on a variety of subjects were held, the *Batei Medrashim,* where many young people sat, whether by day or whether by night, and learned, the well developed Bet Yaakov School for Girls, the Agudah *Schule*, the *Yavneh* School, directed by *Mizrahi*, a couple of dozen *Heders*, directed personally by well-qualified *Melamdim*, Jews who were scholars, and this apart from the Talmud Torah, for children whose parents could not afford to pay tuition, which was financially supported by the Jewish populace, partly from community subsidies, partly from weekly assessments from each family that was in a position to help. And to a great measure, we have to thank our brethren in the United States for the existence of the Talmud Torah, especially in New York, from which support was sent.

Apart from this there was also a Froebel School[130], and many *Heders* for small children, which began from the teaching of the alphabet, for them to become aware that they belong to the People of the Book.

In accordance with the municipal and government regulations, each young person was required to study at a state elementary school, or in a school that operated under government control, such that it adhered to an equivalent level as those that were run by the city. We also had a Gymnasium, and towards the end a Lyceum, where our Jewish youth was very well represented.

Jewish sports organizations, which counted many members from our young people, were seen in the good physical condition of the young Jewish populace of Tomaszow in the final years before the Second [World] War.

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130 Based on the teachings of an educator, named Froebel, who pioneered the development of Kindergarten

Apart from the fact that each organization or party had a library on a small scale, except for the *Bund*, which had a rather handsome and large reading room, there also existed two large libraries where hundreds of the best books could be found.

The municipal library, which was supported by the municipal council, or as it was called 'The Magistrate,' served a large number of subscribers, of which between 70-80% were Jewish. And, it should also be recalled here, that much gratitude is owed for the building up of this library, and a good support for the purchase of the newest books in that time if Jewish writers and Jewish issues, to the longtime Jewish member of the municipal council, Mr. Zvi Edelstein ע"ה who was later killed by the Germans in Lemberg.

The second large reading room was 'The Jewish Manual Trades Union Library.' It was called by this name because it was the property of the Jewish Manual Trades Union in our city, which also supported it, in a material sense. For many years, it lent books exclusively to Jews, and many times, one had to wait for weeks for a book, because the number of readers was unusually high.

In passing, it is very important to recollect that the Jewish Manual Trades Union undertook the burden in a variety of endeavors in our social and community life, for many, many years, in our city of Tomaszow.

The daily Jewish press, as well as Jewish periodicals in the Polish language, weekly and monthly publications, which appeared in the three largest cities of Warsaw, Lemberg and Cracow, as well as Hebrew offerings, had many readers among us.

The Jews in Tomaszow, in general, were good-natured people, friendly towards guests. The city enjoyed a reputation as a place where a poor person would not go away hungry, and also not empty-handed.

In the last days, before the outbreak of The Second World War, everyone felt that the situation was tense. The clumsy and disorganized mobilization, which was carried out by the Polish authorities, did nothing but instill fear in any person with awareness, because this immediately indicated that, despite the fact that the regime trumpeted that we were not going to give up even the smallest unit of territory, that we were entirely weak, and we prayed that we would not be put to the test.

Evenings were spent sitting at the radio, waiting for some sort of news, for a morsel of hope that it would not come to war.

Regrettably, these hopes were lost.

The first Saturday, which was the second of September, and the second day of the war, passed quietly. Apart from a few solitary young people who were mobilized, and sent off to their several points in other cities, where their divisions were supposed to be located, the city was relatively quiet.

Very early on Sunday, we became aware of the declaration of war against Germany by England and France.

The entire *shtetl* gathered at the Sejmik, where the municipal orchestra played, and the leaders of the city, such as the Starosta, Burgomaster, and other high level municipal employees, military officers, gave speeches, and shared with the gathered throng that: Poland is no longer alone on the battlefield, and that with the help of the other two great powers, that the Germans will be beaten rather quickly and with certainty.

Despite the fact that this was said with happiness, and with lofty phrases and speech, everyone felt in their heart that the war had arrived, and that it would be long enough, and one imagined that in the best case it would bring no good, in general, and certainly so, for we, the Jews, in particular.

The next few days also passed quietly. Each morning, the Jews went to their houses of worship to pray, and at the same time, talked a bit of politics, how the situation was. In the evenings, because it was not permitted to light any candles, prayers were said at home.

In general, the city looked dead at night, because only few people would venture out of their houses at night.

As I previously mentioned, nobody could imagine the level of cruelty that the Germans exhibited towards the Jews in the later years of the war, but even more incomprehensible was their assault on the civilian population. Immediately in the first days of the war, regrettably, it was us, the populace of Tomaszow near Lublin, who were one of the first to see the gruesome acts of pitiless murder, by the German bomber planes, flying over the defenseless and unarmed populace.

September 7, 1939, the seventh day since the outbreak of the war, brought extermination and death to our *shtetl* of Tomaszow, affecting many Jews and also many [other] residents of the populace.

It happened to be the weekly market day, and a lively commerce was underway. The marketplace and the surrounding side streets were full of peasant wagons, stands with produce and vegetables, wagons with a variety of merchandise. The peasants, who had traveled in, bout everything their eyes could see, for their own use. Especially, each of them bought salt, kerosene, and matches, with the knowledge that it would certainly come to pass that these items might not be able to be obtained in the future. At the same time, the residents of the city, equally transacted the purchase of a variety of articles from the peasants. There was a din and bruiting in which the shouts of people, the neighing of horses, the quacking of ducks and the cackling of geese, all blended together.

The market day in Tomaszow, which took place every Thursday, was famous throughout the area. Not only did the local peasants come, but also many people from the surrounding towns, such as: Komarow, Tyszowce, Laszczow, Krasnobrod, Jozefów, Narol, Lubycz, and even as far away as Rawa Ruska.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon, at the height of the intensity of the business day, when a lively racket of buyer and seller was underway on the market square, a number of airplanes appeared out of the clear blue sky, which the gathering stared at in wonder. They thought that the planes were 'ours,' what the peasants would call '*nasza.*' It didn't occur to anyone that it was necessary to seek shelter, that, rather, these were German Messerschmitts, that has come to annihilate us, and the peaceful civilian populace, whose only objective was to purchase some eggs, and a cut of butter, or perhaps just a couple of kilos of potatoes.

It only took a few minutes since these steel birds showed themselves. They circled, and took a good look, and certainly established that below them, there was nothing to do with a military point of activity. And the, with their entire force of attack, they fell upon the helpless populace, and dropped several tens of bombs.

The pandemonium and upset that this engendered is impossible to describe. The hundreds of horses that became panicked and frightened, began to pull everything along that stood in their way. Everyone tried to find some place to hide, running wildly in whatever direction their eyes took them, stepping over tens of bodies that had been torn apart, in a most frightful way, by the bombs.

Simultaneously, the German murderers dropped incendiary bombs that hit the entire south-west part of the town, and entire quarters, in a matter of minutes, were consigned to a terrible fire. In this fire, the Great Synagogue of the city and the *Bet HaMedrash* were consumed.

If the imagination can conceive of the confusion that ensued at the Tower of Babel, and at the same time the fires of Sodom occurred, that is what that sorrowful Thursday afternoon was like, after noon on 23 Elul 5699, in our shtetl of Tomaszow, near Lublin.

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The First Days of the War in Tomaszow

By Asher Herbstman

As Told By Y. Wertman & Others

For some time before the beginning of the German-Polish War, we began to murmur about the fact that a war between Poland and Hitler Germany was getting ready to break out. However, we did not anticipate that it would arrive at our city with such a quick tempo.

In September [1] 1939, we discovered that Hitler had attacked Poland, and with lightning speed had marched to Warsaw, which immediately caused a panic in our town, especially among the Jewish residents, not knowing what to do, or where to run to. A mobilization order was immediately posted, ordering everyone to report for conscription into the military. We saw the first of the officer insignias, such as on Dr. Cybulski, Dr. Shulman, Witkowski, and others, wearing their military uniforms. The first went off immediately to the barracks, and on the second day, the first recruits from the district started to appear in the city, going by the thousands to the barracks to be outfitted with military insignias, and in pretty short order, they ran out of such insignias in the magazines. It appears that there was a rather large spy apparatus here. It was so, that one could go about the city and listen to the news from the radio, which continuously brought news from various Polish cities, such that it would unnerve the strongest of men, such that he could have patience for other things, until the pitiable day arrived on our city.

It was the 7th of September. This was precisely on a market day, which always was held on a Thursday, when the peasants from the surrounding villages would arrive, and we, the Jews, were occupied with making a deal – our city was disassembled by an unending bombardment from a Nazi air armada.

Imagine what kind of a terror this instilled in our city, especially among its Jewish populace, when the bombardment brought with it, the first casualties of our city, at which time the following were killed instantly: Itcheh Kruk, Eliezer Dornfeld the younger, Yud'l Reis, Itcheh Lichtenfeld's children. At the same time, a second wave of the German steel birds arrived, and began to drop incendiary rockets on the Jewish quarter. A fire immediately engulfed the entire city. It was said that an individual was standing in the middle of the market square, and indicated where the Nazi warplanes should drop their incendiary rockets, and so, not knowing what to do, and in such a tumult, almost all of the Tomaszow Jewish populace snatched whatever they could from their dwellings. One might grab a pack, another a bit of goods from his place of business, and then fled to wherever they could. Part of them fled to the forest, and part to the meadows, and others, to the nearby villages (the peasants immediately said that they were afraid to hid Jews), at least to flee from he huge inferno that had enveloped our city.

It continued in this fashion for a couple of days, soaked through by rain, and chilled by the night cold, with empty stomachs, hoping for some change, and an end to these tribulations....The Nazi murderers entered Tomaszow on the eve of Rosh Hashana.

With the final occupation of the city, by the Germans, a variety of total crimes broke out, from the smallest variety, such as pillaging Jewish homes and businesses, with the help of Polish anti-Semites.

Seeing no purpose to remaining in the forests, meadows, and villages, slowly, the Jewish populace began to return to the city, seeing the great calamity that had befallen the city, and how nearly all of the city had been burned down, especially the Jewish quarter, where only 2 or 3 streets remained, and not having a roof over their heads, the Jews began to seek places to go, and a little at a time began to move in with one another in a variety of houses that had survived, and could be used as a refuge.

However then, when one, more or less, had some sort of place where to put down one's head to sleep, new troubles began to come from the depraved Nazis. Approximately two days after the city was occupied, a pair of German soldiers were walking along the Koscielna *Gasse* and saw a movement in the cellar of Mordechai Joseph Szparer's house. They immediately went down there, and took out: Fyvel Holtz with both of his sons, Lipa with Yoss'keh Goldman, as well as Itta Borg's son-in-law, and took them to an unknown location and murdered them all (it is said that it was in the Siwa Dolina Forest). It was in this manner, that the Hitler Hooligans continued to ceaselessly torture [the people] in a variety of sadistic ways, such that in the house of Goldzamd, on the Lwowska *Gasse,* several families were hidden, and they were [the] taken out and lined up in a row to be shot. Shia Lehrer began to run, and he was chased, and shot, but this permitted the others to flee.

This was the way things continued for a period of eight days. Upon rising, we saw that the city was empty, there were no Germans nor any Poles. We were breathing a little easier, as we emerged from the stuffy cellars and bunkers where we had remained hidden during this time, when suddenly a variety of news items began to circulate. One such item had it that, a large number of Polish military with artillery, and a variety of other ordnance, had quartered itself in the Church Square, and it was preparing to launch a pogrom against the Jewish populace, A second item had it that the Soviets were already to be found in a neighboring town, Laszczow. It did not take long, and the Russians marched into Tomaszow.

After the arrival of the Russians, we permitted ourselves to come out onto the streets more freely, and there was a sense that the true salvation had arrived. The Soviets immediately ordered the Jewish populace to celebrate a festive holiday, because this was during the days of the *Sukkot* holiday. The Soviet military immediately marched to the Church Square, with their tanks, where the Polish military stood, who that very night, were intending to launch a pogrom against us. They were taken into custody, and sent out of Tomaszow. At that point, we breathed a little easier, and we all went home to prepare for the Festival Holiday.

We thought that we had arrived at a point of tranquility. A little at a time, businesses were opened up, and attempts were made to normalize life. The city council began to allocate residences to those that were burned out. For example, if one [family] lived in two rooms, they were asked to take in another family. Our locally grown communists surfaced. First of all, they began to liquidate the Zionist organizations, and confiscating their assets. For example, the club of those who worked for the Land of Israel possessed a radio, to which they paid no mind, and had no difficulty in confiscating the radio. However, there was not much time left for them to rule, because in a few days, over the radio, we heard the recognized Soviet-German Treaty, about

settling boundaries, and according to that treaty, our town was to fall to the Germans.

A variety of interpretations began to be formulated. There were those who held that it was necessary to leave the city together with the Russians. And there were others, who held that it was necessary to stay in the city, because there was nothing to lose. In the meantime, we saw the Shiflingers, with their family leaving the city , the first of the people in the city to go on the way to Rawa Ruska, It was at that time that the real panic set in. Those who had the means, rented a horse and wagon. They began to transport their merchandise from their businesses to Rawa Ruska, because the soldiers permitted everything to be transported. Approximately, at the time of *Simchat Torah*, the Soviets indicated that they were leaving the city, and that they will provide vehicular transport whoever wants to leave and go to Rawa Ruska. It is self-evident, that the largest part of the Jews of Tomaszow left the city, on the Festival of *Simchat Torah*, together with the last of the Russian soldiers.

With their evacuation of the city, the city stood without any military forces in it, meaning that the Russians had evacuated and set up their boundary at the *shtetl* of Lubicz, not far form Tomaszow, and the German military had not yet occupied our city. There was anarchy – 'Anything Goes.' That part of those Jews who remained behind, that also finally realized they wanted to leave, already could not, because the gentiles of the city now occupied the roads, and didn't let them out, screaming, 'You *Zyds* are taking everything out of the city, and we will be left with nothing.' And the remaining Jews did not want to part with their little bit of pitiful poverty, and they remained in the city until the Hitlerist Angel of Death occupied the city.

We, who were on the Soviet side where, in the first time interval, we almost all settled in Rawa Ruska, first now began to taste what it meant to be refugees. We practically lived out in the open. Only a few were able to take in some refugees from the large number that flowed in from the entire area. The rain and the cold began to oppress our bones that had been broken for some time already, to the extent that we began to look for ways to survive in our new surroundings. A variety of opinions began to be formulated. Some people, smuggled themselves across the border back into Tomaszow, and others went the other way, fleeing Tomaszow, One placed one's self in mortal danger by crossing the border, but what was there to do? In the process of fleeing, men were separated from their wives, and children from parents. In the desire to reunite with one's own family, people took to going off to Lemberg, and its vicinity.

Weeks, and then months, went by. On the Soviet side, we became acclimatized to the living conditions, a little at a time, and actually did not live badly. However, we began to hear terrifying and oppressing news coming from our home, that is, Tomaszow, how through a variety of *aktionen*, Jews were impressed into [forced] labor.

One day, those of us on the Soviet side, were ordered by the Soviet authorities to present ourselves, register, and obtain Soviet passports. This threw us, yet again, into a quandary, not knowing if we were permitted to assume Soviet citizenship. As a result, the Soviet authority commenced an assault against those who did not accept the [Soviet] citizenship, and rousted everyone out of their beds, packed us in wagons, and sent us off to far Siberia. The people of Tomaszow who had remained hidden, remained on the Soviet side in Galicia.

We dragged ourselves in those wagons of filth an thirst for long weeks, hoping for a drink of water. Finally, we arrived in the Siberian forests, and there, we cut down ancient forests and from that, prepared a variety of materials for the Soviet regime.

It is difficult to relate the nature of that hard, forced labor, about the hunger, filth, and the frightful cold that

we had to endure. But even more terrifying were the remnants of the Tomaszow Jews that survived to the liberation, and returning to Poland, when we heard that those who had remained behind in Tomaszow, as well as those who had remained [elsewhere] in Galicia, were all sent to Belzec and there to the gas chambers, and then to the crematoria, which they, themselves, had to construct, and they were incinerated in The Sanctification of The Name. May their memory be for a blessing.

The Last Look at My Former City – Tomaszow

It was not possible to remain in Poland for any length of time, because at the beginning of the liberation of Poland, a sizeable amount of anti-Semitism yet reigned, as well as a variety of pogroms, and at night, it was terrifying to go out. Therefore, part of the people decided that they would illegally cross the border to leave Poland. For part of those from Tomaszow who had returned to Poland, it proved to be too difficult to journey even further, and therefore they decided temporarily to live where they were, especially in light of the fact that later, the situation had more or less normalized itself in Poland. Accordingly, part of the people took up residence in Lodz, and a part in Szczeczin.

'But I had a desire to take a look at our old home town,' is what Rukhama Gelernter told me. Arriving in Tomaszow, I did not know where to alight, because I thought to myself: is this a city, or a wasteland of wreckage? There is not a single Jew left with whom one might take lodging. Imagine if you will, that a kindly Christian permitted me to lodge with him, and told me immediately in the morning to flee because my life was in danger. Despite this, I wanted to see what remained after the destruction. I took a quick look, and saw that all of the Jewish houses, and places of business that survived the great fire, were occupied by local Poles. Yes! I met one Jew, this was the prizefighter, Miriam Hirsch Henya's son-in-law, who lives there with a Polish wife.

But there is no more 'Jewish life.'

There are no more Jewish children;

There is no more Old Synagogue with its *Bet HaMedrash*;

There is no more courtyard of R' Yehoshua'leh, with its studiers;

There is no more Rebbe of Cieszanow;

There are no more dynamic Jewish parties and organizations;

There no longer exists a vibrant Jewish youth, with its pioneering organizations, such as, '*Freiheit*,' '*HeHalutz*,' '*HaPoel*;'

There are no more Tema'leh's, voices of Mekhl's, Ephraim Kalb, Blind Nahum, Crazy Chay'tzkeh from the *Hekdesh,* who used to make merry at Jewish festive occasions.

Even the cemetery is no longer there, because all of Tomaszow is one big cemetery, without any headstones.



German Acts of Brutality in the First Days of the War Cause Many from Tomaszow to Abandon the City

By Chaim Yehoshua Biederman

Here, I wish to relate a chapter concerning the cruelty manifested by the Germans towards a group of Tomaszow Jews immediately in the first days of The War, where in many other places, they continued to permit Jews in many other places, to be lulled by the false illusion that the fear of the Germans was entirely exaggerated. The messages that this group brought home, shook up the Tomaszow Jews, and showed them the true face of the German Beast, and what can be expected of it.

It took place on Tuesday, September 19, 1939, a couple of days before Yom Kippur. The prior Wednesday, the Eve of Rosh Hashana, the Germans occupied Tomaszow, but this did not mean that the fighting in the city was over. It was several days, since Tomaszow tasted the first of the German bombs on that Black Thursday of September 7. [At that time] a large part of the city was consumed in fire, and approximately 200 people fell as the first of the German victims. Up to the point that the Germans occupied the city, we were filled with the double fright of the continuously falling bombs, and shrapnel, and the fear of the German predators when they will seize the city, just as other of the Polish cities fell to them with lightning speed. However, in tat moment when the fighting abated temporarily, a day before Rosh Hashana, Jews emerged from their hiding places. Part of them, immediately took upon themselves enthusiastically to go run to the ritual baths to immerse themselves in honor of the Day of Judgement, and a part of the people actually tried to talk themselves into believing that maybe the Devil was not so Black as he was conceived to be. Even the assault of the Germans, on a prayer quorum that was worshiping at the home of R' Yud'l Ader ה"ד, was ignored, and written off as a usual incident that occurs in every war. However, the residence of Tomaszow, pretty quickly had the opportunity, and maybe the good fortune, to immediately see the countenance of the German Beast.

On Sunday, September 17, the Russians commenced their march against Poland to occupy 'their' part, which they felt they had earned as part of the Stalin-Hitler Agreement.[131] On that same day, Polish military units began to fight in the vicinity around Tomaszow, that had been concentrated in the surrounding large forests.

The house of my grandfather, R' Joel Scharfman ה"ד was the first horse to remain standing on the Krasnobrod *Gasse* up to the market square, where all the other houses were burned down, and many homeless neighbors sought refuge there. It was a thick-walled house, and it was seen as a better protection against flying fragments of shrapnel.

After having caught our breath from the bombs and the shooting, the outbreak of fresh fighting after the Germans occupied the city, threw everyone into a panic. The Germans then set fire to the houses that were adjacent to the house of my grandfather ז"ל, namely, the house of Mr. Yekhezkiel Zoberman ה"ד and other houses (as Mr. Zoberman later related, the Germans took him out of the house, and sending along several soldiers with him, carrying machine guns, he was ordered to go into the forest to warn the Polish recruits that

131 This is the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Treaty, that had a secret clause in it for how Poland would be partitioned between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

they should surrender. When he explained to them that he was afraid that the Poles will shoot him, they said: *haben sie kein angst, gleich wie sie wurden derschossen, schiessen wir gleich zurück.*[132]' The Polish military had already abandoned the forest by the time he got there with the German patrol). Our house then remained like an island destroyed and incinerated street.

As it happens, a German military contingent took up a position on the courtyard of our house, and they came into our house to do a search to determine if there were any Polish army personnel. They also looked for arms. They then order all the men out into the courtyard. We were all stood in rows, and we then suddenly heard a salvo, which the Germans fired over our heads, and ordered us to march to the center of commerce. There, we were all shoved into a small house. Everyone seated themselves on the bare earth. Bullets whistled everywhere about us. Among others, my grandfather R' Joel Scharfman הי"ד was there, my father Abraham Yekhezkiel Biederman ז"ל, my cousin Yisroel'ki Perel, R' Yaakov Shokhet ז"ל, R' Chaim Yaakov Shenner and his son Simcha, Meir Berger (Noah Greenbaum's son-in-law) and his brother-in-law Mendele Greenbaum, Falik Ritzer, Israel Koppenblum, Meir Lancer, and many others, whose names I have forgotten after twenty years.
After several hours, we were, again, lined up in rows, and taken in the direction of Belzec. We received a strict order to stay in line, in military sequence, with the warning that if anyone made even the slightest move to break ranks, they would be shot immediately. (That same day, my cousin Yeshay' Lehrer הי"ד was indeed shot, and a second group was take into custody that included Fyvel Holtz, Lipa'leh the Pious, and others who never came back).

The fighting in the city were at peak intensity. Bullets flew over our heads, and bomber airplanes flew low. Along the streets, one could see many bodies of dead soldiers, of frightful forms. We were made to stop for a short rest, near the new Spoldzielnia that had been erected with the objective of undermining Jewish commerce. From there, we undertook a further march in the direction of Belzec, (incidentally, we later became aware that only a short time after we had left the Spoldeszelnia building, a bomb hit it and destroyed the entire structure).

The German officers and soldiers all along our march route, upon seeing us, reacted savagely, with the meanest form of abuse. One German officer ran with an impetus for a length of several tens of meters, and with his entire savagery, struck my grandfather, R' Yud'l Shafran in the head, such that he could no long continue under his own power, and I, along with my cousin Yisroel'keh Perel, had to support him on both sides. (Of note, according to a letter that we later received, after the Holocaust, from an eye-witness in Sokol, that three years exactly to the same day, 6 Tishri, and indeed on the same road to Belzec, my grandfather was shot). His son, Mikhl Shafran ז"ל had been shot before this, in the house of the *Judenrat* in Sokol, where he was a member, when he refused to turn over a list of Jews to be taken out 'for labor.').

At nightfall, we finally arrived at Narol, where in a courtyard of a nobleman, full of harvested grain, there was a provisional camp of Polish prisoners of war. These grains of wheat sustained our lives, when for several days in a row, we received no food or drink. From time-to-time, we were ordered to gather at a specific point, where we were told we would receive food, but on arrival there, we were beaten, and spit in the eyes by the Polish prisoners, and then, still hungry, sent back to our 'bunks' on the bare earth, under an open sky. The Polish prisoners, seeing this (especially the '*sluzhakehs*[133]') began to show initiative in wanting

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132 Don't worry, as soon as you are shot, we will shoot right back.

133 A Russian word used to describe a 'zealous' soldier.

to please the Germans, and exceeded the Germans with their torture and meanest abuse. They cut off beards, but not simply cutting them. In one case they would cut off the right side of the beard, and the left side moustache. In a second case, they entirely shaved off a once patriarchal white beard, leaving only a centimeter wide strip along its entire length, which had to hang down from the tip of the chin. In other cases, they cut out designs of swastikas in the head hair, and '*Zed Zyd Palestina*[134]' etc. – they also began to tear off our clothing and shoes, etc.

When a group of elderly Jews went to complain to the German officer, about their treatment at the hands of the Polish prisoners, the officer listened to them attentively. He then inquired of the German watch guards why these civilian Jews had been rounded up. They indicated to him that we had shot from our homes at the German military. Then the German officer and were the delegation by saying that we would immediately be shot. At that time, one of the most brutal scenes took place. German soldiers, with bared bayonets ordered all Jewish soldiers that were to be found among the Polish captured military personnel, were to be assembled in one place. The Poles assisted in identifying the Jewish soldiers, and when one of them categorically denied that he was a Jew, they ordered him to strip naked, and when it was definitely established that he was a Jew, his head was immediately split open with the butt of a rifle.

When all the Jews were finally assembled, a group of Germans with fixed bayonets began to prod us, and order us to run to the other end of the square. When barely catching our breath, we arrived there on the run, a second group of Germans was already waiting for us there, with fixed bayonets, and exhausted, we were forced to run back. And this is how the savage running back and forth began. The Germans prodded us with their bayonets, and each time butchered someone. They would stab one of the lancers in the foot, and another in the hand, and other yet, in other parts of their body, wherever they could only strike. This wild game of theirs, chasing people back and forth, and in the process panicking, stabbing, and laughing with the cackle of a hyena, went on for a span of time that to us seemed like an eternity.

We were ordered to stand ourselves along the length of a stone wall, with our faces to the wall. Opposite us, stood a German unit with guns pointed at us. We were notified that we were going to shot, and immediately we heard an order from an officer: Fire! We heard the count, one, two, three. We all had the feeling that this was our last few minutes. I remember, to this day, how I glanced to my side to see my father ז"ל, my grandfather, relatives and friends, for the last time. I recited '*Shema Yisrael*' closed my eyes, and thought of my mother, brother, relatives and friends, who were at home, who would not know where our remains could even be found. Then the salvo came, but of note – I was still alive – they had shot over our heads. They played with our lives and took a bestial satisfaction from our fear of death. We were then ordered to surrender our watches, money, or other valuables, threatening us that if they found anything on our persons afterwards, that individual would have earned a death sentence. Everyone thanked God for this, and gave away everything that they had (Years later, I met someone who showed me a twenty dollar bank note that he had sewn into his clothing, and despite the threat of death, he did not surrender it.).

We were told that all the civilians were going to be set free, and the military prisoners were going to be taken further to a camp in Germany. The elderly among our group, such as my grandfather R' Joel Shafran, R' Chaim Yaakov Scheiner, R' Yaakov, the ritual slaughterer and meat inspector, Schneider, were told by them to follow a wagon drawn by a pair of hitched horses as far as the neighboring *shtetl*, where those local Jews helped them to hide. However, for the younger people, they devised a special attraction. Everyone was allocated a horse, to which they held onto a rope, and it was required to run after the horse as it galloped. All

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134 'Go to Palestine.'

along the way that we proceeded on, Germans stood with whips in their hands, with which they whipped the horses, and we needed to run with the horses at the same pace. We ran with the last of our strength, falling frequently. The horses ran right over our bodies, until finally we were ordered to sit on the horses and ride. However, for us, this was a derisory salvation. Which of us, at that point, was capable of riding a horse? We jumped up on the backs of the horses, held on for a minute, and then in a rapid run, quickly fell off. We would, again, pick ourselves up, and immediately fall under a hail of blows from the riding crops of the Nazi attackers. I was totally bloodied, resigned, and suddenly, I decided that I could indeed ride. In that precise moment, when I thought that I had nothing more to lose, that I would get trampled under the horses' hooves, a miracle happened. I began to ride while sitting stiffly erect, like a veteran cavalryman, and won control over the horse. We rode like this until nightfall. Al along the way, we heard the loud, mocking laughter of the Germans, who were near us. In the evening, we stopped somewhere in a field near Lubliniec. We were tired, hungry, frozen from the cold, because we were half naked, beaten down and resigned to our fate. The Polish soldiers did receive something to eat, but we – got nothing. We lay on the bare, damp earth. The nights were cold. We would array ourselves one next to the other, embracing one another in a long row, and warmed ourselves this way from each others' bodies. It was plain cold for only the first and the last person on their backs. Then we switched, and they also were able to get a little warm. Thoughts at that time were very sorrowful. The prospects for staying alive were, in our eyes, very weak. No food was being allocated, we were weakened, and if the Germans won't shoot us outright, we will simply fall sick from hunger and cold. The German officer called to my father v"g and ordered him to smell the food in his military mess kit, saying thereby: 'Jew, you can smell the food, but you will get nothing.' We were lucky once, to get a bit of water out of a clay pit, and Mendl Greenberg and I had a fight over it, tearing the little bit of water, one from the other, in order to moisten one's lips. At that point, the German officer intervened, and did not permit us to drink the clay water, because, heaven forbid, we might get sick. However, he did not permit any potable water to be given to us. He explained that all Jews are 'Hore-Belishas[135]' who want to bring down Germany, and we, therefore, are enemies. We were also informed that we were being taken to an S.S. trial in Jaroslaw.

The next morning – Wednesday – we continued our march. Part of the time, the opportunity arose for us to be able to snatch a drink of water from peasants, who stood along the way with pails of water, and it was allocated for those Polish prisoners who were going by. We were not permitted to drink this water, however, every now and then, an opportunity arose to snatch a drink, at the precise moment when the German overseer had stepped away for a minute. For the entire time, each of us had two horses and he had to march between both and hold onto them (we were rarely permitted to ride). The pall of dust from the horses and the marching prisoners was unbearable. We almost didn't feel the hunger, but the thirst was unbearable.

We marched by a brook, and we were ordered to water the horses, but we were guarded to assure that we would not take a drink. The resulting thirst oppressed us mightily, and in marching by the brook, somewhere close to Sieniawa a number expressed the wish to just jump into the river, and for at least one more time in their lives, have a good drink, when even by doing this, there was a danger of drowning. I recalled the story of the exile to Babylon when the thirsty Jews were given pouches full of air instead of water, from which they died. The entire march was so reminiscent of that time, the same forms of torture, the same abuses.

On the eve of Yom Kippur I decided that I must 'observe a fast,' and if not with food, let it al least be through

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135 Isaac Leslie Hore-Belisha, 1st Baron Hore-Belisha, PC (September 7, 1893 – February 16, 1957) was a British Liberal Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister remembered for his innovations in road transport and for being an alleged victim of anti-Semitism.

[abstinence from] drink. I was lucky to have found a rusty small can from fruit preserves, and every time that we marched by a Polish peasant who stood by and made water available for the captured Poles, I abandoned my two horses, jumped to him, and dipped off water from his pail and quickly drained it before the German overseer could notice what happened. Several times, I received a beating for doing this, but it was worth it. I had the feeling that this was granted to me as a consideration for the eve of Yom Kippur, when it is a mitzvah to eat and drink. However, after several of these fortuitous 'operations,' I once returned with my little can of water and established that one of my two horses had run away. I took account of what this implied. I was playing with my life. Everyone had two horses except me, who had only one. The German overseer immediately came over to me and said that it means a death sentence. Fortunately, an Austrian officer came by, who came over and gave me several blows from his rubber truncheon for my negligence, and he told the overseer that I would be tried for the loss of the military horse that evening, and dispose of the matter. It was in this manner that he worked out for me not to be taken by the patrol that had control of us, that would have immediately taken me away to carry out the sentence. Later on, the same officer acquired two additional horses from somewhere, and brought them to me, such that by nightfall at the time of Kol Nidre, when we came to the temporary camp to lodge for the night, I actually had one extra horse that I was supposed to have (interestingly, that in that first night in the camp at Narol. A German came to us in the middle of the night and comforted us by saying that 'it is not forever that you will remain here...'). On the eve of Yom Kippur we also passed Stary Dzikow. Several German murderers on our guard patrol came to us with revolvers in their hands, and bragged in front of their colleagues that they had just shot three Jews. We spent the night of Kol Nidre on a large open square, surrounded by automatic weapons, which were fired from time to time, in order to frighten us and not to try and escape.

On the morning of Yom Kippur, the Germans – knowing in advance what day it was – made us line up at the precise end of the prisoners, such that the guards that ringed the marching crowd would be especially able to keep an eye on us. On that day, they did not give us any horses to lead, but instead, they devised something special in order to make us happy. They took two heavy boxes of ammunition, tied together with a chain, and hung them each time on our backs. And when that individual broke under the weight, not being able to proceed any further, they began to beat him murderously. When I was offered the honor of participating in this, my father ז"ל indicated that he would be in a better position to do this, in my place. They assured him that they had something extra for him, and this time, I would have to carry it. I had decided that under no circumstances would I carry it, since it was entirely too heavy for me. I laid down with the load in the middle of the path. In the meantime, our train began to march further. The German officer who rode through, found me underfoot, and he took the ammunition away from me, grabbed me by the ear, and in this manner riding at a gallop, dragged me back to the marching line. When I offered him the excuse that I was not well, and could not drag the heavy load, he answered that if I was not well, that I would have to be shot, so I would not infect others.

My friend, Shmuel Kaufman הי"ד, the son of the so-called *Shokhet* of Izdytycz, one of the outstanding pupils of the Yeshiva of *Khakhmei Lublin*, who was going along with me, was burdened with the same kind of load, and in that, was instructed to carry a bayonet at whose top a *Siddur* was stuck. He was ordered to hold his hand high, and not bend his elbow for even one second. His weakened condition, to which needs to be added a couple of days of hunger and suffering, made it impossible for him to do this, and as a result, they stabbed the bayonet into his elbow.

It appears, that in order to aggravates us further, they served us with a small bowl of soup on Yom Kippur day after noon. At about the hour of the *Ne'ilah* prayer, my father ז"ל was no longer able to continue. His bare feet had been cut up by the sharp little stones that was spread along the entire way. I was given a large hunk

of wood to hold, under one arm, and I was ordered to lead my father ז"ל with my other arm. They began to whip my father ז"ל, and ordered me to sing. Unconsciously, the words to '*Ani Amarti Mata Ragli..*' When I later oriented myself to what I had sung in that crucial hour of the *Ne'ilah* service, I felt bolstered and a home that '*Your beneficence, Lord will sustain me,*' is already near. We forded the San [River] on our way to Sieniawa, and on the night of Yom Kippur we lodged in a large field. At that time, our train consisted of over twenty [20] thousand Polish military prisoners of war. Our group of Polish Jews were the only civilians. A light rain was falling. Completely exhausted and wrung out, I lay on the wet ground. We found a couple of raw rapeseed plants, but this disagreed with all of us. Everything looked hopeless.

My father ז"ל observed my condition, and took off through the field with a small bottle, looking for water for me. A long time went by, and he did not return. I became very upset, and when he hadn't returned by morning, my friend Shmuel Kaufman s"hv and I decided to go and look for him in this large field. In walking across this large prisoner camp, we spied a civilian man in black clothing who was standing and negotiating with the Germans (he bought horses from them). Suddenly he turned to us and in Yiddish said, "Jews, what are you doing here?" We told him that we were being held here on a charge of conspiracy, that we had shot at the Germans, and [in addition] that we were looking for my father ז"ל. He gave us a wink, indicating that we should follow him. He told us to hide ourselves in the grain in the field, and then nearby, showed us a path by which we could, later on, reach the house of a Jew who would hide us in his attic. When the other Jews of our group saw that we also had disappeared, they thought that perhaps there was a way to run away and all hid themselves in a variety of places around the camp in the field. As it happened one individual hid himself in a haystack, and it was precisely there that a German watch was posted, Also, after the entire train of prisoners marched off, and he remained in that haystack for over two days, he had a chance to get out of there.

What, then, happened to my father ז"ל? Going to look for water to give me, in his underwear, and without shoes (because the other clothing had been pulled off of him) he went so far until he left the perimeter of the camp, where, indeed, he found water, and then attempted to get back into the camp, and to me. A German patrol then spied him, that had just relieved the previous watch, and evidently did not know that among the military prisoners, there were civilian Jews, and under the threat of shooting, did not permit him to come back into the camp. His entreaties, that he had left a son behind did not help him, nor that he himself was one of the inmates interned in the camp. E was forced to depart while being deeply concerned about my fate. This, however, was the beginning of the liberation of the entire group. When I later marched from village to village on the way home, overall, I was able to pick up messages from my father which he had left in each place that he had visited exactly one day before me, and bemoaned the fate of his son, that he had left with the Germans, in every place that he was. We got as far as Cieszanow. There, we met up with the Red Army already, and as Jews, we breathed a bit easier for a while.

On the first day of Sukkot we continued to march further. Arriving in Narol my cousin Yitzhak Meir Pflug הי"ד provided us with a small wagon to reach Tomaszow. Our parents, comrades, and friends, who no longer expected that we would return, were overjoyed to see us, however this joy did not last very long. Immediately on the second day of Sukkot, September 24, we became aware of the tragic Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty, in which Tomaszow and all the other territories up to the Bug [River] will revert to the Germans. A severe panic gripped the city. The story surrounding what had happened to our group elicited a totally justified terror of the Germans. On Sabbath morning, I was called as an eye witness to a special meeting in the home of R' Yaakov Lederkremmer הי"ד, where our Rabbinical Leader, The Righteous Rabbi R' Leibusz Rubin זצ"ל was present, along with many other of the important members of the community. After they heard out careful accounting of what we went through, it was decided that a recommendation would be made for everyone to

flee from the Germans. The mass exodus from Tomaszow then began.

Because my father ז"ל came back sick, we waited a few extra days until my uncle הי"ד R' Mikhl Shafran הי"ד traveled to us on Simchat Torah frm Sokol, and told us that the *Rebbe* of Belz had come to Sokol on *Shemini Atzeret* and indicated that it was a mitzvah to flee on Yom Kippur that falls on the Sabbath – but in the few days until we left Tomaszow, very heated debates took place in our house as to whether we really should abandon a Jewish city, that had been this way for hundreds of years, and desert it. R' Pinchas Barass and R' Yaakov Arbesfeld of '*Mizrahi*' were among the daily visitors, and strongly defended the standpoint to remain in Tomaszow, and not undertake to wander, and many of this group indeed remained in Tomaszow until the time of the later expulsions to Cieszanow and Belzec, which put an end to the long-rooted Jewish community in Tomaszow-Lubelski.



The Black Sabbath

By Mordechai Lehrer
Taken down by Y. Schwartz

Page 597: The Ludowy (Tchayneh)

I was born in Komarow to very poor parents. By the age of nine, I was a fully fledged orphan. A poor sister of mine, who lived in Tomaszow-Lubelski, took me in. I studied for a couple of years at the Talmud Torah, and the only thing I retained was what I had learned there. I remember at that time, how envious I was of the children who went to Heder, or studied with a good teacher, and feeling the warm gaze of their parents on them. However, my poor sister was not able to give me enough food to sate my hunger, and later on, I had no place to sleep. I wandered aimlessly for the longest time. I did not spend the night in the same place where I spent the day. I mourned my fate silently, lying on the hard bench of the *Hasidic Bet HaMedrash.*

On a certain day, I borrowed two pails, and became a water-carrier. I carried water to the balebatim of Tomaszow. On the market day of Thursday, I would water the peasant horses, and my situation did indeed improve. I was no longer hungry. On the Sabbath, I ate at the home of Gut'sheh Schwartz ע"ה, and I also slept there. And in this manner, I remained a water carrier up to the outbreak of The [Second World] War. And in order that the readers know who I am, I will refer to myself in the same way that I was called in Tomaszow, Mott'l the Hoarse. And seeing that I consider myself a citizen of Tomaszow, I will, here, convey the experiences that I went through in the time that I was in the hands of the German murderers.

The Black Sabbath

On the Sabbath of the beginning of the month of Heshvan of 1939 (I do not remember the exact date), I along with Maness Unfuss, and two boys from Warsaw, were at the home of Abraham Dorenbash (Baylah Mekh'leh's), when two small gentile boys came in with two S.S. bandits, and informed that here were Jews. We were led off to the *Ludowy.* On both sides of the street, many of the local (gentile) residents were gathered who were making fun of us, and laughing as different groups of Jews were being led by. At the entrance, stood the janitor of the *Urzad Skarbowy* who had in time become a *Volksdeutsch* with a thick truncheon in his hand, and whoever entered, he greeted with blows, such that the threshold became drenched in blood. When I entered, I saw a frightful sight. Approximately 300 Jews stood half naked, with German soldiers on one side, and on the other side, S.S. murderers with truncheons and staves, and were administering a continuous beating. Their most intense rage was poured out at that time on Eliyahu Shtruzler. From him, they demanded gold and money. He was beaten to the point that he was unrecognizable. Afterwards, Eliezer Bergenbaum was severely beaten. They also demanded gold from Gerson, and also beat him very severely. After that, everyone was beaten in accordance with their position in the row, and everyone was searched, and everything they had was taken away. Falek Ritzer was ordered to sing the *Hatikvah* and everyone else was compelled to sing along with him.

Afterwards, we were taken outside half naked, and ladders and sticks were placed under our feet to cause us to fall, and the laughter from the gathered gentiles hurt very much. After this, we were all photographed. We were harassed in this way until night time. At night, a German approached us and asked who among us can speak German. Falek presented himself, to which the German said that he was giving a deadline of three days to leave Tomaszow.

The entire assembly began to flee to Bayrakh'eh in the mill (that is to say near the border[136]). Arriving there, a fresh, frightening picture unfolded before my eyes. Men, women and small children lay out on the street, because there was no longer possible to get into the mill. We lay out in the rain with small, sick children. The crying of the children torn the heart. Two Germans, apparently from the border, permitted a pair of thin trees to be cut own, in order to build a fire to warm the children. One Jewish man, however, tore a couple of boards out of a fence, and as if growing out of the grown, the gentile owner of the fence appeared, and shouted out loudly that the Jews here would cause him a misfortune. As punishment, the two 'good Germans' ordered Shaul'keh (Fat Abraham's son-in-law) to climb up a thin, tall tree and then let go with his hands, so that he will fall down. Pitiably, he had to climb up, and indeed, immediately fell down. He was carried into the mill and I do not know if he survived.

The people exhausted themselves in and around the mill for a couple of weeks. Men fell down, children begged for a morsel of bread, a bit of water. Twice, I risked my life and returned to Tomaszow and brought back bread. I also brought water on a continuous basis. I must also note that many Jews remained in Tomaszow, apparently these being the ones not in the Ludowy, or they figured that the Nazi murderers were not after them.

With enormous energy and exertion, on one night, I crossed the border illegally. I arrived in Rawa Ruska, where I met up with our Red 'Liberators.' With this, one chapter in my tragic experiences came to an end.

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136 From previous information, we know that Bayrakh's Mill was in the town of Belzec, which was at the border with the Soviet occupied part of Poland, and the Ukraine. See page 50, 123, 251

A Model of Salvations

By Shmuel Ehrlich
Taken down by Y. Schwartz

The great tragedy of Polish Jewry was bloodily inscribed in the history of oppression of the Jewish people. The Jewish cities and towns of Poland were exterminated, smashed and burned, together with Jewish lives, together even with the cemeteries, and among them, our little town of Tomaszow-Lubelski in which every span of earth, every stone was covered with Jewish blood, that cries out, demands, and asks: why?....

In the month of December of the year 1939, when it was after the German bombs began to suddenly fall on the houses of the hapless *shtetl,* which each father and mother mourned their [personal] victim of that tragic Thursday, a severe cold winter began to draw near, accompanied by cold rains and snow. Dark angry clouds raced over the skies, just as if they were coming to announce dark and devastating news. The entire Jewish populace sat in their homes, and out of fear, would not utter so much as a word. On a certain day, I think it was a Saturday, several groups of German murderers went out to seize crippled people, the insane, and also the sort that sat around the church to beg for alms, also crippled (to this day I do not know if the Germans realized that the cripples that they seized in front of the church were not Jewish). The firs victim was Pinia'leh Khazer'l, as he was called, Bayrakh Schuster's son. He was diminutive in size, and bent over to a side, and he limped on his small foot. Along the way, the German lifted him up in the air with a hand, but did not drop him, in order not to make his death an easy one, but rather, dragged him to the cellar where Joseph Fyer sold kerosene, and he threw him in there and locked him up with a large lock. Our local gentiles took great satisfaction from this spectacle. Afterwards, they met up with a son of Sadlik, who was deaf, dumb and blind, standing by his former home that was near Mordechai Bergerson (The Red One) and was banging on the door. Pitiably, he had no notion that a war was going on in general, and against the Jews, in particular. Two gentile hooligans were dragging him by the feet and threw him into the cellar as well. After that, they threw 'Crazy Shayndl'eh' [into the cellar], who let out such frightful screams that it tore the heart. Later on, they threw in 'Crazy Taibl'eh' along with a number of other impaired womenfolk, whose identity I did not know. The doors of the cellar, on which the large lock was hung, could be compressed to a small space with a push. The following morning, the German murderers grabbed about ten Jews and gave them large pails, and ordered them to bring water from the pump was not far from the cellar space, and told to fill the cellar with water. Under wild screams and severe beating, the Jews kept on pouring water into the cellar. The victims stood on the steps as the cellar became more and more full. The frightful wailing cries and screams and the banging against the doors could move a stone, but it did not move the stone-hearted gentiles. The fear of death that we experienced at that time cannot be imagined by anyone. And so, it was in this fashion that the Jews poured water in for several days, until it fell silent, and even a whisper was no longer heard. Then, a large flat wagon was brought with horses, and the door was opened, and the dead bodies removed. The deaf and dumb person and one other woman still moved their mouths, as they were taken to be buried. Where this was, I do not know.

May the Nazi murderers be cursed for generation unto generation. All those who were in the ghettoes, all the partisan fighters, all those who survived the terror of Hitler's assault and system of extermination, and all those who, by some miracle, managed to save themselves – all of us were orphaned. Our fathers, and mothers, sisters and brothers, children, friends, teachers and pupils, fell. Even at our most joyous celebrations, a shadow of sadness will remain, for the Tomaszow martyrs who fell as victims to a variety of terrifying deaths.



The Destruction and Annihilation of My Shtetl, Tomaszow-Lubelski

By Sheva Kempinsky-Krieger
Taken down by Y. Schwartz

Page 602: Sheva Kempinsky-Krieger

A substantial number of years have passed, since those nightmarish days and night, when the lands of Poland were flooded with rivers of Jewish blood, that the Nazi murderers had spilled. The children, smashed by the German murderers would have become mothers and fathers [by now], and the mothers, from whose arms they were torn would have been able to derive *nachas* from their grandchildren. The larger part of the small remnant of those Tomaszow Jews that were saved, became old and broken before their time – and despite this, it seems like it just happened today, as if the years had never gone by. This is because the terror and pain of those days is permanent, permanent and fresh. To this day, I have not had a single restful night; to this day, frightful dreams terrorize me. I still clearly hear the wild laughter of the Gestapo, the shooting, and the suffocated screams of tortured children. Ah, God, give me strength so that I will be able to pour out some small part of my tragic experience on this scrap of paper, so that it can be preserved for coming generations; [so that] the Jewish people may know, and remember, what the Hitlerist bandits did with our people.

With the outbreak of the war in the year 1939, I, and my husband, San'eh Nadler, and my four beloved sons, full of heart, remained in Tomaszow under the Germans. When he emerged naked and badly beaten from the *Ludowy* (Tchayneh) he became swollen, and went deaf. When they began to seize people to do forced labor, I his my sick and broken husband in the cellar, and under fear of death, I went off to the village to try and bring in a bit of food, at that time already wearing an insignia .

Once, on my way back from the village, a few young gentile girls recognized me, even though I had hidden the insignia in my pocket. They held me back firmly. Two ran off quickly to report to the Gestapo, that they had caught a Jewess with potatoes. When I saw that I was lost, I told the young gentile girls that all I wanted to do was enter a house that was at hand, in order to take something. From there, I fled through a back door, and I immediately ran home. When the [other] gentile girls arrived with the Gestapo, I was understandably no longer there. Accordingly, they took the woman to show where I lived, with the threat that they would otherwise take her. When this woman and the Gestapo arrived to the house where I lived, I had, in the intervening time, hidden my children and husband in a different hiding place.

A short time thereafter, I observed that the situation of the Jews was getting worse day by day. People were being shot for the slightest trifles, and every gentile had the right to rob and kill Jews. On a certain day, I paid a gentile in a village quite dearly to take my husband on as a shepherd. I also paid yet another gentile, quite dearly, to take on my older boy as a shepherd. Mt three children would go into the fields to harvest some grasses, or just leaves in general, or scavenge the waste dumps, in order to sustain their lives. At that time, the surveillance in the city had become so tight, that it was no longer possible for me to go to the village to see what was happening to my husband and child. On a specific day, an order was issued to the gentile populace that if a Jew was found with anyone, they would receive a death sentence. Understandably, my husband and son returned to Tomaszow.

The first *aktion* took place in the year 1942, in the month of Adar (Purim time). In accordance with an order, all men and women over the age of 32 were required to present themselves on the plaza during the course

of the day. My husband and I, and our children, fled out of the city, and hid ourselves for two days. When I returned, it became clear that all of those who had presented themselves were taken away to Cieszanow. From that moment on, understandably, we became illegal. Jews up to the age of 32 received identification booklets, but we, meaning myself and my husband, and the children, did not have such booklets. We wandered from house to house, and with tears in our eyes, we sought refuge from the Jews that had such booklets, and were legal [residents]. It is axiomatic that each of the Jews was frightened of the prospect of sheltering people like ourselves. Having become aware that many Jews had returned from a variety of hiding places, the Gestapo went around with many gentiles from Tomaszow, from house to house, and shot those that they encountered who did not possess a booklet. Once again, fate toyed with us, and once again, my husband, children and I were saved, hiding in a bathroom. I am not in a position to give an accounting of how much Jewish blood was spilled on that terrifying day and night. And it was in this manner, that we exerted ourselves in frightful hunger, and need, that cannot be imagined by any human conception.

At that time, the Judenrat consisted of Yehoshua'leh Fishelsohn, Neta Heller, Abba Bergenbaum, Yaak'l Arbesfeld, Yeshay' Kruk ז"ל, and others. From my perspective, I must remark that our Judenrat did the best that was possible within their means, to help the already half-dead Jews, with advice and action.

The Second Aktion

The second *aktion* took place on the second day of *Shavuot*. In accordance with a strict order, men, women and children were ordered to present themselves at the plaza (I do not recall the age requirement). They went around from house to house, and with wild shouting, drove everyone out. Once again, the opportunity was available to me, my husband and children, to flee out of the city, and to hide ourselves with a gentile, whom I paid very well. The gentile hid us until a few days after the *aktion*. Once again, we returned, and became aware that everyone, men, women and children, had been loaded on vehicular transports and taken to Belzec, where the people who had previously been taken to Cieszanow were also taken to Belzec on that same day. The wailing cries of the victims in that gruesome night could be heard for miles. The weeping of the children split the heavens, and tore every Jewish heart, and those, who did not want to get into the transportation vehicles, were shot. The dead body of Itcheh'leh Nitz rolled around underfoot near the vehicles.

Being illegal once again in Tomaszow, I went into the *Judenrat*. The President, Yehoshua'leh Fishelsohn ז"ל had by that time been shot, along with his wife and child, and his place had been taken by Abba Bergenbaum. With a sympathetic cry, I begged him to determine if it were possible for him to obtain a booklet for me, so that I could be legal, and offered to give up the last of my jewelry. Crying himself, he answered me: My, child, you should only live! With the jewelry, or without the jewelry, with booklets, or without booklets, we are all lost. Go 'home,' and to the extent you can, rescue a bit of bread in exchange for the jewelry.

Once again, I exerted myself, under great, frightful suffering, on behalf of my husband and children, in hunger, in need, and under constant fear.

The Last Aktion

Before the Holidays, an order came out that all the Jews who are illegal are permitted to gather into the Piekarsky *Gasse*. Six houses had been prepared for them, that they will no longer be harassed, and the houses will not be entered and they will not be shot. In a matter of several hours, everyone had moved in there, including me.

Two weeks after the holidays, I noticed that the members of the *Judenrat* were going about in tears, wringing their hands, and I asked: what happened? I was answered that on that evening, the small remnant of Jews was to be exterminated. And immediately, the Gestapo, with the help of our local Polish residents surrounded all of the houses. Along with my husband and children, we ascended into the attic, taking along our little bit of jewelry And a bit of water. At night, we were already able to hear the tumult and the frightful screaming and the shooting of the remnant of Jews. R' Aharon Kiezel ז"ל shouted out: today is the last of my seventy years! And with a choked *Shema Yisrael*, he was shot. One of my children, in taking a bit of water, spilled a bit, and two gentile hooligans noticed that water was running down. They immediately went up into the attic, and found us with electric searchlights. Wildly, they shouted at us to get down. With tears in our eyes, we begged them to spare our lives, and that they should take whatever they wanted from the house, and I give them my bit of jewelry in addition to that. They cooperated and took us down, and showed us to flee in a certain direction, and by following the back roads, we ran in the direction of Werchanie, because there, my parents had negotiated to work in the service of a nobleman.

On the way, we encountered a woman Christian acquaintance, who asked to where we were fleeing. I told her everything, and that we were now going to Werchanie to my parents, perchance we might be able to hide out there. The Christian woman then said to me: Don't go there, because a couple of hours ago your parents were shot along with eighteen other Jews. They are still lying out on the yard -- -- -- no person in the world can possible grasp what went on in my bloodied heart at that moment. Understandably, we no longer went to Werchanie, but instead we went into the forest near Werchanie. I left my husband and children in the forest, and I went into the village to beg for a bit of food, and at the same time begged for a shovel, and dug out a deep pit, and it was there that we lay. I roasted beets and potatoes that I could beg for in the village.

We lay this way in the pit for three months, cooking in a broken pot, which I had stopped up with a rag, and in this manner, I melted snow in order that the children might have a bit of water. We became very, very filthy. One time, I managed to beg a small pair of scissors, and we all cut our hair. We lived this way in frightful hunger. The sorrow of my children cut my aching heart. The slightest rustle of a leaf startled us into a state of terror. This persisted until a day, when six gentile hooligans came upon us, and ordered us out of the pit. I was the first one out, and from the shot that I heard, I fell over and was covered in snow. However, I immediately heard the scream of my husband, along with my four children who were then shot. When it fell still, half fainting, I was able to hear the quiet groaning from my dying children. I looked about and saw no one, apart from the five, still warm bodies of my nearest. At that moment, a terrifying cry broke out of my bloodied heart (At that time, I was still able to cry). --- I still had enough heart, so that I was able to turn them over with my own hands, and with their faces upward, kissed them all, and fled barefoot, not knowing to where.

I arrived at a field, and seeing a haystack near a house, I went into the straw, thinking that God would take pit on me, and that I would become so frozen that I would go to my eternal sleep. But, as if the spite me, death would not come. Spending the entire night in the straw, my feet and hands were completely frozen – something I suffer from to this day – but my heart would on no account give out. In the morning, a gentile with a cart wanted to gather some straw, and took note of me. Upon seeing me, he became very frightened, because who knows what I looked like at that moment. He took me into the stable, and gave me good food to eat – to this day I cannot understand how it was that I could eat at that time – and he said to me, that he really did take pity on me, but that he was very frightened about keeping me, because to shelter someone who was Jewish was punishable by death. I thanked him profusely and left. But where to go?... In leaving the village for about two kilometers, I noticed an old broken-down ruin. I entered it, and remained there for two weeks. Each night, I went into the village, and begged for a small bottle of water with a piece of bread.

On a certain day, several S.S. murderers came to the ruin (it appears that someone had informed on me) and with wild shouting they shouted: '*Kom heraus! Kom heraus!*' I did not respond. They went away. But it did not take long before a large contingent of gentiles arrived with picks and staves, and shouted that I should come out. Once again, I did not respond. So they began to dismantle the ruin. Seeing my plight, I jumped down and through them in one breath, and took off running for the forest which was not far away. Nobody pursued me, and I only heard how they were shouting: this is a lunatic, and not a partisan fighter. Entering the forest, I fell, banging up my swollen, frozen feet. Blood flowed, and I wept intensely. I begged for death to take me already, just so that I would not be killed by all of the various bandits. It was in this manner that I lay a day and a night. This was already the year 1943.

In the morning, I fled, and came to a colony that consisted of about ten to fifteen houses. I came into the residence of a gentile woman, and begged for a piece of bread. Her husband was sitting there. With fear and astonishment he said: *O panie Kriegerowa, jeszcze zyje?* How is it that you survived till now? And he immediately ordered that I be given food, and after eating, he offered me a small bottle of milk and a half loaf of bread, and told me to go on my way, because he was too afraid to keep me.

I went outside, but did not go away, but went under his house, where it was possible to crawl under the flooring. There I laid for a whole night and a whole day. At night, I went inside again, and I was once again given food, and told to leave, and once again, I crawled under the floor. And in this manner, I lay under the floor for two months. Later on, the lady of the house became aware that I was hiding myself under her floor. She took pity on me, and many times placed food for me underneath, so I would not have to come inside at night. Understandably, her husband, who was the Soltys, and her children, were not allowed to know where I was hiding myself.

One day, the lady of the house, she was called Manya Frotz, said to me that I must leave the place, because tomorrow, the Gestapo was supposed to come for grain and swine, which was due to them on a periodic basis. I was compelled to leave, and came to Werchanie, that is, three kilometers from the colony. Upon arrival, I entered the first house of the village, and speaking with a very emotional and tearful tone, they took pity on me, and I was given food to eat, and warm water in which to bathe. However, when I commenced to take off my shoes, the skin and nails came off my frozen and swollen feet. He told me to crawl on top of a warm stove and on the morrow, he brought me a salve for the feet. They kept me for two weeks, and afterwards they told me to leave, because they were afraid to keep me any longer. Over this period of time, my feet healed a bit.

Once again, I had no where to go, so I hid out in his livestock pen for a couple of weeks. At night, I procured food for myself. I was very mindful of the master of the house, lest he discover that I was hiding in his livestock pen.

On once occasion a gentile took note of me in the livestock pen, a pair of wild and frightened eyes looked me over, and he speedily fled. However, by the time he had returned with other gentiles, I was no longer there. From a distance, I saw a number of gentiles going into the livestock pen. I returned to Manya Frotz, under the floor, and let her know that I was back, and once again, in strict secrecy, would bring me food, and once again, I remained there for a couple of months. Seeing as the grain had grown high, I began to conceal myself in the grin stalks by day and by night.

On once occasion, when I had come to a gentile woman to beg for some food, she said to me; listen well, you need to know that very many of our people here know that you are hanging around here for a longer period

of time, but nobody is going to inform on you. Apart from this, there is one informer, and he is called Jan Skraban. If he doesn't turn you in, you will survive. Therefore, you need to be especially careful to avoid him. However, life had become too much for me to bear by this time, and I no longer had the strength to exert myself and drag myself around through the rain in a frightful state of hunger. On one occasion, I had taken the decision to go directly to this Jan Skraban and to let him turn me in, or kill me himself.

In entering his presence, and greeting him, he asked me: *Oooh, dziecko zyjesz?* And before I could answer him, he told his wife to give me food, and told me to crawl onto the stove, and this 'informer,' kept me for a couple of months. From time to time, if Germans were supposed to be in the area, he would hide me in the field. I helped them by working around the house, and also in the field, if there was no one to see. Until -- --

Until the news was bruited about that the Russians had arrived. From my throat, a joyous shout erupted: Freedom!



My Experiences Under the Germans

By Abraham Singer
Taken down by Y. Schwartz

Page 611: *Abraham Singer, immediately after the war, in a Russian uniform.*

Page 617: *Chaim Jonah, son of Sholom Singer one of the shtibl youth in the Cieszanow shtibl.*

I, Abraham Singer, son of R' Sholom Singer ע"ה (Rachaner's), wish, with this description, to convey my personal terrifying experiences under the Nazi regime. It is superfluous to describe the great importance of such a description, because tens and hundreds of communities were uprooted and cut down with the utmost refined cruelty, not leaving any shred of documentary trace, or memory of their destruction and annihilation. To this day, we know nothing of a large number of cities and towns where the mass graves are found. Not to mention the Yahrzeits of the various *aktionen* or other gruesome predations that befell the Jews before they were killed outright.

The literature of our most recent destruction is still very meager, and the destruction itself is so frighteningly huge, therefore, the principle of 'whoever is excessive in his retelling' holds, and is explicitly a great mitzvah. And therefore, let my retelling be an important supplement to the history of our great catastrophe. Let it be a reminder for each and every one of us, to dedicate time and effort to put up exactly this kind of a monument to our murdered, and cut down *shtetl* of Tomaszow-Lubelski, which once was, but no longer exists. Despite the fact that I make a strenuous effort, and I endeavor a great deal to concentrate my thoughts, My skin crawls as I recall with what frightening deaths my nearest and dearest were martyred in Sanctification of The Name.

My family and I lived in Tomaszow from 1933 onwards, and I think that every resident of Tomaszow knew R' Sholom *Rachaner*. Relatively speaking, we lived rather well, despite the fact that Tomaszow was a small, poor *shtetl*, and the poverty was great among many. Anti-Semitism was rife with its fully open force, such as *nie kupuie o zydow*, don't buy from a Jew, and picketing of Jewish businesses. In general, the gentiles had a wary and hateful posture towards the Jews, and it was not only one Christian who regarded my father ע"ה as a very honest man, looked upon him with a so-called 'pity' what a waste that he was a *zyd*. Gentile hooligans, at every opportunity, displayed their anti-Semitic faces, and would throw stones, knock out a window, or generally perpetrate all manner of mischief. It was in this manner that we existed, externally struggling along, insulted and beaten down, but! Internally, among ourselves in the *Bet HaMedrash*, it was entirely different.

Proud Jews, scions of the great Jewish people, elevated by a deep faith in Jewish continuity, 'The Survival of Israel is no Lie,' this was the strength that enabled us to endure. I cannot forget the imposing picture on the Sabbath or a Festival Holiday in the Tomaszow *shtibl*. It was simply not possible to recognize the same Jews consumed by worry – refreshed, enthusiastic Jews, having cast off the middle of the week secular garments of the Diaspora, together with the nightmare of exile, a holy spiritual fire flamed in their hearts. The heartfelt singing of the Sabbath prayers with such fiery passages a 'and the saved will go up to Mount Zion to judge Mount Esau,' – this warmed and was a balm to Jewish hearts of the Tomaszow Jews. This was their spiritual armor. And in passing, I want to add that every Sabbath it was mandatory that we entertained a guest. And if it happened, on occasion, that in the Cieszanow *shtibl* there was no guest, my father ran around looking, until he found a guest. This all took place in the past...

With the outbreak of The Second World War, at the time of the bombardment on the first Thursday, when Tzal'keh Reis fell near my feet, and whose father ע"ה had come to take a bit of linen on Friday for a burial shroud, which he could not get from anywhere – we, the entire family, immediately left for Rachanie on Friday where a partner of ours lived, R' Zund'l Goldman. On the same day that the Germans entered Tomaszow, they also entered Rachanie, and the first thing they did was take out all of the [holy] books, prayer shawls, and burned them. Also, they cut and tore the beards of everyone with a murderous sadism, and also beat them murderously. My uncle, Hirsch Freund ע"ה (a brother of Shlomo from Laszczow) was in a second location, when they came to take away a Torah scroll from him. He strongly resisted this, and he went outside with the scroll and shouted: You can do what you want with me, but I will not give you this Holy Writ. The murderers skewered him with a bayonet, and he died in an excruciating manner. We buried him in Tomaszow only after making a very strenuous effort.

In about two weeks time later, several Germans arrived, and exactly at 12 midnight, they set fire to the house in which we three families were living. We barely got out with our lives, and went to live with a Jew that was still to be found in Rachanie, Yosh'eh Springer (a brother-in-law to Eliyahu Schnur and Leibusz *Rachaner*). After a week's time, the murderers came back again, on Friday towards evening, and again set fire to the house. The gentiles were already standing around with water, to keep the fire from reaching their houses. We saw that we were lost, what was there to do? Where does one go? These were the questions hanging on everyone's lips. A sympathetic cry tore itself from everyone's broken hearts. My father ע"ה went off to Wozuczyn, where Mordechai Tsunk lived, who had permitted us to come and live with him. Staying there for a short time, they began to seize Jews for slave labor in Belzec. It was described as the creation of a border fence, and for this purpose, it was deemed necessary to dig out long, deep trenches, which the murderers needed to fill with the Jewish victims. Several days later, an order was issued that everyone was required to surrender their overcoats, and to resist this would incur the death penalty. The S. S. murderer Schultz conducted an inspection among us, and confiscated everything that he wanted. I arrived, and happened to see what was going on in the house, and I fled. He shot at me a number of times, but didn't hit me. I was saved by a miracle. It was under such bitter conditions and frightful fear of death that we exerted ourselves in working in the fields of the nobles, without any pay, to be able to possess the so-called *Ken-Karte* which was the card that permitted us to keep on living for a while yet.

On the eve of Passover 1942, Neta Heller and David Schwindler arrived in Wozuczyn, and told us that they required money, if we can comprehend this, to help the poor for Passover. We gave them as much as we could. At that same time, he told us that there was a big *aktion* in Lublin, a result of which fifteen thousand Jews were deported to be exterminated.

On the second day of Shavuot, an order was issued that all Jews that were found in the villages were required to present themselves in Rachanie on the square near the municipal building, and understandably, myself as well. On the square, a sorting took place to the left and right, and in that process, heart-rending scenes took place. Beatings with rubber truncheons, feral shouting by the murderers, the terrifying cries of the hapless victims, the laughing of the peasants who were standing about – I do not know how we held ourselves together and kept from going stark raving mad. Whoever had a *Ken-Karte* was let go. My father ע"ה, who was among the elderly men, was already among those to be taken away. However, the nobleman Redich came from Pawlowka and said to the murderers (point to my father ע"ה) that he was in his employ, and that he was a very good worker, and he made a fervent request that he should be set free. The murderers set him free. Those not set free were loaded onto wagons and taken off to Belzec for extermination.

On *Rosh Hashana*, an *aktion* took place in Tomaszow which was already supposed to be *Judenrein*. In Wozuczyn nothing (of this nature) happened at that time, but something else took place. It became apparent that the Germans were coming to procure grain and swine, so all of us men fled to hide ourselves in the fields, and the womenfolk remained in the houses, assuming that they will be left alone. The bandits arrived with a savage onslaught, and gathered all the womenfolk in the house of the Soltys, and told them all to strip naked. However, not a single woman wanted to carry out this insulting order. So, they were singly taken into the house of the Soltys, and one sat on her head, and they were then beaten. The shouts and screams blew out the ears. On return, I did not recognize my broken mother – with a split open head, and wounds all over her body, black and blue from bruises received in beating. I remained standing frozen, my heart inside of me cried out, why? Why? And it was in this way that each of us recognized their unfortunate ones, and we had nothing with which to offer them succor. Everyone clearly knew that the misfortune was not yet over. And so it was that someone asked, how is it possible to hold on to one's soul under the duress of such terrifying fear?

I worked in the Mechelow sugar factory with other people from Tomaszow, Yaak'l Arbesfeld ע"ה of the *Judenrat*, for whom there also was no more room in Tomaszow, and several other Jews from Tomaszow, who by a variety of indirect means fled, and were working in the sugar factory. All of the workers, including those from Tomaszow, lived in a barracks in the sugar processing complex. I was given permission to 'go home' to sleep, meaning, two kilometers to Wozuczyn to my parents.

On a certain night, several S. S. murderers came, and went off to the Soltys. They did not spend a long time there, and immediately went away. My father ע"ה was greatly upset by the speed with which they departed. He went to inquire of the Soltys, and the Soltys said that they hadn't come to inquire about the Jews, but rather about grain and other matters. We went to sleep. I used to be the first one to get up, say my prayers and go to work. Such was the case now – however, when I opened the door and wanted to go out, my heart fell. Our house was completely surrounded by a crowd of gentiles with sickles, axes, pitchforks, and barred my way. I immediately woke everyone, and we saw that the Angel of Death is making fast towards us. Now, we understood the previous nights visit of the murderers to the Soltys. Immediately, we heard the shooting from Mechelow where 65 Jews were tortured and shot. Seeing in what sort of a situation we found ourselves, sitting for those unfortunate hours in the house, surrounded by so many bandits, we ran about the house like wounded beasts in a cage. We wept, and tore the hair from our heads. We had already given up and did not believe there could be any rescue. However, the fear and terror of impending death became a choking in our throats. My mother ע"ה stood frozen and struck dumb, unable to move like a rooted tree, without being able to move from the spot. We recited our confessions with heart-rending cries. My father ע"ה called me over and said: Listen to me, Abraham, *you* must remain alive and I hope that *you* will remain alive, *you* must save yourself, but promise me that if you survive that you will never forget that you are a Jew. I have to note, that to this day, I do not understand why he called me over and not my brothers. But his words instilled an awesome strength in me, to find a way to rescue myself from this unfortunate life. At exactly six o'clock, the S. S. murderers arrived from Mechelow. My father ע"ה sat in his prayer shawl and phylacteries, and wanted to go out of the house this way. However, I beseeched him to take the prayer shawl and phylacteries off, in order that the gentiles not make sport of him. Rather, I asked him to put on his overcoat, because it was intensely cold outside, and I also tried to comfort myself with the possibility that they might just send us away. But he did not want to put on his overcoat, because he suspected that it was made with *Sha'atnez*.[137] It was only after strenuous exertions that he was persuaded to put on the overcoat. The first wild shout was

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137 A ritually forbidden admixture of fibers, such as flax and cotton.

for the two women to come out, at which my mother ans sister exited. They were ordered to lie down on the ground face down. After that, two more women, who were made to do the same. When they were finished with the women, they ordered two men to come out, so my father ע"ה and my brother went out, and when they lay on the ground waiting to be shot, my father ע"ה asked the S.S. man for permission to take off his overcoat before he is to be shot. The murderer permitted him to do this, he took off the overcoat, and lay down. And so they shot my father and brother, and in this fashion two men were taken out and all were shot (P.S. The gentiles later told me that, from the incident of the overcoat, they had concluded that my father went crazy, but I knew the real story).

Continuing to search for some means to escape, I noticed the feather shack that was there, and I immediately went into it. As it happens, there was a bundle of straw there. I unbound it, and stretched myself out along the wall, on the ground, and camouflaged myself with the bit of straw, and while lying against the wall, watched the entire terrible scene that surely could not have been worse than Hell. And to this day, those images, that stand before my eyes, give me no rest, and torture me, and assure that I will never forget them for the rest of my life.

The murderers counted up the dead, and saw that their tally was incomplete, because they had 22 dead, and their list showed 23, meaning that one victim was missing. The Soltys examined all the dead, and indicated that *Awramku* was missing, but that I work in Mechelow, in the sugar production complex, and it was because of this, that they didn't search for me. And so it was that I lay unmoving, feeling, at any moment that my heart would stop.

The bloody corpses lay sprawled about on all sides. All around, tens of peasants stood around as onlookers, who by their so-called looks of sympathy took great satisfaction at the Jewish calamity. Afterwards, a table was put out, on which all manner of good things were placed. Whiskey and wine flowed like water, and there was a variety of baked goods and meat that the gentile preparers had previously set aside, who now danced about subserviently for their guests. The wild and gleeful laughter reverberated, and after each glass of whiskey, the murderers applauded 'Bravo!' and sang the *Horst Wessel* song. At the same time, the corpses were still quivering.

After finishing off this piece of work, the S. S. murderers, drunk and happy, went away. It fell silent, and on young girl, Reizl Kupiec, the daughter of Avram'cheh, a friend of ours, was not struck by bullet, lay bloodied among the other women. When the murderers went away, she picked herself up and with all her strength, began to flee. A laborer who actually worked for them at the mill ran after her for a couple of kilometers, captured her, and brought her to Rachanie to the Gestapo where she was tortured and shot.

In a little while, at this location, several wagons were brought, and the corpses were piled on. Stiffened hands and feet, and bloodied heads, hung down from the wagons, and swayed with the rhythm of the wheels, and along the entire length of the way, human blood continued to drip, which in long red lines, wrote out the sorrowful tale of the lost innocent lives. This was the silent language of the spilled Jewish blood that the accursèd earth imbibed in its thirst. To this day, the mystery remains with me, how in the course of three quarters of an hour, approximately, the wagons with the corpses returned to the same place where they were shot, and a deep pit was dug out, and all the victims thrown in. Into the mass grave were also tossed the burned bodies of two Jewish families that lived not far from us. This was Baruch Herschensohn with his family, and his brother-in-law Moshe with his wife Frad'l and their children. When they heard what was happening to us, they committed suicide by immolating themselves.

I was still lying in the little feather shack. Hearing that all was now as still as a grave about me, I was barely able to raise myself, but on no account could I stand on my stiffened feet. It was now about ten o'clock in the morning, and literally, with the last of my strength, I emerged from my hiding place, but where to go? How does one rescue one's self from a death that continuously stalks you? I began to run, not knowing where. Several gentiles took note of me, but remained as silent as a dog not willing to bare its tongue, possibly out of the great respect that they had for my murdered father ז"ע. One of the gentiles shouted after me, '*Awramku, uciekaj do lasu....*'[138] and I fled in one breath.

Coming to a field where there were stands of grain, I sat down to catch my breath. After sitting for a half an hour, the watchman came by, and upon seeing me, he became very frightened, and began to shout that I should flee already, and if not, he will have to kill me. I ran off and came upon a pit. I went down into the pit, and sat till nightfall. I began to shiver from the cold, and I felt that I was going to freeze, that I am congealing into a single block. What does one do? A stream of tears suddenly burst and flowed from my eyes. It was only now that I fully grasped the entire scope of the calamity that had befallen me and those around me. I forced myself out of the pit with a head full of ignited ideas. Outside, it was secretively still. Two heavy, hard hammers pounded on my temples. A heavy load lay on my heart, and before my eyes stood a thick cloud, and all of the tortured, and shot persons, that I had spoken with, not very long ago. I closed my eyes, and I also saw them with outstretched hands, and how much sorrow there is in the world, that in that precise moment had been poured out on me.

I was reminded of a gentile who was well-known to us, who would transport our flour to the train. I went o f to him for a long while. Entering his courtyard, I hid myself under a small woodpile. I was afraid to go into the house, because of the possibility of encountering neighbors. A couple of hours later, he came out to take some wood, and he espied me. He nearly fell down out of fear, and quietly asked me, *Awramku*, you are still alive? Or, have you returned from the World to Come. I wanted to say something to him, but on no account could I open my mouth (to speak). He remained standing for a while, in thought. He went into the house, apparently to take counsel with his wife. After a while, he came out and told me to go into the livestock pen, and he will immediately bring me something to eat. I went in, an indeed, immediately, he brought me warm potatoes and milk. And no matter how strange this may sound, I ate with a ferocious appetite. He made me a lodging spot next to the dogs, and that is how I lay for the entire night. I was exhausted and broken, but could not sleep. In the morning, he again brought me food, and he asked me what I had in mind to do. I was still unable to speak. I thought that I had been struck dumb. He saw that I was unable to speak, and he went away. After several days, I first then began to speak, first to myself. When he came in to me, with tears in my eyes, I said to him, if he could permit me to stay until March, when it would get a bit warmer, I will then go away into the forest, and hide myself there, and from time to time, I would come to him for a bit of bread. He began to laugh. Why he laughed, I did not understand. As he left, he said to me, '*glupie zydzie.*'[139] In this manner, I remained with him for two weeks. When he carried food into the livestock pen, he would call the name of the dog, Babycz.

[One day], his wife came in, tearful and wringing her hands, telling me that a great misfortune had befallen her. Her husband had been arrested. 'The Germans are certainly aware that we are keeping you, and I beg you not to bring any misfortune to my home, only that you flee, because they can still come to do a search.' A darkness descended over my eyes. With an embittered heart, I left after nightfall, but I had no place to go.

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138 'Awramku, flee to the forest....'

139 Stupid Jew.

I was afraid to beg, and so I went along aimlessly, lost in thought, and the thoughts ran one over the other, and in laboring over these severe nightmares, I did not notice that I had stepped onto a frozen river, and the ice broke under me. I sank under the ice, and only with great difficulty and intense struggle, did I barely get out, and from the intense cold, I froze into a single block. I saw, and felt that I was going to pass out, and I began to beseech the Lord that He should take my soul. In the meantime, I saw a livestock pen, and I stealthily entered it, since if the gentile caught me, he would surely have killed me, but to me, it was by now all the same. I dug myself into the hay, and lay there for two days, without food, but every now and then, taking a bit of snow in my mouth. Hunger oppressed me severely, and I could not work out that I would expire here. I went back to my gentile, without his knowledge, and hid myself in the very same corner next to his dog, as I had done previously. The dog recognized me, and did not bark, and I lived like this for two weeks, eating the rations brought for the dog. Nobody knew that I was there.

In two weeks time, I saw that the master of the house had returned, and I began to make myself visible to him. With choked back tears in my eyes, I told him everything. He gave a deep sigh, and said to me, stay here some more with me, but you need to know that I am doing all of this because of your father. And in this way I stayed with him not only till March, but until the middle of summer. Each day, e would tell me of the terrifying, and gruesome predations that the German murderers wreaked upon the Jews, the various *aktionen*, to which he was close to see. He told me that, in Tyszowce the Germans burned a Christian family because they were found to have been hiding a Jew. However, he said that the day of their great defeat was not far in coming, and he comforted me, seeing the effect that his narrative had on me and the degree to which it made my hair stand on end.

On a certain day, it was very hot outside, and I emerged from my lair, and puttered around in the livestock pen, knowing that everyone was in the field. As it happens, at that precise moment, the daughter of the master's sister entered, who, as it happened, along with her father, did not get along with the master because of certain inheritance matters. And she noticed me. I immediately felt that everything was over – – she turned white with fear, she said nothing, not knowing what was going on. She knew me, and thought that I had been shot, and yet, here I was alive, and is to be found under her uncle's protection. She wanted to get away. I oriented myself quickly and said to her: 'Stepka, remember! My life, quite possibly, is no longer worth anything, if your father becomes aware that I am here under the sufferance of his brother-in-law, in which case, he is placing the life of his brother-in-law and his family at risk. My life is spoken for already, and your life is also put at risk (I threatened her) so I beseech you, as much as God loves you, let this incident, where you ran into me, remain a secret forever. She promised me that she would tell no one. I remained yet afraid, and I asked her to swear. She knelt and crossed herself, and swore that this will remain her secret. She went away, and the secret truly did remain a secret.

One day in 1943, I began to suffer, since Yom Kippur was drawing near, and I did not know which day it was supposed to be. This preyed on my mind for a whole day, and gave me no surcease. At night, I dreamt how my father ע"ה came to me, and told me that the coming Sabbath was Yom Kippur, and that I should not forget to fast. Naturally, I fasted that Saturday, and etched that day into my memory, in order that, should I survive, I would be able to verify that I had properly fasted on Yom Kippur. As I later verified it, this was the correct date.[140]

On a certain day, the master of the house came to me, falls on me and bursts into tears, telling me that tomorrow, along with the entire family, as is the case with all the other residents of the village, he must leave

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140 In 1943, Yom Kippur fell on Saturday, October 9.

the village. They received this order because this place was to be occupied by *Volksdeutsche* who had been evacuated behind the front lines. He, himself, does not know where he is going, but it causes him pain in his heart, not knowing what is to happen to me. He would have unquestionably taken me along, but I look too Jewish, but more to the point, he is afraid of his own comrades, who know who I am. He immediately brought me several pieces of bread, several bottles of milk, and he embraced me and took his leave, wishing me success, and he hoped that we would yet live to see each other after the liberation, which seems to be so near, and he then departed with his family. I remained unable to move, what do I do now? I have nowhere to go, and death lays in ambush every step of the way. In the morning, I ascended into the attic and looked out at how the *Volksdeutsche* began to arrive, encumbered with livestock, horses, and occupied the neighboring villages, including the section where the master of this house lived, which, incidentally, was the prettiest corner of the village. And each time, a family of *Volksdeutsche* would approach, looked around, and then went to look elsewhere, since the place didn't meet with their approval. After sitting like this for a couple of days, the master of my house returned in stealth, to have a look at what was transpiring, how his house was being occupied. He saw, however, that nobody was living there, as was the case with neighboring houses. I gave him a signal that only the two of us knew, and he came up into the attic. I relayed all the details to him, that I had assembled over the course of the couple of days, such as the fact that nobody seemed to want to live here. He said he would wait another two days, and then, if nobody was living there, he would return to live there. After two days, he returned with his entire family, and he told me that he believed it was in light of the fact that only because he took care of me, that he was privileged to see his neighborhood spared by the *Volksdeutsche*, and from this day forward, he would never be separated from me. And this is how I continued to live. He even gave me better food to eat.

It pained my heart greatly that I was not able to compensate this decent gentile for his goodness, for his dedication, and for putting his own life at risk for me. Accordingly, I recollected that we had hidden some cut goods which we had from our dry goods business (P.S. We had a dry goods business in Tomaszow in the *Halles*, not far from Ber'keh'leh Tregerman ת"ע), near the miller. When I told my master that I wanted to go to the miller, which was about a two kilometer walk, and to bring back a bit of goods for his benefit, he strenuously dissuaded me from doing this, and told me that he doesn't need this. He was afraid that if I go, the miller will, God forbid, kill me. I did not obey him, and on a certain night, I went to the miller who lived near the mill. A *Volksdeutsch* had already taken over our mill, who lived in the same house as had been occupied by the miller. I approached it and looked into the window, to see if there were any unfamiliar people. The dog began to bark, and a son of the *Volksdeutsch* emerged to see what was causing the dog to bark. I immediately approached and knocked. The miller opened the door, and admitted me. Upon seeing me, he became very frightened and shouted: *Ty Awramku jeszcze zyjesz*! You, *Awramku*, are still alive! – Yes, I replied vigorously. He asked me to sit down, and began to tell me that there is discussion going around about you, *Awramku*, that you along with a whole band, had assaulted the master of the mill on a previous night, beat him and robbed him as an act of vengeance for taking away the mill from you. I argued with my comrades that you had been shot a long time ago, and now I see that, indeed, you are alive. My heart started to pound when I saw his thieving eyes sparkling with fire, nevertheless, I controlled myself, and asked him to give me a few pieces of merchandise that had belonged to us, because I want to use it to save myself, to be able to procure some bread with it. I – I told him – lay hidden in the forest. He told me he would give me this.

On the same Monday, someone knocked at the door. I do not know who knocked. He went out, and immediately came back in. I asked him what was this all about, and je said to me not to be afraid. This was his brother, and he had asked that which shift he had to work at the mill. I felt, however, that he was not telling me the truth. In the meantime, he took out some whiskey, put it on the table, and he said, let us drink

to the fact that you have remained alive. A tooth is a tooth, and he began to press me, but he sensed that I was impatient to leave, and so he let me depart. He took me by the hand and pulled me back, indicating that I should eat and drink, indicating that I certainly must be hungry, almost shouting at me. I tore myself away from him. Going about 30 meters from the house, I hear shouting: *'Halt! Halt!'* So I began to run. Looking back, I saw a whole cohort pursuing me, so I began to run even faster, and they began to shoot at me. A bullet struck me in the hand, from which I was lightly wounded. To my good fortune, the workers at the sugar factory came out, who were leaving for the day, and I went into that crowd, and at that point they stopped shooting. An is not the fate of man wondrous, the workers made a path for me, making it possible for me to flee, thinking that I certainly was one of them, running from a danger. I lay on the ground and crawled along in this manner. It was dark and black just like in my heart, until I managed to crawl to a bale of straw, and was able to observe from there how they were searching for me with searchlights. Not knowing what had become of me. I lay this way for a longer time, and eventually dragged myself back to the master of my house. I told him everything in my hideaway, and he told me that he had heard shooting and as a result, he first went to look for me, and not finding me, he was already certain that I had been caught. He said further, *Awramku,* I have told you again, I have asked you not to go. – I went through a variety of other tribulations, and it is simply not possible to write about all of them.

A period of time later, the master of the house said to me that a strange family had been drawn into his yard, and because of this, I can no longer remain in my hideaway, but that he had dug out a pit for me in the pig pen. It was biter for me there, because I could not sit, but only lie down. I lay there for five weeks, until one day, the master came to me, and grabbed me around, and began to shout:' *Awramku! The Soviets have arrived! Liberation! Liberation!'* He shouted and clapped his hands. I fainted dead away. I awoke in the house lying in his bed.

After the liberation, my pack of troubles had not yet come to an end. Only now, only now was I able to begin to feel all the pain, all the tribulations, all my darkest experiences. Looking about and seeing that I was a sole survivor, like a stone, without my nearest and dearest, without friends or relatives, all alone, where a sea of enmity continued to rage about me. Vengeance! Vengeance! This is what may bloodied heart wanted to cry out, but which Jew does not shrink in fear from simply the mention of the word, 'vengeance,' which is at the same time not understandable. And yet, in our Holy Writ, and in our prayers, we do not shrink from this concept. In the Pentateuch we read: Deut 32:41(meaning that I will return vengeance to my enemies and I will repay my enemies). In our prayers we find[141]: (sing ye nations of his people, because he will avenge the blood of his servants). And do not Jews pray each Sabbath that He should take vengeance for spilled blood. Yes, the pain is deeply cut into my heart. The sea of the blood of our martyrs and heroes seethes and boils, and from the depths of those unrequited waves, the cry of vengeance reverberates, Take Revenge!!! But how
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When the Red Liberators arrived, I wanted to immediately run out, but my rescuer did not allow me to, and said to me: You were able to lay in constant fear for over two years, so please remain for a couple of days more, because I am far from certain about our own people. You must not forget the conversation that I had with my friends. Yes – I said – I still remember every word.

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141 From the *Av HaRakhamim* prayer recited on most Sabbaths, between the *Shakharit* and *Musaf* service, before the Torah scrolls are returned to the Ark.

This had taken place a while back, when all of the friends of the master of my house gathered at a time when they were bursting with Jewish plunder. A conversation took place outside, not far from my hiding place, and I heard every word. One said that the talk was about that *Awramku* was alive. My master then replied, yes, yeas, indeed, I heard this also, and he asked what was to be done with this rascal if he were encountered. There were a variety of opinions. One said that he would immediately turn me over to the Gestapo. A second said that as something special, he would not have the heart to kill him, and thereby, proudly proclaimed that, with a simple rock, he had bludgeoned two Tomaszow boys to death. A third one said that seeing that he could not stand the Germans, they did well that they had slaughtered the Jewish bloodsuckers. My master said that if he encountered me, he would butcher me with a pitchfork. Later on, he asked me what I thought of this exchange. I told him it suited me just fine. It was of that exchange that he now reminded me, and that for the time being, I should not dare to go about outside, until he could establish the intention of his own circle of friends, and what their current attitude was towards Jews, and only after that, would he tell me what I had to do.

After several days, he came to tell me that I can emerge, but to be very careful about where I go, and where not to go. He also advised me to go out at night, in order that my staying with him should continue to be a secret. I gave him to understand that Stash, it would be a great honor to recognize your great heroism in that you hid me, and with my entire heart I want to reward you. Now, I wish to give away to you, along with everything that I own. He answered me, *Awramku*, you do not yet know. Firstly, the war is not yet entirely over, and the atmosphere towards the Jews remains frightful, and wherever a Jew is encountered who had pitiably managed to hide, he is killed immediately. The enmity that all this time had been sown against the Jews has not been uprooted. So pay heed to me, do not go anywhere and remain hidden with me so long, that even my friends remain unaware until such time that the environment completely quiets down. And the only reward that I ask of you, is never to tell anyone who it was that saved you. Apart from this, I require nothing from you. I fell upon him and kissed him.

However, I found myself unable to sit still. Freedom tempted me greatly, and on the second day I made myself visible in Wozuczyn. All the gentiles from the area came to gaze upon the great wonder. Everyone said that I had hidden myself in the forests. After a few days, the master of my house told me that several Jews were to be found in Tomaszow. I then asked him to take me there. Phlegmatically, he hitched up his horse to the wagon, and took me to Tomaszow, taking me to the outskirts of the city, and dropped me off. The first Jew I encountered was near Czyszakiewiec's mill (on the road to Zamość), he was a Jew from Jozefów, by the name of Shanish Dakh. He looked at me, and I looked at him, each of us terrified of uttering even a single word. In the end, he was the first to speak: One of our people? Yes – I replied. We kissed one another and made each other's acquaintance. I entered the city and met up with Simcha Reis, Yeshay' Bergstein and his brother Benny, the children of Raphael Bergstein, and also Shevakh Nadler, Sani Nadler's wife, and Chana Weissleder, and a few other Jews from Jozefów. It is not possible to convey the great joy of these few who managed to survive. Each one had something to tell about their bitter experiences. We all lived in the house of Raphael Bergstein, figuring that this was the safest place, because it was not far from the Russian command headquarters.

We began to search for the means to sustain ourselves. We began to travel from one city to the next, to bring a variety of articles that we could sell. However, the roads were very risky for a Jew to travel, and therefore, I would put on Russian clothing with a borrowed automatic weapon, and travel together with the Russians. After several months in Tomaszow, we received a letter that we were to place 25 thousand zlotys on a small bridge, and otherwise, we had no place in Tomaszow, and at the same time threatened us with death. It was signed N. S. Z. We put the sum, as indicated, and told no one. Eight days later, we received a second letter

in the same vein, for a sum of 50 thousand zlotys, and if we made this public, it would not happen. We saw that this was bad, and that there was no end to it. In the meantime, the Starosta called upon us, demanding to know why we were not presenting ourselves for military service. In regards to myself, our group said I was their Rabi, and the rest were broken and ruined from the devastating tragic experiences they had gone through. He let us go. We all fled to Lublin, where more Jews were to be found.

Later on, I came to the D. P. camps in Germany, and I got married, and went off to that oft-dreamed of land of our fathers, the Land of Israel. I remain to this day with a broken and bloodied heart, and can never forget the terrifying deaths inflicted on my dearest, who fell so gruesomely in Sanctification of the Name. Give great respect to their sacred memory.

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

(P.S. With the master of my house, I am to this day in constant contact. He writes to me constantly as 'My Dear Son,' and from time to time, I send him a package).

I Am the Sole Survivor of My Entire Family

By Chana Ruduler (Krieger)
Taken down by Y. Schwartz

Page 628: *Chana Ruduler-Krieger*

Page 633: *The Germans uncover a bunker and drag out the hidden Jews; A sick Jew lies on the snow and the woman shivers in the cold. They are searched by the Germans.*

The great destruction of each city and town in Poland, in the last world war, where at one time Jewish life pulsed, has become a place of the greatest tragedy and martyrdom. The Jewish cities and towns of Poland were devastated and laid waste, the rosebush of Polish Jewry was torn out by the roots. Today, even in the smallest Polish town, there remains not even a memory of a Jew. The minimal traces of the destruction know how to relate the frightful details of the days of slaughter. Every individual survivor, who got out by a miracle, is the principal living witness of the most terrifying crimes that is called 'The Mass Murder of the Jews.' The human suffering of that time were so boundless and terrifying that when one attempts to tell about them today, it rings as almost incomprehensible, and even unbelievable. My little *shtetl* is dead. Today, I am far, far away from my home, but even now, I hear the pitiful wailing of the terrified voices of the first *aktion* in Tomaszow. To this day, I hear the parting words, and the last groan of my father ז"ל who, together with my entire family gave their lives, and pure souls in Belzec, together with all the other martyrs, relatives, friends and acquaintances. To this day, I hear the sacred intonation of the final '*Shema Yisrael.*' The Jewish *shtetl* no longer exists. The only thing that remains is a memory of it. Let my recounting serve as a symbolic monument for all of the martyrs, holy and pure, of my little shtetl. And may they rest in peace on their final bier.....

Not far from Tomaszow Lubelski only a few kilometers away, was a small village called Jarczow, or as it was called *Gmina, Powiat Tomaszow Lubelski.* At the outbreak of the war, I an my family remained in Jarczow. Immediately, the local gentiles sensed that their time had arrived. At the beginning, they threw stones at every Jewish home, and afterwards they came in to shoot, even before the Germans arrived. With the arrival of the German murderers, a frightful Hell was initiated. The first victims began to fall. A pursuit was initiated immediately, as well as seizure to be put to a variety of forced labor, such as gathering up rocks using one's mouth, polishing autos, digging ditches, rolling on the ground, sweeping up the streets with one's hat, cleaning outhouses barehanded, and a variety of senseless tasks that only the devil could devise. Tens of Jews paid with their lives at the hands of the most frightful torture. One woman, already badly beaten, with her hands and feet broken, was thrown to the ground and run over with an automobile. And as the hapless woman lay dying, the murderer, without any pity, put a bullet through her heart. One Jewish man was tied to a wagon, and at the same time, dogs were sicced on him, and he was dragged through the streets until his body remained an unrecognizable mass of flesh, black and red from scabs and blood. This was how, with a variety of spectacles, various tortures, tribulations and abuses, hard bitter labor, plunder, shame, and shooting, became daily happenings.

Later on, there was a *Judenrat,* that consisted of Yehoshua'leh Fishelsohn, Neta Heller, Yaak'l Arbesfeld, Yeshayahu Kruk, Abba Bergenbaum ז"ל as well as a German Jew named Melman, about whom, regrettably, I have nothing good to say. My heart is too badly broken for me to tell everything about this German Jew, but it is possible that in passing, I will be able to tell something. This very *Judenrat* was charged with

providing a specified number of Jews every couple of days, for work in Belzec, from which nobody ever returned.

I began to wander, not lodging where I spent the day, with hunger torturing me frightfully, and fear even more. I hid myself with various gentiles that I knew, however, nobody wanted to keep me for more than two or three days. It was in this manner that I crawled around, like in a chicken coop, until the month of March 1942, when an order was issues that men and women over the age of 32 were required to present themselves at an appointed time at the square (I think it was on the Piekarsky *Gasse*), to be taken to Cieszanow, and later to Belzec. At that time I stood to be imprisoned. What was going on in my heart at that time, no one can imagine. Blood ran from my eyes.

Suddenly, a tumult ensued, Gershon Sheps'l's (Roitenberg) arrived late, and he was shot on the spot, along with several other Jews that I didn't know. At that time, Jewish blood ran like water. I shudder at the memory of the frightful wailing that I can hear to this day, and I believe that the pitiful cries will always haunt me. In the midst of this tumult, I placed my life in danger, and for a long time, began to distance myself from the square. To this day, I can see the two eyes of a policeman who noted that I was distancing myself from that location, and who said nothing, or perhaps it was my frightful fantasy at the time that made me imagine this.

With very difficult exertion and exhaustion, I was, once again, able to beg a gentile to hide me. He kept me for several weeks, until one time he said to me that he can no longer do this, because he is terribly afraid because the penalty was death for concealing a Jew. With tears in my eyes, I begged him intensely but it was to no avail. At night, I went away, and knocked at the door of yet another gentile who knew me. He wondered greatly that I was still alive. He took me in and kept me for a bit of time. One time, he came to me in a state of heightened agitation, telling me to flee at once, because the Gestapo were here already, and he does not want to jeopardize either his life or the life of his family on my account. I saw that pleading would be of no avail, and I had no sooner gone out, when I was apprehended by the Gestapo, who beat me severely and took me to the marketplace. At that location, there were already many Jews who had been seized from their hiding places, and among them were my parents, four brothers and one sister, who had been hidden by various gentiles, which I personally was unaware of, and never even thought about once. Only one God knew whether they were even still alive.

This was on the second day of Shavuot, or better said, May 22, 1942, at which time the second *aktion* commenced. All the Jews of Tomaszow had been gathered, as well as those from the entire *Powiat*, such as Jarczow, Laszczow, and from other vicinities in the area, and all together, were begun to be driven to Belzec, taking away everything that we had. We were told that we were being taken to do labor, surrounded by S. S. murderers with weapons and long whips, with dogs and Jewish police from Piesk. Anyone who was unable to proceed was beaten murderously. Along the entire way, one or another person was taken and shot. I, along with my entire family, went to the colony. Inside of my, my heart cried, because I knew I was going on my last journey. When I asked a Jewish policeman where we were being taken, he answered me sarcastically, 'What? You don't know where you are being taken?'.. I saw that I was lost. My thoughts raced quickly, one thought flying past the other, and from my subconscious came a cry: 'Chana, save yourself!' Every fiber of my being cried out: 'So long as there is time .. Live! Live!' The idea was not to surrender to the murderers and, indeed, not die an ignominious death.

We were all taken to Belzec, and driven into the dark barracks and locked in. I took note of my father in the barracks, an a fried of mine, Golda Wolf. We were well guarded by police, and we were penned in on all sides. At night, I approached my father and said to him, 'Father, I intend to flee.' He began to weep intensely,

and he said tome, 'My child, save yourself if you only can, let there at least remain some memory of my large and well-branched out family. I hope to God that you will remain alive, and be able to tell what the German executioners made of us.' I went over to my friend Golda Wolf and said to her, that it was three quarters the way through the night. I flee, I sad, come with me. – I am very much afraid – she replied, and did not want to accompany me. Quietly, I opened the door, and heard the last intense groan from my father ז"ל. Immediately I felt a strong blow from a Jewish policeman. It was very dark, and not looking, I crawled towards the barbed wire on all fours, and I scratched myself up from the barbed wire, and got out. I went back 'home' through the woods and back roads. A gentile told me that my little sister Pesha, age 9, was still here. I, personally, do not know how she disappeared from the barracks at Belzec, where she was with my mother and brother. However, as she told me, she employed a stratagem similar to mine. The gentile hid me in his livestock pen. At night, he would bring me a couple of potatoes, a piece of bread and a bottle of water, and sometimes a couple of beets.

On a certain day, the gentile told me that the gentile at which my sister was hidden had told him that in two days time he is going to turn over my sister to the police, because otherwise, he will not be able to get rid of her, and he doesn't have the heart to kill her himself, as others were doing. My skin crawled when I heard this. Over time, I crawled out of my hiding place, and went over to the gentile that had my little sister, and stole her out of that place, and brought her back to my hiding place. The master of my house, on becoming aware that we were [now] two, became so enraged, that he picked up an axe, and threatened to kill us on the spot, if we both did not leave immediately. Go to Faladow, he screamed, that's where your *Zyds* are hiding! I went off to Faladow with my sister, and indeed, we met up with a pair of Jews that had saved themselves. They advised me to attempt to bribe the Soltys with a sum of money, and that the Soltys will then give me a letter to a nobleman of the area. In the letter, the Soltys is to write that I am known to him as a good and diligent worker, and that I will work for him without pay, and the essential thing was that the nobleman needed to sign that I will be freed from internment in Belzec (P.S. I was aware that a few people who had bought such protection, had been let go from Belzec).

The plan greatly appealed to me, and I began to implement it. However, the question remained: what to do with my little sister? How can I take her along to the Soltys? Perhaps the Soltys will turn me over to the police. No! I must not place my sister's life at risk. And only with very strenuous effort, was I able to have her concealed with a gentile woman, and by myself, with a pounding heart, went off to the Soltys. When I greeted him, he became frightened. With a sympathetic whine, I told him what it was that I required. He took pity on me. I put a sum of money on the table, which he did not even count, and he gave me the letter that I needed. I thanked him profusely, and went off to the nobleman. Upon coming into the presence of the nobleman, I fainted away out of fear. I was revived, and when I came to myself, I told him my story with tears in my eyes, and gave him the letter form the Soltys. As soon as he had read through the letter, he immediately composed a new letter that since I had been freed from Belzec, that I now work for him, that he is extremely satisfied with my diligent work, and he asks of the *Judenrat* that they should issue me a card with the status that I have been let go from Belzec. I thanked him from the bottom of my heart.

And now, the most difficult part begins. How does one access the *Judenrat?* If I go, wearing the insignia, I would invite the attention of every ruffian to prey on me, or plain kill me for the great nerve that I had to simply be alive. But to go without the insignia, would also place my life at risk. I took the second option. I hid the insignia in my wallet and came into the *Judenrat* where a darkness immediately settled over my eyes. I became aware that the card that needed to be issued to me had to come from the previously mentioned German Jew, Melman. He immediately began to scream at me as to how I manage to get myself out of Belzec, and that he was going to investigate the matter, as to whether I was telling the truth, and that I should

return the following morning at that time. With a bloodied heart, I left. I asked myself, 'where does one go?' There was no point in returning to the nobleman without the card. I reminded myself of the domicile of Chana Heller's daughter, Basha, in which I knew the secret entrance and exit. On top, everything [looked] like it was hammered shut and closed. I spent the night there, and in the morning, returned to the *Judenrat.* Herr Melman told me that he could not yet issue me a card, perhaps tomorrow. The following day, I returned yet again, and again, he told me to come back the next day. Chana Heller's daughter Basha told me to offer him something as a bribe. I did this, and as I came in, I placed 1009 zlotys on the table along with a small gold watch. Smiling for a ling time, he counted the money, and without so much as a word, issued me the card. With shining joy, I ran to Bash to tell her the good news. She told me that since it was now late, that I should spend another night and return to the nobleman very early the next morning. I listened to her and remained for the night.

As soon as I fell asleep, I began to dream a dream (which I will never forget), that I was in a very nice house, and beside the house is a very tall mountain, with very beautiful, tall trees, very pretty ambience, and that in the trees, there is a very deep pond, and that I am standing right at the edge of the pond, ready to fall in. With all my strength, I am holding on by the tips of my fingers, and I feel that I am just on the verge of falling in. Suddenly, a great, strong wind begins to blow, and carries me away. I awoke, bathed in a cold sweat. I no longer was able to sleep, but waited instead for the dawn that had to come, so I could go off to the nobleman with the most fortunate card [in my possession]. Very early, it was a Friday in the month of June, all of us, about 14 people, took note through the4 cracks of the shutters, that tow Gestapo men were coming near to the entrance (apparently someone had taken note of it, and had informed of its location). Momentarily, a great tumult erupted, with everyone fleeing to the attic. One person screamed, another cried, yet another said his confession, hollering '*Shema Yisrael,*' I saw that this time I was truly lost. One of the Gestapo men remained standing by the door, and with outstretched hands and in a loud voice, laughed wildly, and shouted out: *'Ach, wo ist das möglich so viel Jüden schmutzige ist nach da?'*[142] – Boldly, I stepped up to him and retorted: '*Ja jestem Polka, prosz mnie przepuscic.*' And I walked right through his outstretched arms. I do not know if he was [momentarily] confused by my boldness, or not. The second murderer, however, aimed his automatic weapon at me as if to shoot. So I did not attempt to run further, but rather, with vehemence, walked up to him unafraid, and used the same words to him, shouting at him I was Polish, and that he needs to let me through. The first one also let me through, saying that all I had done was come to visit the Jews. I do not know if he understood everything that I said, he just made a move with his hand for me to move off, and before I had even gone 10-15 steps, I already heard how they were shooting everybody else, and indeed, the grave of that entire family is at that house.

I went off with very measured steps, and afterwards ran in the direction of Sznury. Entering the house of a gentile and asking for a bit of water. Neither living nor dead, I went further into a forest, and waited for nightfall, and at night came back to the nobleman. They thought that I was no longer alive. At the same time, they informed me that all the Jews in Failed had been seized, along with my sister, and they had been shot. My poor, dear sister. My dear father and mother, and brother, where are you lying? I don't know! I ask myself from where is it that I am able to summon the strength to tell all of this, to write all of this down, that causes the pen to spit fire and blood, with the fire of the soul, and the blood of my wounded heart – – –

Another order that was issued was that whoever will turn in a Jew, will receive 100 zlotys and 20 kg of sugar, and if a Jew is to be found in the shelter of anyone, that person will receive the death penalty. As a result,

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142 Oh my, how is it possible that there are so many dirty Jews still here?

the nobleman became fearful, and he gave me to understand that he was in danger because of the card I had, and when the Gestapo arrived, he hid me in the attic or in the livestock pen.

I began to feel that the earth was on fire under me. I went off to Tomaszow, to the priest who knew me well. He used to buy from us, and with tears in my eyes I begged him to save me, because only he was in a position to do so. However, under no circumstances did he want to do this, and he chased me out with great vigor. I went off to Masha Rothenberg (I knew where she was hiding) and asked of her, what are we to do? How can one save one's self? She told me that she knew a Christian that can create 'Aryan' papers for me, forged, as you understand. All I need to do is pay 600 zlotys and give him a picture of myself. Understandably, I agreed to this, and gave 600 zlotys with my picture, and on that same day, had such a passport in my possession. I returned to the yard with a lighter heart. Along the way, Polish policemen accosted me, and threatened me with their fingers, and then let me continue onwards.

Coming back to the nobleman, or as he was called Pan Poplawski, and showing him my new passport, with my new name, Anna Fedina, occurred precisely at the time that a sister of his was sitting there, visiting him as a guest, from Cracow. I began to weep bitterly in front of his sister, and told her about everyone, and how my entire family had already been murdered, and asked what to do, and how to save myself, now that I had such a passport. She heard me out thoroughly, and I took note of tears in her eyes, and she said to me: Listen, the one thing I can do for you is the following: On such and such an hour, a transport will be passing through from Laszczow. Make it your business to arrive at the last possible moment, when the transport is actually moving, so that you will not have to tarry there. Travel in the direction of Lublin. The Germans there are seizing our Polish women, to be sent to Germany to do [forced] labor. Even though I do not know what sort of work they do, it could be quite heavy labor, they do provide food, and they permit you to live. I am also giving you my address, and you are to write to me often, and I want you to call me Cizociza. Your letters will most certainly be [opened and] read, and as a result, they will see from whom the letter comes, and where you come from. Hopefully in this way, Holy Jesus will protect you from all danger, and you will live, and survive this terrible war.

Immediately in that same week, on Tuesday (a lucky day), I arrived in Laszczow exactly at the moment when the transport was beginning to leave, and as paradoxical as it looked, I was looking for Germans to seize me for work, to be sent to Germany. However, the entire journey was uneventful, and I was not seized. In Lublin, I went into an official agency, and strenuously wept that a friend of mine had been taken for labor in Germany, and that I want to see her. I was written up, but not legitimized. I was held there for several days. That location was a gathering place for seized people that had been arrested, seized on the streets. Afterwards, we rode to Germany in a freight train. We were not given any food. I managed to beg a but of bread from one gentile woman, telling her that I had been seized, and my family doesn't even know. Silently, she cursed the Germans, that oppress the Polish people so, but her one consolation was that no more disgusting Jews would remain in the world.

We arrived in Germany, and entered a camp which was in a wooded area near Dessau. There, we were divided up into barracks of 20 women in a room. We were allocated frightful, heavy labor, in digging canals, digging ditches, etc. For food, we received 200 grams of bread, and at night, a soup. We hungered enough. In a while afterwards, we took note of six Jewish girls, one from Janów Lubelski, and two from Warsaw, and three from Lemberg. We made an effort to sleep together, meaning, one next to the other in the event that someone cries out, or talks in their sleep, calling something by its name in Yiddish (P.S. There were such instances in other barracks, where girls shouted out Jewish words in their sleep, and in the morning, they

were immediately taken away. The entire camp seethed with the nerve of these Jewish women, who had managed to fool these pure Aryan Christians, leading them around by the nose).

On a certain day in 1943, I was badly upset when all six of the Jewish girls were taken out for an inspection and afterwards, they were all shot. To this day, I do not know how they were exposed. It was said that it was because of the correspondence that they carried on, or because of something else, I do not know. I tried to put on a normal face with all my might, but the inner fear of death sapped me of the essence to survive. In a couple of weeks, they began to investigate me. One Christian woman actually went to the point of saying that she had a feeling that I was a Jewish woman, and indeed, she conveyed to the Gestapo that she harbored this suspicion. On a certain day, as I was returning broken, from the day's work, exhausted and deathly starving, I was told to appear immediately before the Gestapo. A darkness descended on my eyes. I went, and was already certain that I will not come back alive. A blond fat German with two predatory eyes, asked me about a variety of things, and in the end, he told me to tell him the truth, as to whether or not I was Jewish, even though he, personally did not believe so. Yes – I said to him – I am Jewish, and laughed heartily. The German became very confused, and apologized copiously to me, and dismissed me. On the other day, I had received a letter from Cracow, with a picture in it of my 'Cizociza..' She wrote to me that she misses me very much, and she wishes to live for the moment that she will be able to see me again. I wrote a full-hearted letter back to 'Cizociza,' and understandably, this helped me a great deal in causing the suspicion about me to dissipate. But immediately, a short time afterwards, I sensed that I was being scrutinized as to how I handled myself, how I speak, as to whether I gesture with my hands when I speak, and they began to watch me at my bunk where I slept. I had a feeling that I would not be able to conceal this, because I simply was too afraid to sleep. I wept over my dark, bitter fate, only in the outhouse. But, once again, a miracle occurred on my behalf. Since I was counted ast the best and most diligent worker, and earned a good reputation, I was sent to work privately for a German family who developed a sincere affection for me. Here, already, I had enough to eat, and in this fashion I remained with this family until the end of 1944.

At the end of 1944, the camp was evacuated to Blankenburg. Lessing Platz, the German for whom I worked, fervently requested that I be allowed to remain with him, but this did not help, and right along with all the others, I was transferred to the second camp. I was immediately put off upon my arrival. There were several thousand men there, assembled from a variety of camps, bandits, thieves, prostitutes, and a variety of other underworld elements, and in addition to the great and difficult labor, the word was out that everyone here would be exterminated. And indeed, every day, someone new was shot. I was here, where I had fallen into, and on one clear day, I fled and went into the forest, and hid myself in a tunnel. I sat there for three days, and the hunger oppressed me mightily. Accordingly, I came out, and it was already the year 1945. I already saw the Americans fighting the Germans. I still had the strength to ask for a bit of water from a German, which he gave me. The shooting died down. The Nazi beast finally lay buried.

In the Struggle for One's Life

By Herman & Sabina Keitel
Taken down by Y. Schwartz

Page 640: *Herman Keitel, Sabina Keitel*

Approximately 15 or 17 kilometers from Tomaszow, there was a train station by the name of Susiec. There, most of the Jews were employed in the wood factory. In general, it was a good business in which Jews made a good living, and lived well, which was a rarity in Poland. Of special note was the fact that we lived in good relations with the Gentiles, to the point that one didn't feel the frightful anti-Semitism that was coursing through all of Poland at that time. I, along with my brother-in-law lived with our families in Susiec. My grandfather [Velvel] Vel'i Katz ע"ה and my father Yaakov Keitel ע"ה lived in Tomaszow. I worked for the well-known Baron Wettman, a Viennese German who was a very good-hearted man. I managed his accounts and took over all the wood products and exported them, etc. I was greatly loved by the Baron because of my dedication in my work, and indeed, earned a good salary and lived very well. My home was a home that was open to guests, where whoever entered, ate and drank, and someone who was traveling also lodged, whether Jew or non-Jew, because as previously mentioned, we were well integrated with the gentiles.

In passing, I wish to recollect a Christian by the name of Lianewski, a grandson of a Polish Admiral, who would constantly come to Susiec from Warsaw for a variety of reasons. I became good friends with him. He would eat and sleep at my house, and I never wanted to take money for this. He told me that for this hearty friendliness towards guests, he would never forget me. And, indeed, this was the case. When the Jewish people were drenched in blood, he did not forget me and my family. In a later part [of my writing], I will have the opportunity to write more about this gentle Christian man. I also had a very loyal Christian friend from Warsaw by the name of Wiszniewski, who would visit with me on a variety of occasions, at which time I would present him with the very best. He, too, did not forget me later, and as we later became aware, Jewish blood flowed in him, because his mother was Jewish. All of this was before the Holocaust.

With the outbreak of the war, and with the arrival of the German bandits, the frightful nightmare did not skip over us. And it seems to me, as if it was just yesterday, that a third of our people were killed out on all of the battlefields in Europe. Six million Jewish victims on the altar. Can we at least take an accounting of the number of six million tortured fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers, small children, old people, friends and acquaintances. But how can we take this count, for surely we would go out of our minds. We are also, in this way, a high-strung people. But each surviving Jew is missing half or all of a family that were exterminated by a variety of deaths that only highly refined sadists, the dregs of humanity, could conceive. The spilled Jewish blood boils and seethes, and it cannot be stilled. The heart-rending cries and the weeping of the tortured little children still ring in my ears, the pleading of the little children at the feet of the murderers. The transports, that came to Susiec every day, stand before my eyes, carrying the hapless Jewish victims from Susiec to those paths that led to extermination. It is these frightful scenes that I will never forget.

Immediately in the first days, the Gestapo arrived in Susiec and stopped in front of my house. A wild shout was heard, that all Jewish men are to come out before them. However men there were in the house, hid themselves in the blink of an eye, wherever one could. The shouts became ever louder, insisting that the accursèd Jews should come out immediately. My wife and her sister went out and told them that the men

were not home. Accordingly, they beat my wife and her sister severely, and told them to take off their shoes and run barefoot in the snow, which was frozen. The scars of the wounds remain with them to this day. On return, they were no longer there. For a couple of weeks, my wife and her sister lay scared in bed, exhausted, and barely able to reconstitute themselves. A short while later, my wife and I were summoned to Tomaszow, in the Gestapo [office] and told to pay up all the notes that I owed. I told them that I had nothing, because the entire shipment of wood had been confiscated. They released us. And this is how we began to live, in great fear, and with every arrival of Germans, we went and hid ourselves.

On March 7, 1941 we became aware that immediately, a transport with 600 people in four cars was to arrive with men, women and children, from Mielec. As the train was pulling in, approximately 100 sleds with peasants arrived to transfer all of these hapless Jews to Cieszanow. Not far from where we were hidden, we were able to precisely observe the offloading of the people, which took place in so frightful a manner, that it beyond the ability of human imagination to conceive. That gruesome picture stands before my eyes to this day. At the opening of a car, stood two S. S. murderers with rubber truncheons, and two Polish policemen (gendarmes). With the wild shouts of *'Juden heraus!!!'* The pitiable people began to jump, and the murderers began to beat them. There was barking of the kill-trained dogs who also tore hunks of flesh from them. The panic and screaming from the people, and the wailing cry from the children tore the heart. Afterwards, the people were ordered onto the sleds. On ascending the sleds, every other person, or so, was shot. The dead bodies lolled about among the sleds. The last of these was a woman who was pulling a small carriage with a child. At a specific moment, the woman released the carriage from her hand, and wanting to grab hold of it and pull it back, she fell from a murderous bullet. When all of them had departed, the carriage with the baby remained behind. That night, with tears that were choked back, we buried the dead in one mass grave. There were thirteen people of which three were women. One continued to struggle through the night, and died in the morning. A Christian brought the child to me, and my wife bathed it, fed it, and gave it the name Bobosz. The child kept on crying, *Mama Hav! Mama Hav!* Six months later, a Jewish man came to us from Tomaszow, and presented himself as the brother of the woman who had been shot, and asked to take the child. In the ensuing time, we had become strongly attached to the child, and didn't want to let him go. However, having no choice, with tears in our eyes, we gave him back.

A short time thereafter, we were told that in two days time, we, the seventy Jews that were found in Susiec, were required to present ourselves at the assembly point in Tomaszow, and whoever had a work card would be set free. A great cry broke out in our home: what is to be done now? We decided to present ourselves and took comfort in the fact that we had work cards. Immediately, Baron Wattmann's daughter Muszynska arrived, with the director, to take over all the wood and the accounts, because we were required to present ourselves in Tomaszow. I gave everything to her. How wondrous is the fate of man. When I had turned everything over to the Baron's daughter, she called me into the house. Looking about to see that no one was listening, she told me not to dare present myself with my family in Tomaszow, because from a source from the servants, she knows that this is the final trip. Even though we have work cards, the order says that at the appointed time, no Jews may remain. So, listen to me, [she said], flee where your eyes look, and maybe you will survive and save yourselves. You are a great loss to me, she said, extending her hand, to wish me farewell, and left the house.

I stood unmoving like a stone, with heavy, dark and sorrowful thoughts crawling around in my mind, which clouded my reason. I looked with my eyes, but I saw nothing. My lips moved, but no sound came out. My hands trembled as if I were fevered. I was frightened, and must have looked like a madman. Wildly, I ran to my wife, and told her everything, after which my wife broke down and cried intensely. What shall we do, what shall we do, she mumbled, and wrung her hands. That evening, all of our Christian acquaintances came

to take their leave of us. I took note of the fact that in Susiec, at that time, an underground was already functioning, and all those who came to me worked in the underground, all of them advised us not to present ourselves in Tomaszow, but rather that we should flee to the forest. To our question that we have no documents, one teacher took out her documents and gave them to my wife, who immediately assumed the name Grabowska Jozefa, from Lemberg. A Polish lieutenant said to us that we should leave that very night for the forest, because tomorrow might already be too late, and that the Gentiles should not be able to take note, and that we should be at an agreed location (near a felled tree) and wait for him during the following day, and he will bring documents for me and my brother-in-law. We sat until two o'clock, said farewell, and then left.

We immediately packed the most necessary items, and as still as thieves, slipped out with pounding hearts and with quite sobbing we went off to the forest to the designated location. It was still outside. Everything appeared to be sunken in slumber. Dark angry clouds covered the skies. The night was black, the earth was black, and our hearts were black, dark, dim and laden with terror. After three days of sitting in great fear in the forest, the lieutenant arrived, and gave the reason that he needed to wait until he had the two documents created, stamped with the appropriate stamps, and with our pictures. A spark of hope flew up in our hearts. He comforted us, and quietly sang '*Jeszcze Polska nie zginela, poki my zyjemy*' [143] and he gently thumped his chest. He said his farewell with a full heart and went off. We anticipated these documents with happiness. My brother-in-law's new name was Jan Hurkala and I was Stanislaw Guntaz. We decided to travel to Warsaw. By using back roads, we approached a train station, and traveled to Warsaw. The way in which we came to Warsaw is a separate, tragic chapter, that demands a tremendous amount of nerve to pour it all out onto paper. We had to contest with gentiles that recognized us, and it was only through miracles and the expenditure of large sums of money that we were able to reach Warsaw.

We traveled to Mr. Wiszniewski and he became very frightened, but was very helpful in receiving us. He was very much afraid, and did not have a place to keep us. He introduced us to a neighbor of his, presenting us as Polish refugees from the Russian side. We lodged there for several nights. We then went to Herr Lianewski and he received us graciously, His wife, however, was a virulent anti-Semite, who at the first occasion of my entry, indicated that she did not tolerate any Jews, because in 1920 the Jews and Bolsheviks killed her father , who was a Starosta, and she can never forget this. However, since her husband, a grandson of a Polish admiral, has such a good opinion of us, she will provide succor to the extent that she is able, and without thinking a great deal, she approached a brother-in-law of hers, Jan Wojciech who was the director of the 'Depot' at the train station, that as unemployed, he must see to it that work is arranged for me. He promised to do this. On another day, he posed the question of how would he be able to offer me work, since he first needs an indication from a doctor that I am in good health, and as a Jew, how can I go to a doctor. But this Jan Wojciech was a man whom I would designate as one of the righteous Gentiles of the World, because not only sis he rescue me and my family, but also many Jews, thereby placing his own life at risk. And so, we remained at Herr Lianewski's. Two days later, Jan Wojciech arrived and said to me that I should give him my document, and I gave it to him. Two hours later, he returned with the document and an official bill of clean heath. He had taken a gentile, and went with him to a doctor, with my document. And on the morrow, he told me to report for work.

On the following day, I was already dressed in the uniform of a railroad worker and always went about confidently. Herr Lianewski arranged for us to have quarters, in the Warsaw flode (???) and paid 500 zlotys a month, while I was earning [only] 180 zlotys a month. Understand that we still had some money left. We

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143 The opening lines of the Polish National Anthem

strove to live as well as we could with the neighbors. One day, my brother-in-law's son went into the house of a neighbor, and saw a Christian book of prayers (catechism), and asked the little girl, Zoza, what is that? – The parents overheard this, and began to wonder how it was that a boy of nine does not know this already? It can be no other reason other than these are Jews. Immediately this began to be whispered about, and the master of the house immediately became aware, who immediately came in extremely agitated, and calls me into a separate room. He said to me that 'I have heard that you are Jews, and so I beseech you to flee from here, the faster the better. I do not want to know to where you go, because I do not want to fall on misfortune because of you.' Understandably, we lied, and he left angry, saying thereby, 'we shall see.' My hands and feet began to tremble, and I immediately went off to Warsaw to Herr Wiszniewski, telling him everything, and asking him, what is to be done? The constant smile that was on his face, made an impression on me. He asked me to wait, and he left the house. A couple of hours later, he came and told me that on this very day, we are to move into our new quarters, which he located for us in the Praga at Brzeska Number 13. We quietly removed ourselves from there, and came to our new location.

Here, it was something different already. The surrounding people were simply underworld types, prostitutes, the darker elements [of society], drunks, etc. We had to blend into the new circumstances. My wife and I went about constantly 'drunk' despite the fact that we never drank. Well, we developed a vocabulary exactly like the society around us, and it was in this fashion that we had to play the role like skilled artists, constantly remembering who we [really] were, and never forgetting to talk and gesture with our hands, and never to forget that at every word to say '*Jezsu Kochany.*[144]'

As I previously said, Jan Wojciech had arranged employment for me. My job consisted of loading and unloading coal. For each wagon of coal, six men were required. Every day, 130 Jews were brought from the ghetto to this work, and at night they were taken back. Four Jews and two Poles worked at each wagon. I made the acquaintance of all the Jews who had a premonition of what awaited them. The Jews would also bring along a variety of items to barter for produce, but it was, pitiably, very difficult for the Jews to take it [sic: the produce] out, because the Germans would confiscate it at the gate. Within the realm of my capacity to do so, I helped these Jews with whatever I could, and because of this, they took me for a decent 'Polack.' When I had to give them 5 kg of kasha, I gave them an actual 5 kg, and not like other Poles who would give them three instead of five. I would also attempt to get along as well as I could with my foremen. I would give away the 'treasures' that the hapless Jews would bring with them. On many occasions, I would simply return these items to the Jews, so they would have it available for barter a second time. I was also one of the best workers, for which, every month, I would receive a premium of a quarter of a liter of whiskey, and a hundred cigarettes. I would always give this away to my foreman, a certain Skywa, a great Jew-hater, who would oppress the Jews for no reason. And when I gave him the whiskey and cigarettes, I would ask him not to bother the Jews, because they were good workers. At this, he would smile heartily, and said that Poles, after all, were not any kind of Jews.

In the interim, the Jews would tell me of the great calamity that was befalling the Jews in the ghetto on a daily basis, how every day, innocent victims were falling. It cut me to the heart to listen to all the gruesome things that were told to me. I also heard about things that literally stunned me, and was awed by them, to my great astonishment. How did those in the ghetto find the strength to live under the shadow of such a gruesome death. Not only live, but retain their spark of divinity, create institutions, open schools, provide mutual assistance to one another? Where did each and every ordinary Jew, that worked along side of me, find the strength, who would bring food into the ghetto at great danger to his own life, and care that it should reach

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144 *'Sweet Jesus,'* as an oath...

those who were in need, that did not have anything with which to buy? Where did the teacher, who came from faraway to the ghetto, find the strength, while starving, and without means, gather together the naked Jewish children, among which were children who had lost their parents, teach them, wash them, sew for them, write study books for them? How is it that parts of the Jewish young people, under the unheard of, and unsightly Ghetto conditions, found the strength in themselves, and the energy to think about resistance? And the greatest heroism of all, was to live each day in the ghetto and retain one's humanity. I was stunned, and cannot understand to this day.

Among those with whom I was acquainted, was also a Jew who before had been a very wealthy man, and very intelligent. He would ask me to come to the ghetto every day, before dawn, and he will call out, '*Guntaz!*' to which I was to reply '*Jestem!*' I was to stretch out my hands, and he would throw over a variety of articles , and he would settle up with me at work, because I was the only one that he trusted, because to him I was a very honest 'Christian.' I declined to do this, because I was simply afraid to put myself at risk. However, he implored me very strongly, and begged me with tears in his eyes, and told me that it was not only for himself that he needed the produce, but also for children, and not only his own children. I could not stand this test, and with a heavy heart I complied with his request. I don't know why, but this Jewish man elicited an intense compassion from me, and I began to come before dawn and this Jew would throw down a variety of merchandise to me, from which I would always give him whatever he requested. Many times, when I would take more from my Christian acquaintances, I gave it all away to this Jew. Not once, he would discreetly say to me that I had a Jewish heart, and not once, would he notice how I would be wiping away tears from my eyes. One time, I approached the Ghetto, and the Jew called out, '*Guntaz!*' and I answered '*Jestem!.*' I spread my hands out over the wall to catch the merchandise. How astonished I became, and practically fainted, when I saw that I had caught a small child, and before I had even oriented myself as to what to do, two women stood by me with a baby carriage, and said to me forcefully, *Panie Guntaz dziekuje bardzo*,[145] and took the child, placing it in the carriage, and casually walked away. I went off to work frightened out of my mind. At work, I asked the Jew about the child, how my life was endangered, and he lowered his head like someone who had sinned, and said that he knew nothing. I did not speak of the matter again, however, I no longer approached the Ghetto.

After a period of time, the Jew again approached me, asking that I come to the Ghetto. This time, he wept bitterly, indicating that they are at the point of expiring. I said that tomorrow, I would come with my wife. Before dawn, I came to the Ghetto with my wife. About 100 meters from the Ghetto, I remained standing, and told my wife that I will be right there. My wife approached the spot that we had agreed on, and upon hearing the shout, '*Guntaz!*' she answered '*Jestem!*' At that precise moment, the gendarmerie took note of this, and began to shoot. I pulled back and remained standing, frightened, fearing for the fate of my wife. My wife did not lose her composure, and in the wink of an eye, vanished into a guardhouse that was near the Ghetto. The guard, taking her for a Christian woman, told her to lie down in the bed, and she lay like this until nine o'clock. She got up and went out, and a Christian was standing at the gate, who said to her that he was afraid to go out, because the gendarmerie is inspecting everyone. However, it was equally no good to remain there, so he took her under the arm and went out. No sooner had they come out, when the Germans gave a shout, '*Kom! Kom!*' They approached. They found a package containing one thousand zlotys on the person of the Christian, indicating that he was trading with the Jews, so he was shot on the spot. They found nothing on the person of my wife. She produced her document, as the wife of a railroad employee. So how is it that you are in this location, she was asked. She said that she had spent the night with this Christian,

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145 Mr. Guntaz, thank you very much

because he was a member of her family. The guard stood at a distance, nodding his head that she was telling the truth. She was told to leave, and she sauntered off casually.

On a certain day, I had engaged the previously mentioned Jew in a conversation, and he told me of the gruesome scenes that took place in the Ghetto. I could not retrain myself, and blurted out, Master of the Universe, my unfortunate Jewish brethren! What? He gave a shout. Yes, I told him, I am a Jew. Stunned and awed, he looked at me, tears stood in his eyes, and he said nothing to me, but muttered quietly, I knew it, I felt it.

A few days later, my foreman Skywa called me aside, looking at me with murder in his eye, and said, you, Guntaz are a Jew! Who would have thought this of you! Such a swindler! Such Jewish secrecy! Huh? I say: Why do you try and perpetrate such a charge against me? Shut up! He shouted at me in a subdued manner. One of my people eavesdropped on the confession you made to the Jew from the Ghetto! I now know everything, you filthy swindling Jew. It is not for naught that the Führer is killing you, you are swindlers and liars. I no longer heard what it was that he was saying, I began to feel dizzy. My hands and feet began to tremble, and my face told him everything [he wanted to know]. The first thing I did was give him the ticket that I had, so that he could claim my whiskey and cigarettes. He took the ticket. On the second day, he reminded me that I was a Jew, so I saw that it was bad. Accordingly, I ran over to Jan Wojciech and told him the entire story. He became very angry with me, mut still started to think about what to do. After calming down, he said to me that tomorrow, after work, that I should go to the doctor, where there will be a note waiting for me that releases me from work, because it is too difficult for me, and that I will be re-assigned to a lighter work, meaning, not under the supervision of this very Skywa. And indeed, I began a lighter work of cleaning and sweeping etc., in a completely different place. I never saw this Skywa again. I never saw the Jew [sic: from the Ghetto] again.

On a certain day, as I was returning from work, a healthy, tall gentile tough stopped me and said: Listen, Guntaz! That you are a charlatan I know, so how much longer do you expect to be able to go around masquerading as a Christian. I am well aware of the fact that you and your wife are Jews. I shouted at him: Come to the gendarmerie. So he said: Come. Let us go, and with me every limb was already quaking. – So what so you want? I ask him. He says to me: three thousand zlotys. I haggled with him, and settled for two thousand zlotys. I paid him (P.S. He became aware of this being once at the home of Wiszniewski, to whom he was related).

Several days later, on a Friday, two policemen came in and ordered that our documents be shown for review. So I showed them. So they say, they want to see the real ones, and they also want to grab the Jewish fish that are being cooked nowadays. Two gentile hooligans were already waiting outside, that the extortionist, understandably, had sent over. So I asked, how much is this going to cost. – Ten thousand zlotys, came the reply. I haggled with them, and settled for five thousand. The policemen said to me: You need to run away from here as fast as you can, because tomorrow they will send others. My wife cried sympathetically: What do we do? Where do we go?

Immediately on the other day, two other gentile hooligans came, and also demanded money, if not, they will call the Gestapo. I told them that I had no more money, and so they stood to take away a new machine. They brought a porter, and the porter took the machine away. In about an hour, the porter returned, and says to me, seeing that he is aware that we are Jews, and God forbid, does not wish to inform on us, but he also needs

to live, that I should give him something as well. He himself, is a member of the P.P.R..[146] and with the help of Jesus, everything will yet turn out alright. When I answered that I had nothing, he indicated that the fluffy blanket was also good [to give] because he can get 500 zlotys for it. I gave him the blanket.

The gentile hooligans in the courtyard took note of the fact that each time a different person comes along, and carries away a machine. Here, the police arrive, and they began to harbor suspicions. So they seized my younger son, and on the steps, tore off his trousers, and with one wild shout that all began to shout *'Zydy! Zydy!'* My children all fled, to where, I did not know, whether to my sister and brother-in-law, or somewhere else. I stood standing, not knowing what was happening to me. I felt like my blood was freezing in my arteries. What was left for me to do now? Immediately I heard the shout of '*Zydowka! Zydowka*!' The door opens, and a girl comes in and asks me if my name is Guntaz. I answered in the affirmative, so she hands me a letter in which it is written to me that I need to take care of this girl because she works in the underground. However, she saw in what kind of situation I was in, and she went away.

Immediately, a Christian who was a good acquaintance of mine entered, who had taken me for a Christian the entire time, and now first became aware from the gentile hooligans in the courtyard that I was a Jew. He only exchanged a few words with me, and then went away. We went to his home to take counsel together. He was very disappointed that we had not told him that we were Jewish, because he would have provided better protection for us, but now he can't do anything for us. In the meantime, we took note of the two policemen who made threatening gestures towards us with their fingers. No matter what, the ground under our feet was now burning.

We went to the first extortionist so that he could take us to the Gestapo. He, personally, was too frightened to so this, because if he knew that we were Jews, why had he not informed the Germans earlier, and just took money. In any event the entire matter was now unpalatable to him. Again, we wept intensely, because he was the first one to bring this misfortune upon us. We did not have a groschen to our name. He took out 200 zlotys, and said he could lend us this. We didn't want to do this, but it was either the Gestapo, or as we were told. He set us up in the [town of] Wawer near Warsaw and became our best friend. As we later learned, it was the Wiszniewskis who influenced him to behave this way. We visited once again. However, my brother-in-law, Shmuel Poder had left, and was in the Susiec Forest. It was in this way that we struggled, and fought for the little bit of life that we had, until the liberation.

146 Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnica*)

During the Years of Horror

By Rachel Schwartzbaum (Klarman)
Taken down by Yaakov Schwartz

Page 653: Rachel Schwartzbaum-Klarman

I know, and I am almost certain, that after reading my memoir, a memoir that I am not in any physical condition to record even one tenth of what I wish to relate, the reader will have the reverberation of the wheels ringing in his ears, and will, for a long time, be unable to free himself from the atmosphere of the transports and the wild shouting.... when the territory of Poland was flooded with rivers of Jewish blood, when the red-black clouds of smoke from the continuously burning crematoria covered the heavens. For were there even heavens at that time, for very nature itself was frighteningly cruel to us, the hapless. A fountain of tears continues to asphyxiate me to this day, reminding me that always, on the eve of an *aktion,* a strong wind would blow, just as if a hundred witches had risen at once. On an angry night such as this, the sullen wind would blow up heaps of refuse near the filthy barracks. On such a night the crows would crow in a frightening manner, and this only served to intensify the fear – the fear of imminent death. Between the dark angry clouds that passed overhead, a small, pale moon would show itself, always showing us a contorted face, and it appeared to us that just, just then, the entire world is about to go under, and even before the morning star would appear, everything will already be too late. We all will be driven off, robbed, abused, and slaughtered.... Many years have already passed since those nightmarish bloody days, and yet those horrible scenes remain fresh and vivid in memory, the memory of a Hell that was played out on the earth, in the very heart of Europe in the midst of a rich culture and a civilization of centuries. No! I will never recover from those bloody wounds. My sorrow over the slaughtered, powerless sisters and brothers, small children and friends, among whom are my closest – my dear parents who died in Sanctification of the Name is such a tragic way. Let my memoir be like a sacred memorial for the martyrs who were brought down by means of terrifying torture, buried in a variety of common graves, in countless mass graves that are sown all over, and plowed into the fields of the Jewish European Diaspora. ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

My First Fright on the Way from Warsaw to Tomaszow

Close to the outbreak of the bloody war, I found myself in Warsaw where I worked in tailoring, which truthfully, my father, Meir Klarman and my mother were strongly opposed to having me travel to Warsaw. It was as if they had a premonition of what a great calamity awaits the world in general, and the Jewish people in particular. I was, however, strongly attracted by the big city. The little *shtetl* of Tomaszow, which in prior years had been a budding sprout both in terms of work availability and commerce, suddenly went to sleep. Anti-Semitism against the Jewish populace began to bare its sharp talons. Christian manufacturing establishments opened, such as 'Samofamac' and others like it, which literally tore the meager sustenance out of the hands of poor Jewish merchants who sat in front of the establishments for days on end, reading a newspaper. The *shtetl* took on a somber mood. Workers began to go about with their heads lowered. The craftsman liquidated his workstation. And unemployment grew from day to day. And many of the workers traveled off to the big cities and it was then that I was swept along. I challenged my parents by telling them that only in Warsaw will I be able to work myself up, and with a heavy heart, my parents consented, and I went off to Warsaw. And as I have already mentioned, I worked in tailoring, in a very large firm, in which I learned something every day, and improved my skill every day. But, at that time, I did not know that man's

fate, which is so intensely fragile, would direct that I should master this skill in order that in the coming bloody days of the devastating war, it will help me, and perhaps save my poor, darkened life, that I lived through at that time. A short time later, the war broke out, and immediately everything was battened down and locked up, no train, no bus [to be had] and my thoughts began to roil and knead about like thick clouds. How, and in what way, can I get to Tomaszow and my family. I cried and wailed ceaselessly, fearing to be all alone, to remain in the maelstrom that had been created. By luck, I made the acquaintance of a group of people who simply decided to set off on foot, one to Lublin, one to Zamość. I joined with this group. On the way, the first fright befell me. The bombardment was frightful, shooting [was going on] on all sides. Wherever my eyes looked, I saw conflagration. Jewish families with tiny children were going back and forth on wagons, that were supplied by peasants, piled with [their] bedding. I literally felt that my young heart was going to stop out of sheer fear. And so, in this way, we dragged ourselves for an entire four weeks, not spending the night in the same place we spent the day. Exhausted, broken, half dead, and fainting, I arrived at Tomaszow.

My Arrival in Tomaszow

As soon as I entered our home, a darkness fell over my eyes. I did not recognize my parents at all, for it appeared that they had suddenly grown old. To my question, 'what is going on here?' my mother ע"ה burst out crying, and remained stubbornly silent. However, there are silences that cry out more loudly that all shouts and all manner of speech. Pitiably, she did not want to, at that time, disclose the litany of tribulations, and the implementation of the horrible crimes that had already been perpetrated in so short a time against the Jewish populace in Tomaszow. Her silence at that time thundered at me, literally hurling bolts of lightning in my face. Feeling depressed and beaten, I fell asleep.

That following morning, I was able to see the great disaster for myself: several Gestapo murderers were leading a group of seized Jews to forced labor. Like feral tigers they spastically thundered: 'You vermin-infested filthy Jews,' while beating them over the head with rubber truncheons. An intense fear befell me, which deadened every hope and belief in me. The fear spread about me like a black shadow, what was there to do? How does one save one's self? My father ע"ה paid a Christian of his acquaintance a specific sum of money to smuggle me illegally over the border to Rawa Ruska, and I donned peasant's clothing and with a heavy, broken heart, said my farewells to my dearest. My father ע"ה quietly shouted after me, I hope, Rachel'eh that you will live and survive this devastating time of crime and collective guilt. I arrived uneventfully in Rawa [Ruska] to the Soviets, and I was able to breathe more freely there.

My Lonely Existence in Rawa Ruska Until the Outbreak of the German-Russian War in June 1941

I arrived in Rawa [Ruska] late, but the streets were still full of strollers, with many Jews, and indeed, Jews from Tomaszow. And every one of them tells of how bitter and bad it is for them, how they wander about among the houses of study, in the synagogues, how a part of them no longer have anything from which to live, and how they are denied admission to anywhere. And despite all of the headaches and various ills that these refugees brought with them, a part of them were planning to illegally cross the border back to Tomaszow, because they are unable to survive. Another part were planning to travel further into Russia, for which the Russian government, from time to time, forms echelons, and whoever wants to is able to travel. When I told them, in summary, in what kind of a Hell the Tomaszow Jews found themselves, how the Angel of Death had spread his black wings and spares no one, young and old, how the German murderers mete out

death at every turn, all were struck dumb and open-mouthed. However, not everyone believed me, and on the spot I was told that I exaggerate, and many, yes indeed many, from Tomaszow did return to Tomaszow, and pitiably, later on paid for this, very, very, dearly.

My grandfather ע"ה, R' Chaim Fershtman, with his family, who had been in Rawa [Ruska] for some time already, was very happy to see me. He, also told me how bad and bitter it was here, and how they had decided to travel on to Russia.

After several days, I found work in tailoring. I did not earn a great deal, and was barely able to support myself. However, I would have been willing to tolerate it all, except for imagining what sort of terrifying circumstances had befallen my family in their plight. I stayed up entire nights crying over all of our collective fate.

On a specific day, my grandfather ע"ה, and his family, with a full heart, took their leave from me, and traveled off to Russia. It truth, he very much wanted me to come along with them. I categorically refused, because I believed that we were on the very verge of seeing the end to all these troubles, and I had better be near my family, who were not far from where I was. And so, my solitary life proceeded in this way, with unhappy days, and sleepless nights until – until June 1941, when the bloody German-Russian war broke out abruptly.

My Return to Tomaszow and My Frightening Experiences

The sun set in a fiery sea, and in an ignited, brilliant explosion of flame, slid down beneath the horizon, and vanished, while leaving behind a blood red sky for a very long time. The streets are full of people, running hither and yon, wringing their hands. They cry and wail, a war has broken out in whose anticipated we trembled mightily. And here, we are talking, and here they are bombing us, and there are already dead who were killed. And here, shooting is coming from all sides, and before anyone realized it, one already could hear the wild voices of the German murderers and I returned to a state of anxiety, back to the fire. I, and several other Tomaszow families set out to return to Tomaszow. Arriving to my parents, they fell upon me, and wpt sympathetically. A wellspring of sorrow gazed out on me from my mother's ע"ה eyes. She looked at me with a mixed gaze, and did not even make the effort to wipe away the tears. Her sorrow was genuine and deep, to the extent that it choked up my own heart.

Immediately on the morrow, my parents receive a notice that because their daughter had returned from Russia, my parents are required to pay a large sum of money on my behalf as indemnification money. A keening went up in our house, regarding how it would be possible to get such a large sum of money, however there was no answer to this. In the morning, at eight o'clock, the sum must be presented. My mother ע"ה took a gold chain that we still had in our possession, and went off to sell it to the Polish priest. She told the priest everything, and the priest took the chain, paid her, and told her, 'Go save your child.' My mother thanked him with a full heart, and went away. On the following morning, she paid the sum on my behalf. In this manner, all of the families that returned from Rawa [Ruska] were required to pay extraordinarily large sums as an indemnification. It is superfluous to say that the German murder machine turned over flawlessly in all of its detailed operation, such that, no matter where a Jew came from, the Gestapo knew of it immediately. Do understand that there was no lack of informers, snitches of all kinds, since thousands of eyes lay in ambush for each and every Jew.

In a short while, a German enters, and says he is knows that I am a seamstress, and would I be able to sew a variety of items for his family? Yes, I answered, and seized upon this like some extraordinary find. I began to work for his family, and he sent other Germans, and I thanked God that all of them were satisfied with my work. I even received a *sonder-ausweis* that is, a work card.

I am Slandered as a Communist

One morning, the Gestapo official Prokop comes in, and conveys that he Has an order for me to go with him, and that I am arrested because I am a communist. He gives me five minutes, and I can take along whatever I want to. My parents began to weep intensely, and asking for mercy, and he stood by in cold blood, while whistling a tune. He said that first, he would take me to the senior S.S. officer, Zeidel. Hearing that name cause a tremor to pass through mt heart. The senior S.S. officer Zeidel was of medium height, broad-backed, and his face could change at any instant. One moment he was in a fury with bulging eyes like a despot, and a minute later he would wear a sadistic smile when one would give into him and be servile. The slightest violation against his orders did not go unpunished. For the slightest tardiness in getting something done, he would shoot someone, holding a revolver in one hand, and an apple in the other hand, which he ate at the same time. Who can imagine what was going on in my heart at that time? When I was taken into the presence of the murderer Zeidel, as soon as I saw his thieving eyes, my tongue was tied out of terror. I stood bowed and contorted, as if the weight of the entire Jewish exile had suddenly been placed like a heavy mass on my young back.

He screamed: You contemptible communist, that you are! Turn to the wall! Put your hands up high! And he began to brandish his revolver. When I saw death staring me in the eyes, I regained my composure, burst out crying, and fell to his feet and with a heart-rending voice told him that I was still a child, and do not even know what this is in the first place. At that same moment he left, and I do not know if he was called. However, leaving the door slightly ajar, I saw how one person was giving him a couple of bottles of whiskey, and said something to him. He returned soon, and shouted in an even louder voice: 'Get out of here, you despicable communist! Like a shaking leaf, I barely crawled out, and entering my home, I then first fainted, not seeing the great joy of my parents that I had been saved, and returned from the Other World.

In this manner, things got worse from day to day. Every day and every night was a battle to live through the day. People began to tear themselves away to go to work, because those who had work cards had a right to live. Later on, people stopped returning from the frightfully heavy labor. The first victims were the Schwindler family with four sons. After work, they were ordered to dig graves for themselves, and they were shot. The *Judenrat* was told to bury them. Immediately, R' Nahum Zucker v"g carried them on his own back to the cemetery. We observed the great calamity. What can one do? Shimon Goldstein, Benjamin Bluzer, Gershon Gartler, Masha Rothenberg, etc., would stealthily enter the cellar, as quietly as possible, where my parents lay hidden, and on once occasion had actually decided to make bunkers for ourselves in the forest. However, nothing came of it, because the risk was too great.

The Aktion in Tomaszow

The first *aktion* took place in March 1942. In accordance with an order, men and women, during the day, were required to present themselves on the square. Three shots were fired to initiate the *aktion.* Immediately the savage shouts of the *gruppenführers* and order givers could be heard. They stood at full battle readiness, arrayed here and there in groups, strategically deployed, just like maneuvers for an attack upon an enemy. Do not think that it is a small matter that the Jews of Tomaszow, with their wives and children, are a threat

to the Third Reich, and are the ones who are principally guilty for the World War. All the combatants had previously been issued rations of alcoholic beverages. They would get this before each slaughter because it helped them get better results and the 'work' itself proceeds more quickly, with greater vigor, and more savagely. We saw the great misfortune unfold before our eyes. The tumult and confusion became great, People ran about frightened and lost: where can one hide, to where can one run? Not all Jews had bunkers or cellars, so one ran to neighbors, to shared places of concealment. And here, it is already late, because the Germans are combing the streets. A small number of rich Jews from other places were able to buy themselves out for a large sum of money, in whose place they began to look for the poorer ones. The murderers ran about on all sides with drawn guns. They took up strategic positions at all the walls. Immediately we could hear the report of continuous shooting, the savage yelling of the bandits, the weeping of children, the moaning of the wounded. Here and there, a Jew would run by, and a murderous bullet would bring him down.

I lay in an attic, stuck back in a corner, and through a small crack, I looked out. And suddenly, my eyes beheld how they were already now leading my dear parents with their hand held up. A choked cry tore itself from the depths of my bloodied heart. I tore the hair out of my head, and sympathetically wept: now I am surely alone, as alone as a stone. It was in this manner that each time, someone else was taken to the gathering point. Part of them were not taken but shot. And all were taken off to Cieszanow, and form Cieszanow to Belzec. One of my little brothers, age 12, had stolen away, and then returned. My joy was indescribable. When I saw him, I arranged for his safekeeping with a gentile, for money of course.

After the *aktion,* it was not possible to return to one's own place. Part of the Jews who were hidden did come back, and those that had work cards for the time being, had the right to live, and I was among them. I was yet to receive a short letter from my mother ע"ה, where she writes that she beseeches God that a memory should remain behind, that I should remain alive. But woe it was to such a way to remain alive. The day-in and day-out terror and fear, the hunger that sucked the last bit of marrow out of the bones. But the measure of tribulation was yet far, far from being full.

The Aktion in Belzec

The second *aktion* took place on the second day of Shavuot of that same year. With an even greater impetus, the murderers ran about like wild animals, searching, ferreting out in holes, cellars and attics, dragging people to the gathering place. Whoever was unable to go, was shot immediately. The same scenes were repeated, that took place at the time of the first aktion. The same wild shouts, the beating over the head, the trampling of tiny babies underfoot. The screaming and crying literally rent the heart. At that time, I was hidden in a camouflaged cellar.

As I was later told, one Jew had 'the good fortune' when he ascended the wagon, simply expired. His dead body lay there, wedged in the crush among the living. When all of the victims had been loaded, one person asked the Germans what was to be don with those who were shot, and laying sprawled about? – Put them up among the living – was the answer. *Apfahren!!* – The *obersturmführer* cried out. Accompanied by heart rending cries and wailing, the wagons began to move from their spot. All the unfortunate victims were taken to Belzec to be exterminated.

Judenrein

On the following morning, after the second *aktion,* Tomaszow looked like a cemetery. The houses wrecked, and plundered. Only a small number of Jews saved themselves who were well hidden, remaining orphans,

widows, and solitary broken souls. For the time being, the murderers continued to tolerate the *Judenrat*, except for Yehoshua'leh Fishelsohn ע"ה who a while back had committed suicide. Some said that the murderers had shot him , along with his wife and child, because he did not want to provide any Jews, and in his place, Abba Bergenbaum ה"ד became the President. And so, it was in this fashion that we, those ver few that remained, began anew to exert ourselves, in hiding already, becoming swollen with hunger, and continuous terror in the face of impending death.

After a short while, late at night, there was knocking at my hiding place. I became very frightened, when he called out my name and said: flee as fast as you can, because tomorrow, in accordance with an order, Tomaszow must become *Judenrein,* including the *Judenrat* among them. Since the Germans know about all the hiding places where the few Jews are still hiding, flee! I then also flee. This was a Jew who worked for the Germans employed in the labor office. I then advised everyone that I knew, but I was not believed. One Jew put his life on the line, and went back to have a look at his house. The doors and windows were already torn off, and everything had been plundered. On Friday, I fled to Tarnowska. On my way, I already hear the sound of shots. Tomaszow became *Judenrein.*

My Experiences in Tarnowska

Arriving in Tarnowska, I saw many people from Tomaszow who worked hard, and in bitterness, at a variety of jobs, without pay, but only for a bit of food. Do understand that all of these Jews had work cards. There were Christian people who also worked at a variety of jobs, but their working conditions and circumstances, were entirely different. They had no fear, and were also able to eat fully. I presented myself to the director of the S.A. Kina, with my work card, as a seamstress. He was agreeable, and I began doing tailoring for the Christian workers, without pay. I received food from those for whom I did work. I had sufficiently enough to eat, to be able to give some away [to others]. Relatively speaking, it was quiet. The director would continuously comfort us by telling us that nothing bad would happen. He constantly assured us that we were considered to be needed workers, and indeed, he would travel frequently to Lublin to work out ways to extend the time we had to live.

On one night, my little brother Shmuel, who was hidden with a gentile woman, came running to me blackened, barefoot and naked, saying that the gentile woman had thrown him out. A darkness fell on my eyes. I was advised not to declare his presence, because they would kill him. I began hiding him, each time in a different place.

On one occasion, the director told me that on the following day he was going to take me to Tomaszow, to sew for his family which was living in the house of Ruzha Bergenbaum. I really didn't want to do this, but you can understand that I was in no position to refuse, and therefore, went off with him the next day. I sat there and sewed. His wife was very satisfied, and was very good to me. Her mild blue eyes were not like those you would see in other people, when they saw a Jew. Her warm gazes would serve to calm me, but I could not sit still, thinking over and over about my little brother who lay hidden [back] there. I asked the director to take me back to Tarnowska, at least for a day, but he categorically refused: Why specifically today? He asked me ironically. I then begged his wife, and literally cried before her. She summoned one of her workers, and he took me back to Tarnowska in a small wagon, and he said to me that in a day or two, she would send for me.

My little brother was extremely happy to see me, so that tears washed over his face. I gave him food to eat, that the director's wife had given me to take along, and with a pounding heart and a bad premonition, I went

to sleep. Before dawn, I hear a wild tumult, and I immediately hear that well-known shouting of the Nazi bandits. I look outside, and all of the Jews stand ringed around by the S. S. murderers, and before I can even think of what to do, trembling with fear. They are already knocking at the door: *Heraus, verfluchte schweinen!*[147] I went out. The murderers are running wildly around, shooting from all sides at fleeing Jews. Here, Wladek Ettenberg run by me (Yaakov'leh the doctor's grandson), and says something to me, and here, a moment later, he lies dead of a murderous bullet. I quickly went over to all those who had been rounded up, who stood surrounded by the murderers, with their drawn weapons. My glances wandered quickly here and there, but I did not see my little brother. One of the murderers stood with a list in hand, and called out the names. One portion [of the people] were told to go to one side, and another portion to a second side. Rachel'eh Putter threw herself at the feet of the S. S. man, begging for mercy, and showered him with several pieces of gold, but it was to no avail. He took the few pieces of gold, and stood her with her mother to one side, among those to be exterminated. Her three brothers were not on the list, and *for the time being*, they were left alone. When the S. S. man finished calling out the names, he announced that the seamstress that works for the director in Tomaszow, will be shot tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock. A shudder went through me, as I saw them already leading one group whom they kept on beating. They are thrown upon small wagons prepared for this occasion, and the weeping and crying literally tore the heart. An overweight German, with great pleasure, hoarsely screamed in a sadistic manner: *Nach Belzec abfahren!* And several wagons packed, approximately 70 Jews, began to move in the direction of Belzec. In the case of many families, the children were taken, and the parents left behind, and vice versa.

They began to drive the second group, but in an opposite direction, towards Zamość. The second group also consisted of a like number of people. I stood confused, not know what I had to do, how does one now flee from death, and where does one find a rescue to be able to continue living. At that moment, I earned a blow to the head, and I fell down. The same murderer picked me up and carried me with one hand, and threw me onto the people who already sat on the wagon. Blood ran from my head, but I did not feel any pain, because I did not know what was happening to me. I first came around in Zamość, were we were driven to a gathering place, where many Jews from many places already lay with their faces down.

We were held there for an entire day without food, and we unfortunates were then driven onto freight trucks and we drove off. Nobody know where to.

In Majdanek

For anyone who has not gone through this personally, it is very difficult to grasp how it is possible for a human being to withstand such frightful torture. Regrettably, my pen is too feeble for me to be able to retell everything accurately, so that it can be understood, and even believed.

While riding in a freight truck, we suddenly perceived our great misfortune. We are being taken on those dark roads that lead to Majdanek, on those roads that are saturated with Jewish blood, on the ground that has been fertilized with the ash of incinerated Jewish lives. The closer we got, the stronger the odor of the gas chambers of the death camp became. All of us began to weep in a whimpering fashion. We saw that our fate was explicitly sealed. I was seized with a sense of quandary based on hopelessness, a terrifying apathy, a plight that had no exit. Unwillingly, I would constantly fondle the vial of poison that I had provided for myself, while still in Tomaszow, from the employee who worked at Frank's pharmacy. I simply did not want

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147 Out, you damned pigs!

to die at the hands of these murderers. As soon as we arrived, we were taken directly to the gas chambers, and were beaten with murderous blows. Just from the beating alone, many fell dead on all sides. Nearing the gas chambers, we were told to strip naked, and in getting undressed, I lost my vial of poison. We had already gone into the gas chamber, and just as one [of the attendants] was ready to close the hermetically sealed doors, at the very last possible moment, an order arrived for us to dress ourselves quickly. We ran out wildly, and naked, and whatever garment came to hand, one put on. We were driven into a broken down barracks and were informed that we were going to get something to eat, and we received a bit of watery soup.

And so, this is how our dark lives began in the terrifying death camp Majdanek, hunger, fear of death, every couple of days a *selektion*, right-left. My eyes looked upon frightened people from Tomaszow, who were sent to the left, which meant to death. And each time I was present, and saw how the Angel of Death smilingly indicated with his baton, whether to live or die. I felt as if my heart would stop, and to this day, I cannot forget these gruesome images. And it was in this way that the span of death passed over me every minute, and in this way the murderers tortured us with the fear of death, as life went on in exhausting one's self, in waiting in a situation that was neither death nor life. The apathy and resignation had reached a stage, where the will to live had died within me – let whatever will be, happen already, I can no longer stand it – my bloodied heart cried out to me.

On a certain day, we were again dragged to a *selektion*. This time, I saw many women, young girls with pale frightened faces and according to what I remember, there must have been several thousand. How frightened we became, when a Gestapo doctor arrived, about whom we had heard of the type of frightening experiments that he carries out with his victims. Out of terror, I closed my eyes, not to look at his sadistic countenance. He selected 700 girls and women, to the right, and I was among the 700. And the rest of the *scheisse*[148], as he calls them, goes to be exterminated.

He gave a speech to we, the 700 girls and women: You, all of whom I have selected – he called out with a contrived indifference – should remain calm. It is fated that you are to have your own bed, your own house, where you will begin to live like human beings. You are to travel off to do labor with peasants. You should be attentive to do everything that you are ordered to do. *Auf Wiedersehen* – he waved with his hand.

We were immediately led to freight trucks. Upon entering the wagons, we saw there were girls and women there from before, We did not know when they had been driven here. To our question of where they were going, they answered: to peasants for field work. The crowding became continuously worse, and no more people would come in. [Despite this] the murderers pushed more and more in, and when it was to the point where one could actually no longer breathe, they nailed the doors shut. On each of the steps, a German murderer stood with an automatic weapon. On the roofs, lay the murderers bearing arms. At every turn, someone becomes indisposed, someone passes out, and everyone comforts themselves blindly, that we are traveling to work with peasants.

In Auschwitz

In transit, I didn't feel that I could last. We were so tightly crammed into the wagon, there was coughing, and there was choking from the chlorine disinfectant that had been shaken out. The odor of human excrement chokes in the throat, and there are quiet groans heard, from dying people. One becomes angry at another as

148 Shit

if the other were responsible for the crowding that broke bones, and kept one from breathing. We were pressed one against the other, bathed in a clammy sweat of death. One woman screams and continuously curses the entire world. Shouts for water come from all sides, just a bit of water to moisten dried lips. The reverberation of heavy gunfire penetrate the roiling ears. I look about, and see that all the faces are so pale, probably mine as well. And, lo, we now see the new great disaster to which we are being taken. From a distance, we can now see the electrified wire of the Auschwitz camp. How terrifying and frightening it is to be with the knowledge that death is inevitable and is approaching.

Slowly, slowly, the train begins to lose speed. It says that Auschwitz is drawing near. The train remains standing, and a frightening anxiety seizes everyone. Breathing stops, and murderous hands rip open the sealed doors, accompanied by wild bestial shouts to debark. [The scene] swims before my eyes, and I am barely able to stand on my feet. With all my strength, I tear myself out of the pressed mass of humanity, where many who were previously standing, in the congestion now fall stiffly to the ground. The S. S. murderers and their assistants hit the half dead women over the head with their staves. Faces become bloodies, Jewish blood spurts from all sides. Wild shouts are heard: *Ausstellen zich in reien!*

A cohort of the entire mass of people, sick and well, forced into rows, move in the direction of the 'baths.' One feisty young girl that did not want to go, earned a whack in the head, and then spit in the murderer's face. With the butt of his rifle, she fell dead at the hand of the murderer, near me. I envied her, because she could no longer feel the shudder that I feel now. *Get undressed!* We hear the shout from all sides. Entering the 'bath' a woman *kapo* stood at the threshold, and 'greeted' everyone with a blow to the head from a stout stick. I crouched involuntarily, and got a heavy blow to the spine, from which I suffer to this day. I fell down, and I was dragged off to the side by my feet. I lay stiff as the dead, for how long, I myself do not know. I did notice that there were more naked women and girls. The tumult and shouting from the murderous blows got me back up on my feet. When it was full, hands clamored to one another and – with a wild command, we were again chased out to get dressed. I became totally confused, and do not believe that any of this is real. But, in that desolate Hell of Auschwitz, death does not yet come quite so easily. The murderers love the sadistic and bloody toying with their victims. We were led into barracks where there were traces that not long ago, there were people here.

Torture at Work

Immediately the following morning, we presented ourselves at roll call. I dragged my feet along with all my strength. I was in terrible pain in the back, from the blow that I had received the prior day. But fear of death, and – no matter how comical it may sound – the will to live, at that moment, indeed, served to lighten the physical suffering. Today, it is difficult for me to understand: How was it that, while we were swollen with hunger, and in constant fear of death, we were able to work so hard in the waters, half naked, in which we were not even permitted to dry whatever clothing we had, but were driven more and more to exert ourselves, and nobody caught cold. There were instances, of sick people in my group, with high fever, being afraid to tell, in order not to be sent to the so-called 'ovens,' carried out the most burdensome and difficult work tasks. An instance of this nature occurred with me as well, and quite honestly, it is difficult, very difficult to understand how, and with what sort of mysterious wondrous force, the spirit of life was blown into those dried out skin and bones? Would it be possible in the normal course of an ordinary life, for the body and soul to withstand such physical and emotional stresses and not break? And perhaps the body strengthens the beaten and ailing spirit? Something like this serves as a rationale for me.

And so, this is how we 'lived' in Auschwitz where we were held as a sort of sidelined slave criminals who were sentenced to death. And it was only for the price of being granted several weeks or months, we were compelled to give up the very blood of our living essence. We were considered to be creatures without any feeling, no will, and no comprehension. Whoever so desired, could mete out a beating without a cause, to abase, and in the face of this, it was forbidden to react. We had to endure the most difficult emotional and physical suffering with superhuman patience.

After an interval of time, *selektionen* began, and I again saw those bloody terrifying scenes. The fear and terror of such a loathsome death broke me entirely. I could no longer cry; my tears had long ago dried out. But go and figure out the fate of an individual who had always been sent to the 'right.' Despite this, I felt that my strength was abandoning me, and life had become repulsive to me, and decided, at one point, not to present myself for work. What will be, will be, I thought.

Precisely on that day, there was an sweep, in which people were seized to be taken to the ovens. I began to run, I myself not knowing to where. I went into a building to hide myself, because under no circumstances did I want to die in this way. A sweep of this nature meant certain death. During a sweep, people were seized who didn't work, or simply hadn't presented themselves for work, that is, people who satisfy no need, people who are loitering about for nothing in God's world. In the building, I spied an empty small barrel, I turned it upside down, and sat in it. Suddenly the door is opened, and through a crack, I see a woman S. S. official, and in the blink of an eye, I went out to her and fell at her feet, and with teeth chattering, I told her, in brief, what I had already lived through as a young child, no less. She heard me out attentively. *Come with me!* She shouted. I was very afraid, and thought she was taking me away to my death.

My New Workplace with Better Conditions

she took me over a variety of small streets, and my heart was beating like that of a robber. The sun was shining clearly, and a cool breeze livened up my otherwise sullen face. We came into a laundry where 40 girls worked, washing laundry. I saw water, which for me was the greatest luxury, because for a bit of filthy water, I would run very far. I also see warm water, meaning, it was possible to drink as much as one wants to, and to wash one's self. For a while, my eyes lit up. You will, *for the time being*, work here – she said to me. She turned me over to the overseeing washer woman. She spoke at length with the overseer, looking all the time at me, I understood that they were talking about me. What they were saying, I did not know.

I began to work as a laundress, etc. The conditions here were entirely different. I received better food, and the overseer was very good to me. On the sly, she would slip me extra food to eat all the time. In a short while, I told the overseer that I was a seamstress. She seized upon this, indicating that they, indeed, needed a seamstress. Immediately on the following morning, she arranged for me to begin work sewing, where I began to sew for all of the kitchen people, as well as the *kapos,* who incidentally, were more terrifying than the German murderers. I no longer hungered. I began to feel the first stirring of hope.

I would lie awake at night in the dark, with open eyes and think: Is all of this real? No one lies any longer in ambush for me? I feel a warmth that heals my wounds. I want to forget the sorrowful life, and fill it [instead] with hope for the times of freedom that will arrive. I worked for exactly a year as a seamstress, which for me, was relatively good. Up to beginning sewing, I had spent a year of struggling with the most demanding physical labor.

The Liquidation of the Good Workplaces

On a certain day, an order arrived to liquidate all of the good working places, and that everyone must return to the same places where they had worked previously, when they had arrived in the Hell hole. At first, I thought that I would not be touched. However, I, too, was told that very early in the morning, I have to report for roll call where I will begin to work at my previous work. It grew dark in my eyes – –

Once again, I began doing the desolate burdensome work in the waters, and again began to suffer hunger, want, and fear of death. At work, I always hit my face, in order not to intercept the gaze of the tall German with the ruffian-like appearance, who would beat us murderously for next to nothing. Woe betide the individual who wanted to rest for a minute. If he would see that someone was no longer capable of work, he shot them immediately. These type of gruesome scenes were a daily occurrence, and how my heart stood this without bursting, I do not know. After a short interval, *selektionen* began again. Deafened and assaulted by the chaos of the heart-rending screams, it would transport me, like someone who was senseless, and it was a long time before I would recover from it.

There was no end to the frightful suffering. I felt like I was literally going to expire, that I was going to be extinguished like a sputtering candle. I decided to try and find my former overseer, thinking that perhaps she could rescue me. I found her, and she was frightened at my appearance. Always, when we spoke, I would tell her about my heavy labor, and that I can no longer keep myself going, and that she should take pity on my young life, and save me. – Wasting your life is a shame, but what can I do – she said to me with disappointment. – Nevertheless, come to this spot in two hours, perhaps I will be able to do something for you. Despite the fact that I am skeptical about it.

My New Work in the Union Factory

With great anxiety, I was barely able to wait for the two hours to go by. When I came to the spot, she was already waiting for me, and greeted me with a smile: You are lucky – she said to me affectionately – you are going to work at the Union Factory. There, a variety of ammunition is produced. There, all the workers are considered very essential, and I believe that you will stay working there – and lowering her head, she added – 'There you will be able to continue to live.' At the same time, tomorrow, I was to present myself to the director (I have forgotten his name). I thanked her heartily, and kissed her, took my leave of her and departed. My heart did a little leap for joy. The words of my former overseer, 'there you will be able to continue to live,' echoed in my ears. On the morrow, I immediately presented myself to the director, and began working in the munitions factory.

I Am Drawn into the Underground

Men, women and girls worked there, mostly people who were under protection. I made the acquaintance of new people. After an interval of time, a girl told me that I am under the observation of the underground that operates in the factory, and that they have decided to take me into their operations. However, I must be very, very careful, because several underworld elements operate here, such as informers, the wives of *kapos*, etc. My objective, like that of the others who work in the underground, was to steal materiel, and I already knew where to hide it. I immediately agreed, with a pounding heart. In the first days of stealing the materiel, my hands trembled as if in a convulsion, and later on, I became accustomed to it, more bold, and was able to take out more, and turn it over where it was needed. The sense of revenge dominated me to the point that I became

one of the best 'thieves.' From time to time, each would pass on to the other, decisions made by the leaders of the underground, whom not everyone even knew.

On a certain day, almost all of those who worked in the munitions factory were arrested. And everyone was searched. Detailed letters were found in the possession of four girls, from which they found out that they stood at the head of the underground, and that they are principally guilty. A little at a time, those who were arrested, were released. I was detained for only one day, and all returned to their work. However, the girls were held for a long time, and they were tortured with frightful methods in order that they reveal those who belonged to the underground. They withstood all of these tribulations, and betrayed no one.

A time later, it was represented that a large concert was being held that day, in the great hall – with a well-known actress – the hall was decorated with pretty divans, and a Jazz band played German Tangos. I, myself, wanted to temporarily forget, and go, but it happened that one of my feet was causing me a great deal of pain. When the hall was fully packed, the musicians disappeared, the doors were locked shut, and gas was let in, and all the people inside died a horrible death.

The Judgement

It took a long, long time, until the half-dead inmates of the camp came to themselves. After the 'concert' people went around as if they were crazy, freshly made orphans, freshly made widows. My dear friend who worked with me, met a tragic death also at this 'concert.' Everyone was devastated by a frightful psychosis of a gruesome, boundless fear. Here and there, Jews – mothers of slain children – not being able to take it anymore, committed suicide. It was said, as if no one will get away, one sooner, and another later. And it was this way that I continued to work at the Union Factory. Everyone had a pale complexion and frightened eyes – dominated by a psychosis of madness. We were now only ghosts of human beings, whose lives had already been taken away.

On a certain day, an order was issued that all inmates of the camp, without exception, have to gather in the large field. Frightened to death, all of us, like one, were driven to the field, not knowing what new calamity is going to befall us. On arrival, we saw four gallows, together with a large wide table, around which sat three judges. To the side, stood the tall lean German, with a pair of angry eyes. The dark moustaches seemed to make his mouth look wider, holding his monocle to his eye that constantly seemed to want to fall. On the table, spread out, lay many papers, books, and folios.

Suddenly, we see the four tortured girls, literally skeletons, with extinguished eyes. My heart seized up when I saw this. Esther'keh, the pretty girl from Warsaw, cried out with her last bit of energy, while going to the gallows: Jews! Do not look at the fact that we are going to our deaths. As far as possible, take revenge against the murderers for the spilling of this innocent blood! There dark end is drawing near! Fight with all your might and take revenge! She collapsed. One of the murderers picked her up and all four girls were led to the table. It became as still as a grave site.

It took a word from the tall German who was the Procurator. With a thundering voice he began to speak to the for unfortunates: You damned Jews, how did you dare to raise your filthy hands against the German Reich. You lousy filthy damned Jews that brought such a bloody war onto the world! We will exterminate you, exterminate you, down to the last one! In the name of the law, let these four criminals be hung! Hang them! He shouted, with such a savagery, that everyone went cold. The judges continued to talk and shout,

but I could no longer hear. And all of us, pitiably, had to stand there and watch how they hung those four young girls.

Beaten down, with bloodied hearts, we were driven back. Esther'keh's last words rang in my ears, a last will and testament from her choked throat: 'Jews, take revenge!!'

The General Evacuation of the Auschwitz Camp

On January 18, 1945, an order was issued that on this day, a general evacuation of the camp would take place. Everyone, without exception, must be evacuated. Only those who are entirely unable to go, have the right to remain.

A confusion arose among the people. One did not know what to do. What is better – one would ask the other. There were instances of people who presented themselves who were barely able to drag their feet, and the opposite case of people with the capacity to go, who remained behind. I decided to go, let what will be, be I thought, but at least my eyes will not see Auschwitz.

A tumult suddenly arose, and instead of us having to march off in two hours, we were immediately arranged in rows of four, surrounded by our very familiar overseer-murderers, and we marched out of the camp. After going this way for an hour, we were already envious of the people that had stayed behind, and it is possible that they envied us, because we heard a heavy gunfire coming from the direction of the camp. We also observed airplanes flying over the camp. Everyone tried to see if they were Russian airplanes, and as we later became aware, they were, indeed, Russian. My heart ached so for why I had left, but who is to know whether anyone was left before the Russians entered.

We dragged ourselves on, barely, barely able to walk. People began to drop. A heavy-set fat bandit, with a broad back, with a ruddy complexion and a murderer's appearance began to should anyone who fell. He bellowed and screamed like a wild animal. The further we went, the less people remained. Bullets flew and whistled in all directions. I felt that my fate was sealed, by the threat of death lying in ambush for me, and that I would not extract myself.

Our Wanderings

In this manner, we dragged ourselves as far as Berlin, and not a third of the people were left. We were billeted in the Malchow camp. This was a fresh Hell. We were not given any work, but also no food. We expired from hunger. Here, a young man stands talking, and here he falls down dead. We were kept in the Malchow camp for three weeks, and then transported to the concentration camp at Ravensbruck. There we stayed for only two days, literally the living dead, swollen from hunger. From Ravensbruck, we were driven to Gross-Rosen. There, they did not want to take us, so we were taken to Magdeburg. We were there for one day. Finally, in the end, we were settled down in a forest that was full of Gypsies. They had been brought there previously, and they were so wild with great hunger, that when we were given a bit of raw rice in our hands, they attacked us and took it away.

After two days of sitting in the forest, we began our trekking again. Among the murderers, every time, another one would disappear. One time, we traversed a field where the workers were harvesting potatoes. A couple of girls went to snatch some potatoes, and immediately three girls fell at my feet from murderous bullets. As I had previously said, we were going four abreast.

We began to be taken only at night, until we came to Cottbus. We sat down in the street. I was totally swollen up from hunger, and my teeth were chattering from the cold. All around us houses were burning. I was no longer able to stand on my feet at all. I asked the overseer to shoot me. He did not want to. Why is it that yesterday you shot two women when they asked you to? – I asked him. Because I cold no longer look at them – he answered me.

With, literally, my last bit of strength, we dragged ourselves to Leipzig. The bombardment and shooting was awful. The German populace flitted about like poisoned mice, and in the blink of an eye, we perceived that we were intermingled with the German populace.

At the same time, the overseer said, with a forced good-natured smile, that he will send us to the Americans that are already on the other side of the river. If I am not mistaken, I believe it was the Elbe. He loaded up a small vessel and only men went into this boat, and he ordered that we wait until it returned. In the middle of the river, he drowned everyone.

When we saw this, as many as we were, we scattered and fled, [because] nobody was guarding us at this time. Nevertheless, I remained very frightened. I saw a large pit, and so went into it and hid myself. Before I even looked around, the pit was full of those who fled. And so, in this manner, we lay in the pit. Night fell, the sky was covered in clouds, the crooked moon, from time to time, provides some light, and then is again concealed behind the clouds that pass across its face. Pressed down on the damp and wet ground, I first got a sense of where I was, and remained frozen. I could not shed a tear, to ease the heaviness that pressed down on me, to choke me. I now first began to understand that I come from Majdanek, from Auschwitz, where the wellspring of my tears were dried up. There, I lost all emotion, all that remained was a flicker of a will to live, crushed by an unknown force.

The Liberation

And so, enveloped in such a burdensome homelessness that tossed me about, tore me, and rent me, we hear a shout: *Donnerwetter! Heraus!* I look about, and I see an S. S. man with a revolver aimed at us. *Wer seit ihr!* He screamed at us. I responded by saying that we were detainees without protection. What sort of detainees, he screamed even louder. I told him the truth that we were Jews. He quickly unbuttoned himself and took off his S. S. uniform jacket, and remained standing there in a Russian tattered uniform, full of medals, and he gave a shout: *Vstavayte Rebiata* – – you are liberated from all of your tribulations! Hurrah! Hurrah! Everyone shouted with one voice.

This was on April 23, 1945. I will not forget that date for my entire life. He led us into a large house, where there already were doctors. Everyone was separately examined, and given a variety of medicines, and fed at the same time. We were under Russian protection for a bit of time. Some people died, perhaps because they ate too much, and a little at a time, my strength began to return, and I traveled off to Poland.

In Poland, I saw that I had no life that I could think about. My kin were all dead, the frightening horror rises from the streets, the stones are sticky with the blood of the butchered Jews that will never dry out. The couple of houses, that I see standing like blackened grave markers on a cemetery, my poor little shtetl of Tomaszow-Lubelski, now you are one big mass grave. I immediately left Poland with the few Jews, saved by a miracle, to Germany, in which we began to concentrate ourselves in the so-called D. P. camps. There, I had no rest at all. Night after night, I screamed in my sleep. Often, I would not want to lie down and go to sleep. I

became very exhausted, until finally, I traveled to the Land of Israel, where I could not even dream of my horrifying years.

Today, I am in Israel with a husband and two hearty little children, and it pains and bloodies the heart that my nearest and dearest did not live to see this. And I will never forget what Hitler ימ"ש did to our people. Remember what Amalek did to you!!

My Experiences

By Charna Kaufman-Eilen
Taken down by Yaakov Schwartz

Page 679: Charna Kaufman-Eilen

We lived in Tomaszow on the school street Szkolna 21 where we had a small enough house where we ran a bakery. My parents ע"ה worked very hard, because we could not afford the larger premises that a bakery demanded. And they earned their livelihood in a decent and honest manner. I, and my older sister Chana, helped with the baking in the house, and after work, I learned how to sew.

In the last times, the high taxes literally flayed off our hides. Anti-Semitism stalked is at every turn. We were constantly pressed into the small houses, where all around us, we could feel the poisonous hatred towards the Jew, where the air, the sun, the earth, the sky, and even the wind belonged to the gentile. And it is therefore no wonder, that a strong, dark pessimistic wind blew through the shtetl, and under no circumstances, admitted so much a s a single ray of sunshine. However, at no time, did I permit myself to be completely saturated with this pessimism, but hoped for a better day, on a better tomorrow....

My Four Good Years in Wloclawek

In 1935 I got married in Wloclawek. My husband, who himself comes from Szydlowiec-Radomsk lived in Wloclawek, where we had arranged a nice home for ourselves, with pretty furniture. My husband made a good living. In my spare time, I participated in a good cultural milieu, and literally began to sense my quiet, modest, fortunate family life. But the sun shined for us this way, for only four years.

My Three Frightful Months with the German Executioners

In the year 1939, the frightful war broke out, and the Germans bombed Wloclawek immediately, where hundreds of killed people fell. On the second day of the war, the murderers had already marched into the city with tumult and din, and they shot every Jew that they encountered. A frightful panic ensued, the Jewish populace ran around as if insane, looking for places to hide, not knowing where to look for a refuge.

Exactly on the eve of Rosh Hashana, when the Jews, clandestinely, assembles to pray, with broken and wounded hearts, beseeching mercy in regards to the great calamity that had suddenly fallen on all of us Jews, tow S. S. murderers suddenly entered with a wild laughter, and seized a Jew along with his 19 year-old son, and took them to their home, conducted a severe search and after that led the father and son out and administered a severe beating, screaming at the father: You despicable Jew, dig the pit faster, faster. When the pit had been completed, they shot the son, and tossed him right into the pit, and the father was compelled afterwards to fill in the pit, hearing the shouting and screams coming out of the pit, from his son who was still half alive.

On the following morning, all the men were dragged out from the houses, arrayed in rows, eight abreast, and with hands held up, all had to shout: 'Today we are all going to be shot because this is what we have earned.'

And this is what happened every day, when we went at six in the morning to the frightful and heavy forced labor, and returned from work at six in the evening. But every day, fewer Jews returned, since people were shot for the slightest thing. For not being able to carry a heavy load, the penalty was death, and hundreds of people were drowned. The work consisted of extracting the pillars of a bridge from very deep water, which had previously been wrecked.

My husband also worked at this devastating labor. When he came home, I could not recognize him, his eyes glazed over, beaten, bloodied, wet, soaked through. We wept over our dark fate, and who was to know what misfortune the following day would bring. The work was a bit easier on my husband, because he was a good swimmer.

My Husband Flees to Tomaszow

One time, he could no longer contain himself, and he swam off underwater. The murderers shot after him a couple of times, but miraculously, the bullets did not hit him, and he got away from there. After long and difficult wandering, he arrived in Tomaszow to try and locate my parents. He totally did not recognize Tomaszow. He did not see a single Jew. From a local gentile woman, he became aware that my parents were to be found in Rawa Ruska. To this day, I cannot grasp how, by way of a variety of back roads, he was able to illegally cross the border and reach my parents in Rawa Ruska. However, my parents were already [by that time] in Russia. From Rawa [Ruska], my husband traveled to Bialystok, hoping to find me. This was what we had agreed to previously.

In Wloclawek, I remained with my brother Fishl, his wife and his two children, where we were by now already wearing yellow badges. The situation grew worse from day to day. Each day brought fresh misfortunes with it. One of my neighbors, a dear and full hearted elderly Jewish man, was seized by the murderers, and had his beard ripped out, and when his face and head were running with blood from the beatings, he was forced to dance and sing, and they, the scum, laughed heartily and photographed this hapless Jew in a variety of poses, until they tortured him to the point that he gave up his holy soul, and expired.

Pursued by unrest and great fear born of the desire to find a modicum of refuge in our uncertain situation, I still needed to go look for something to eat for my starved children. Wearing the yellow badge, I was forbidden to go where people traverse in the middle of the road where people travel.

Once, when I was proceeding with a pounding heart, a German murderer was approaching me. In the moment, I wanted to turn away, but the sharp glance from his two thieving eyes riveted me to the spot. 'Come here, you despicable Jewess!' – he shouted at me, and grabbing me by the throat, he led me to a rather large office, and ordered me to wash all of the rooms, and polish all the windows, wipe off all the tables, and this needs to be made clean and sparkling in accordance with the taste of the German master race, and if it does not meet with his satisfaction, he will – and he made a motion with his index finger, drawing it across his throat. I asked him to give me a couple of rags with which to wash. And he gave me a slap across the face, such that it became dark before my eyes. Blood ran from my teeth, and the murderer shouted at me to take off my garment, and use the garment to wash. In great shame, and with a bloodied heart, I took off the garment, and began to wash and clean. A well of tears poured from my eyes as I was washing the windows. In no way could I get control of the spasmodic crying that ran through me like a storm, because only a mother can have the emotion that not far away lie the poor hungry children, crying and begging for a morsel of bread. I finished the work after six or seven hours. The murderer arrived back, and I had my garment, that was by now torn, rinsed out, and put on while wet. He smiled, since apparently, it satisfied him. But in a

moment, his face became ignited, and he gave a wild shout: Get out, you filthy Jewess! He gave me a shove, and threw me out.

Coming 'home,' exhausted and hungry, spat upon and bloodied, I could not stand the cry of the children any longer, and so, I fainted. When I came to, after a longer time, and I lay ill for two weeks time.

A shot time later, inspections and searches were conducted every day, in all of the Jewish homes, and they took away everything that caught their fancy, underwear, blankets, fur coats, silverware, and money. And each person was required to carry this to the place that they ordered. There were instances when the murderers tore off earrings, with pieces of ears, an will as fingered from hands. When everything had already been stolen from me, A *Volksdeutsch* came into my home, and told me that I was to vacate my home in 24 hours and take nothing with me. I am to leave everything that is here behind. On the following day, immediately in the morning, the *Volksdeutsch* brought me a paper document indicating that he had taken possession of this residence from me, And I have the right to travel to my parents in Tomaszow. A gentile woman whom I knew, provided me with a document identifying me as a Polish woman, and my name was Ceska Cerunska. Despite the fact that the paper had no picture, and was certainly worthless, I paid her well, hoping that maybe it will prove useful, couple with the fact that more or less, I had Aryan features. The *Volksdeutsch* was very 'personable' in permitting me to remain in 'my' home for a couple of extra hours.

I Go Off To Bialystok

In the end, barefoot and naked, with two tiny children in each hand, I went by a variety of back roads, to the train. With a pounding heart, I discarded the yellow badge. The gray-dak sky looked forbidding, heavy black clouds chased after each other across the skies, and on top of this, an intense driving rain fell, giving the appearance that everything was weeping along with us over our great calamity. Coming to the train station, barely alive, I entered the car where the gentiles rode, because Jews were supposed to ride in a separate car. For the entire journey, I heard the tumult and screaming from the car where the Jews were, and were the German bandits were tearing away tiny children out of the arms of their mothers, and throwing them out of the windows. The entire way was full of blood and tears. I even had no right to cry, because I was among gentiles, and didn't want to give myself away.

The train dragged itself to Warsaw. In Warsaw we encountered only destruction. From Warsaw, we dragged ourselves to Malkin, to the border. With very difficult struggling, and intense exertion, with beating and blows, it became possible for me, and the children to flee across the border by using back roads. But until we were able to get to Bialystok, we had to lay in a large pit for four days, in which there already were people previously. This was until we saw a platform, and we were taken out and taken to Bialystok, where we were able to breathe more freely, and where my three-months of frightful suffering and torture came to an end. May the German murderers be cursed for generation on generation to come, for the spilled blood, for the bestial murders of the Jewish people.

I was not in Bialystok for long. I suffered a great deal from my child that had gotten very sick. Standing one day in a queue for bread, I spied my husband, and gave a shout of joy, and choking tears overwhelmed me, and communicated our tragic experiences.

From Bialystok, we traveled to Lemberg. There, I learned from a Jew from Tomaszow, that my parents are in Vinnitsia.[149] We decided to travel to them. My entire family was with them already, my sister Chana, with her husband Abba with their child, my brother Fishl, with his wife and child (P.S. how it was that my brother Fishl, with his wife and child, extracted themselves from the German Hell, is a separate story). Also, my brother Abraham [was there] with his bride. A terrible longing befell me for my entire family and we traveled to them.

My Life in Russia

The echelon that took us to Russia did not go to Vinnitsia, but rather to Voronezh. And we had to remain there. A while later, I became aware of the address of my parents, and remained continuously in contact with them.

In the year 1941, I traveled to my parents in Vinnitsia. Our joy was boundless, telling each other about our experiences. Remaining there for a few days, I traveled back, when the first misfortune befell me. My sick child died, and we gave the first victim to the Nazi murderers ימ"ש (as I have already noted, my child had fallen ill when I fled to the border).

Four weeks later, the German-Russian War broke out. A terror seized everyone immediately. The [image] of the German murderer was well incised into my memory. Frightened and disassembled, as if someone had just flung me back into that dark time, I was shot through with the atmosphere of those gruesome throes of death and dying. All the frightening and horrible images came swimming up in front of my eyes all at once, and I saw my tortured neighbor, how blood was pouring off of him. I hear his last groan, before he gave up his gentle soul, and here I see the cars, already, crammed full of Jews that are being evacuated from the already bombed out little towns. Jews with extinguished and frightened eyes, weeping and screaming from children, the men dragging valises with them, families holding each other by the hand, older people barely able to stand on their feet, mothers calling to children, and vice versa, everything screams out of great confusion, and in every nook and cranny I looked, perhaps, perhaps I will spy my dear parents and brothers with the family. Regrettably, they did not come (my brother-in-law Abba Gross was already at the front).

It did not take long, and the German front moved towards Voronezh. We evacuated ourselves further, and later on again even more further. It was in this way that we wandered, from one place to another until we settled down in the place, and lived through the war, living continuously with the hope of finding out where my dearest and nearest could be found.

Our Return to Poland, and the Effect on Me of the Bad News

On returning to Poland, we took up residence in Wroclaw. The first thing I did was go to the Jewish Committee, on the chance that I might find out something about my parents. In the courtyard, I am approached by the tall Yaak'l Wolf Schuster (I don't remember his family name) and says to me: Charna, whom are you looking for? Tragically, your parents, sisters, brothers, with the entire family were buried alive in a large mass grave, where there are 36 thousand Jews, and many of them from Tomaszow. My wife and

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149 In Polish, the name of this Ukrainian city is rendered *Winnic*.

five children also are interred there. I, personally, was at the site of this grave as a military man, where I mourned them, and left them – – [150]

Fiery sparks began to fly before my eyes. I felt that any minute, and I was going to fall down. And from my mouth, words poured out, words that butchered like flaming spears. I pictured how Nahum Schuldiner's children were sent as messengers to their parents, telling them that tomorrow the full extermination of all the Jews will take place, that they should find some place to hide themselves, and to tell their nearby neighbors that they should hide themselves. Then Nahum Schuldiner ע"ה came to my father, Yud'l Eilen ע"ה and said that he had decided that wherever all the Jews were going, that we also have to go. Indeed, they went, and paid so dearly.

He also told me about the tragic death of my sister Chana ע"ה. She was standing at the open great pit with her pretty, full hearted little daughter and wept sympathetically and tore the hair out of her head. My parents with the entire family had already been tossed into the pit, and cried out from the pit. A human impulse appears to have overcome a German murderer, and chased her away. Then she shouted out proudly: Take no pity on me, I am also going there, where my parents, brothers and all the Jews are going! And with her child, she immediately jumped into the pit, where no one was shot, but immediately covered with the earth. This was told to him by a Jew would was saved who knew my family, giving him an accounting of all those from Tomaszow who were buried alive there.

I fell down and fainted. I became sick. I lay [ill] for a long time, my bloodied heart being unable to heal: Alone, only I remained out of my entire family. Today, I am in Israel, with three children with my husband who also remained as the only one left out of eight children. And in my heart, I carry a deep wound, for the six million butchered martyrs, and among them, my nearest and dearest, who will always remain sacred and dear in my memory.

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150 The description of this mass grave, and the environs, suggests that this is the notorious killing ravine at Babi Yar in the Ukrainian city of Kiev.

On the Waves of the Hitler Storm

By Beryl Hirschensohn
Taken down by Y. Schwartz

Page 687: *Beryl Hirschensohn*

My *shtetl* Tomaszow can be found approximately seven kilometers from Belzec, which perhaps more that all of the little towns, imbibed seas of tears from the tens of thousands of Jews from all of Europe, that transited through here on their last journey to Belzec. What we still don't know, is the sum total of the total undermining and extermination of the Jewish *shtetl*, as does each shtetl, which has its own specific story, its unique tale of suffering, that is told about the local nature of the great calamity. With my memoir, I wish to place a memorial to the butchered Jewish shtetl of Tomaszow Lubelski and also for those unfortunate Jews among whom I found myself in my life of wandering during the period of the Nazi Hell. {I do this] because a holy mystery, a bloody symbol, hovers over the past of my shtetl, and to permanently memorialize the memory of those martyrs, whose spirit hangs, awakened, recalled, and demanding: Do not forget us!

The Hell began with the arrival of the German murderers when the war broke out in the year 1939. My family and I consisted of seven people, my parents and three brothers, a sister, and myself who was a boy of age 14. Trouble and oppression, hunger and need, the seizures for forced labor with a variety of abuses and shootings. The gentiles of the shtetl honed their knives for robbery, plunder, murder, rape, etc. However, a miracle occurred at that time: When the gentiles were making themselves ready to launch a pogrom, which was scheduled to be launched at ten o'clock at night, the Russians entered Tomaszow at night, and the Jewish populace breathed more freely, and received the Russians with mixed emotions. Jews began to accustom themselves to the new regime. The Poles however, looked upon Russian rule with clenched teeth. The anti-Semitism that had sprouted here for many years already, and was deeply rooted in the soul of the gentiles, became the real oxygen that blew upon the flame of Jew-hatred, with the arrival of the Soviets, because for years now, on Polish soil one heard the mantra of '*Zydo-Komuna*[151].' And now, the Jews were accepting the Russians like their own true friends, and it is better to have the Germans rather than the Bolsheviks – or so the gentiles thought to themselves.

However, this didn't last for long. And a notice began to circulate that the Russians are shortly going to evacuate, because Tomaszow has to, in accordance with the [Molotov-Ribbentrop] Treaty, must return to German control. From the beginning, the Russians lied, insisting that wherever they would set a foot, they would 'liberate' the people from the capitalist-fascist order, and they would no longer leave. In a couple of days after the notice, the Russians began to leave the city. Many Jews traveled with them, mostly workers, craftsmen, and just plain people who had common sense and a clear view of things, because not all Jews took a sober and realistic assessment of how great the danger really was. There were still people who thought that possibly, it would be possible to live with the Germans like it was possible with the bolsheviks. After all, how doe one abandon a home, some bit of net worth, and then go off wandering in exile? And the Jews left their fate in the hands of the future and were, pitiably, so bitterly disappointed later on.

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151 Jew Communist

My family and I went with the Russians as far as Rawa Ruska. In Rawa [Ruska] we took up a place in the synagogue that was full of refugees. Or as they were called [in Russian] *Beznichehs.* The conditions were unbearable, the lack of sanitation, not having any way to make a living, and in general, the entire atmosphere as it related to refugees, were literally asphyxiating. On a given day, an echelon was assembles to travel into Russia voluntarily. My family and I traveled to the Zmerynsky Region[152]. There, we worked at a variety of labors. My parents, however, could not control themselves under any circumstances, first because of Kashrut, and also for other reasons. My family and another 25 Tomaszow families signed up to be repatriated. My father, Itcheh Hirschensohn (*Rachaner*) with his family, Itcheh Loden with his family, David Ofen (a Teacher) with his family, Getz'leh Jarczower (a cattle merchant), Old Ber'ishl (kasha maker) and many other families whose names I no longer remember. We were taken and re-settled in the Skalat Region, in the village of Horodnycja, which was near to another village named Krivo. All of this had previously been part of Poland, and now it had been incorporated into the Russian system with collective farms and factories. Most of the populace consisted of Ukrainians, who hated the Russians with a passion, but hated the Jews even more, whom they regarded as communist hooligans.

On June 22, 1941, when the war broke out between Germany and the Soviet Union, it didn't take long, and we were captured by the German murderers. Immediately on the first day, the Ukrainians, with the S. S. bandits, fell upon the village of Krivo and how many families from Tomaszow, and many other cities were shot by their homes (the N.K.V.D. had exiled a number of Tomaszow families to Siberia some time ago). The victims lay for two days, because there was no one to hide them, until it became apparent what they, the Ukrainians, were concealing in a single mass grave. Only one Jew from Tomaszow, Ber'ishl *Kashamakher* (Itcheh Loden's father-in-law) remained alive. The S. S. murderers did not touch him. He stood by and watch how his entire family was murdered. He, indeed, had a great privilege, to die naturally in the ghetto of Skalat, where my father ע"ה buried him in the Skalat cemetery. Only two of us families remained in the village of Horodnycja. The Germans entered the village tumultuously on horseback, with bared automatic weapons. At just that time, my mother ע"ה was standing outside, and they asked her whether there were Jews to be found in this place. My mother shook her head negatively. So they left, and immediately after them, Ukrainian police arrived, and seized me, my father and brothers, and Getz'leh Jarczower. Under heavy guard, we were taken and led to a place where they showed us two killed Jewish boys that they had shot, ordering us to bury them. We immediately dug a pit, and interred them. Later on, they told us to dig pits for ourselves. In the middle of this digging, my mother ע"ה ran up with our sister, along with Getz'leh Jarczower's wife with his three daughters, and they began to cry intensely, begging, and falling at their feet, and [as a consequence] we were let go.

A short time later, an order was issued that all the Jews in the area must come to Skalat in the rail yard, and a ghetto will be created there. Jews will work, and there will be order. Along with my family, I transferred over to Skalat, and remained their until a ghetto was created.

In the ghetto, we first began to suffer from a variety of troubles. We suffered hunger and need, and various diseases spread throughout. The Jewish police were terrifying. For the smallest infraction they beat and tortured. The somber and well-known President of the *Judenrat,* Meir Nierler, who was known for his cruelty, and who was so loyally committed in serving the German executioners, and who always provided

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152 This is a subdivision of the Vinnitskaya *Oblast.*

more than the count of Jews that the Germans demanded of him.[153] One time, he came in with Jewish police, and shouted at my father, that he should tell him where his son was. At that time, my older brother worked at a ranch. My father did not want to say. When he was already almost half dead, and blood ran fro every side, they roused him, and took him away to the camp at Kamenka, where, upon entry, one became a candidate to be sent to Belzec. He had already incarcerated a large number of Jews in this camp, which he had to provide on a certain day to be taken away to Belzec. There were, however, many well-to-do who bought themselves out of this situation for much gold and money, and to take their place, he needed to seize others. Every 2-3 months there were *aktionen*, savage *aktionen*. The Ukranian, Jewish and German police seized people, and initially put them into the synagogue. The President, Nierler, was a wild man, running about searching and sniffing out, dragging and beating people murderously. The cry of children and women bored out holes in the ears. – Do whatever you can, so we can remain alive! This is what the mother-in-law of President Nierler said to her son-in-law – even if you have to send thousands and thousands of others! (It is said that this mother-in-law and her son-in-law are alive today somewhere). Well, he did work faithfully. *Obersturmführer* Miller was very pleased with him. President Nierler and the commandant of the Jewish militia went about dressed in fine, elegant riding trousers, with polished boots, and the bouffant shirts with stuffed in sleeves, sweaty, inflamed and feral, with riding crops n their hands, in the same way that the Germans, identical to the savagely incited Germans and Ukrainian butchers, from house to house, from attic to attic, from cellar to cellar, pulling, tearing, beating and screaming, like wild animals, no worse than their good mentors. The synagogue was fully packed. The crowding was great also in the foyer and the women's synagogue. There were dead people and people who had fainted to be found there. Under curses and screaming, the unfortunate people were let to the train stations, under a hail of whips, and taken away to Belzec.

After the frightful *aktion,* there came a pause to catch one's breath, and we began to crawl out of a variety of hiding places. My family and I had a camouflaged bunker in the ghetto, and it served its purpose for us; we were not seized. There were also many people who bought protection, and gave them a temporary right to stay alive. People wrung their hands, what was there to do further? The fear sapped the marrow from our

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[153] When the Soviet - German war broke out on June 22, 1941, about 200 Jews in Skalat fled with the retreating Soviet army. The town fell to the Germans on July 5, and that day 20 Jews were murdered by German troops. On July 6 Ukrainian nationalists killed 560 Jews.

A *Judenrat* was set up, headed by Meir Nierler. He was accused of collaboration with the Germans in rounding up Jews for deportation. In the autumn of 1941, 200 young Jews were sent to a slave labor camp in Velikiye Borki. A group of Jewish women were sent for forced labor to Jagielnica. Early in 1942, 600 sick and elderly persons were rounded up and assembled in the synagogue, and from there taken to Belzec death camp. In an *Aktion* on Oct. 21, 1942, 3,000 victims were sent to Belzec, while 153 Jews were shot in Skalat itself. On November 9, in a second raid, 1,100 were rounded up and sent to the death camp.
On April 7, 1943, about 750 persons were murdered and buried in mass graves near the town. Following this *Aktion* a resistance group was organized, headed by Michael Glanz. The young members collected arms, but the Germans, aware of the existence of the group, advanced the date of the next *Aktion*, for which the group was still unprepared. In this *Aktion*, carried out on May 9, 1943, 660 persons were killed. The city was then declared *Judenrein*. Only 400 Jews survived in the local labor camp. A resistance group was formed in the camp as well, and when the partisan units under General Kowpak began operating in the vicinity, 30 Jews escaped and joined their ranks. All but seven fell in fighting against the Germans. On July 28, 1943, the last of the Jews in the Skalat camp were murdered. About 300 Jews had found temporary refuge in the forests in the vicinity, but they were attacked by the Ukrainian bands led by Bandera, and only 200 survived the war.

bones. A short time later, we observed that we were entirely surrounded. A great tumult ensued, the murderers savagely penetrated, and began to lead the unfortunate ones out, among whom were my dear parents and only sister. By happenstance, I happened not to be in the ghetto at that time. I had stolen out to go and beg for bread. At the same time the *aktion* took place that lasted for three days and three nights. On the outskirts of the city, the victims were forced to dig their own graves. How my brother managed to escape from those pits at that time, I do not know. Three thousand Jews: men, women and children, were shot at the lip of the pit. Anyone who was not struck by a bullet was thrown into the pit alive. The outcries tore the heavens. People fell naked at the feet of the murderers and begged for mercy, but the murderers just laughed at them and beat them murderously. Under the ceaseless outcry emanating from the graves, the Ukrainian police threw in dirt to cover the graves. The, like locusts, the executioners threw themselves on the clothing, feeling them, searching every item of clothing and shoved Jewish gold and other valuables into their pockets. They quickly loaded the clothing on autos, and rode off, leaving the fresh bloodies graves, that undulated like disturbed waves. In these graves, under the earth, human limbs became intertwined, with each person tearing and biting at one another, not finding any surcease. The graves groaned and wept. The entire course of this *aktion* was told by a girl that was covered with earth, but was fortunate to scratch her way out, or someone pulled her out by virtue of part of her body remaining exposed. So it was related.

My brother, whom I found had fled from the pits, and was more dead than alive – he did not want to speak, or he simply could not – ran to the ghetto in order to retrieve some things from our bunker, so that we could exchange it for sustenance. In entering the ghetto, we saw that our bunker had already been ripped open, and we encountered a band of Ukranian plunderers that were stuffing their sacks with whatever they found. They smiled at us. We found a few minor items in our bunker, and we left the ghetto. Where were we to go? We went to a gentile of our acquaintance outside of the city, and with tears in our eyes, we begged to stay with him for a couple of days. He did not want to keep us for much longer. He told us, that yesterday, in the Kamenka camp, they had shot and killed several thousand Jews. This was already at the end of the year 1943. I must add here, that for a short time, I worked in the Kamenka camp, where the commander of the camp would torture me at every step and turn. My brother and I fled into a forest, and there we wandered aimlessly for a longer time. At night, we would beg food from the gentiles, from whom, not once, we saw death staring us in the eyes. Live became loathsome to us already.

We once came to a Ukrainian before whom we wept very intensely, asking to be rescued. He took pity on us, and took us in, and up in his attic, and hid us. He treated us very well. He would bring us food at night, and many times, took us into his house, in order to let us wash up. His entire family knew about us, even a young girl of his, age 12 years old, also knew about us, and none of them told anyone. As we later found out, from stories, he was secretly a saboteur. We stayed with him for a couple of months. He would have kept us to the end, if the following had not occurred:

On a certain Sunday, all of the saboteurs came together in his home, and afterwards, they went off to say their prayers. Then, a gentile hooligan ascended the attic for the purpose of stealing eggs, and discovered us. He then began to shout out: 'Oh my God – Jews!' Out of fear, he fell off the ladder. We quickly tore open the straw roof, and in one breath ran off into the fields. The entire village pursued us with dogs, with scythes and staves. We went into a hole full of oats. We lay like this, in abject terror, until about one o'clock at night.

Later, we went to a Polish gentile, who had lived near us. He gave us bread, and told us to flee, because we were being sought. He told us that the Germans wanted to shoot the saboteur, but he offered the excuse that he did not know, and his friends saved him. We later also became aware, that before the Germans came to him, he burned the picture of my father that was so precious to him. After further news, we became aware

that in the same time, a strong partisan group arrived, well armed, entered the camp and shot um a number of Germans, along with Ukrainian police that were there, and liberated 500 Jews. These were the last of the Jews, simply those who had bought protection, such as the Jewish police, Jewish advisers, etc. The partisans inquired among the Jews, asking that whoever wanted to go with them, could do so, but only if that person has weaponry. And it was only those who managed to grab weapons from the Germans that were shot, went along with them.

Two days later, a large reinforcement of German troops arrived, seizing all of the Jews together, and shot them all. A massive assault began, and the Germans began to pursue the partisans. We were captured, and they seized us, and immediately accused us of being partisans, as we were Jews. We kept on shouting that we were not Jews, and not partisans – we spoke Ukrainian very well – that we were from Great Ukraine from the Zmerynsky Region, the village of Semaki (we were there once) and we were being taken to Germany to work, and that we had gotten off to get a drink, and the train left without us, and all our effects, with our documents, remained on the train, that my name was Merynuk Mishko, and my brother was called Merynuk Ivan (we had previously prepared ourselves for such an eventuality). They drove us into the village. They rode on horses, and kept beating us with whips, from which I carry the scars to this day. After being led into the presence of the commander, we were sat in a cell, where a Ukrainian gentile woman who spoke German and Ukrainian, interrogated us to determine who we were. We told her the same story, and in the process, constantly crossed ourselves and mumbled prayers. She believed us, and relayed to the commander that it was her belief that we were not Jews. When she had left, I was conducted into the presence of a German by myself, where a Ukrainian interpreter sat, who began to interrogate me. I retold the same story. When the German saw that everything was consistent, he asked me whether or not I was hungry. I said yes. He immediately brought me hot soup, and a large stein of beer to wash it down. At the first sip, I felt that my head was starting to spin, and that I am getting drunk. In the blink of an eye, when the German looked away, I poured it out in a pail that happened to be standing there. He asked me how old I was, and I told him that I was 18 years old (this was true). The German, thinking that I was good and drunk, again interrogated me, and once again, everything was consistent. Afterwards, they brought in my brother, and repeated exactly the same thing with him that they had done with me. These were security police, who guarded the border. They took us away to Podwolczysk where they turned us over to the S. S. for interrogation.

The S. S. bandits did not interrogate us, but looked over the reports about us that the border police had given them. Five S. S. murderers constantly looked us in the eye, in order to see if they could extract a reading of who we were. Three said that we were not Jews. They spoke German, which we understood, and two said that we were Jews. Since there was a majority that said we were not Jews, they turned us over to the Ukrainian police to convey us to Tarnopol to interrogate us for real.

In Tarnopol, when I entered the office, a darkness descended on my eyes on perceiving the murderous eyes; a terrifying fear befell me. I controlled myself with all my might, as if being awakened in a start by his wild shout. He looked me in the eyes and asked me who I was. And yet again, I told him the same story, and thereby burst into intense crying, saying that I did not know what more is demanded of me. In the meantime, he reviewed the report. He gave someone a glance, and I was led into a side room. From under the door to my room, I noted that my brother was standing there. Entering the room, were four men who were beaters, two Germans and two Ukrainians, with rubber truncheons. The German told me to drop my pants. – Oh, God, why is such a cruel death ordained for me? – I thought to myself, in that one confused minute. – But I did not lose control of myself, but with my hands, drew down the foreskin so that I would appear to be a gentile... The Germans recognized that I was not a Jew. However, to the Ukrainian murderers, it seemed a shame to lose a victim in such a way, so they wanted to give me 25 lashes at least, because, perhaps, I was a partisan,

and according to their opinion, perhaps I was a Jew after all. I was laid out, and I felt the first lashes against my naked skin and screamed loudly, and later, I no longer heard anything. After the whipping, I was, bloodied, thrown out of the window. I a woke in criminal detention.

My brother, who had been put into one cell along with me, told me what happened to him. Upon being led into the room, he receive two heavy slaps to the face in order to disorient him. My brother, however, did not lose control of himself, but rather began to talk to the Ukrainians to let them know that they should not dare to touch him, and for no good reason torture a brother of theirs, recalling the revered Bogdan Chmielnicki. My brother had a genuine Aryan appearance, with blonde hair. The Ukrainians surveyed the situation, and quietly said something to the Germans, and immediately took him to the cell where I sat, or better said, where I stood. This was a political cell, for people who were suspected of being partisans. Many people sat there, and each day, people were taken out and shot.

Two weeks later, we were taken into an office, and a judgement was read before us that we had been tried, and sentenced to three months in jail because we ran away from the work assignment to which we were being taken, but everything else that we told them had been deemed to be true.

Being in jail, we were taken every day to work in Kamenka. You can understand, that there were no longer any Jews there. The only ones who worked there were political prisoners. At night, we were taken back to jail. We were given only enough food to sustain life. In Kamenka, the *Oberscharführer* was Rebel, who had known me previously as a Jew, and who would always torture me. Upon seeing me, he stood there for a while and shouted out wildly: You despicable Jew! I played dumb, as if he did not mean me, and demonstrated to him that he had made a great mistake, and I showed him the ID card that I had received from the Germans. He did not believe his eyes, and with a wave of the hand he let me go. However, because of this, he would allocate the heaviest work to me, and constantly mumbled: Despicable Jew, Disgusting Jew, etc. I ignored this. My brother was not touched, because, as I have said, he had an Aryan appearance.

At the end of the three months, we were taken to a camp where men were being concentrated to be taken to work in Germany. We received documents in the name of the previously mentioned Ukrainian identities, with our fingerprints.

In the camp, we became aware of a bit of news that was frightening to us: prior to traveling on to Germany, we will have to undergo a medical examination in Lemberg. Here, I new I would be found out. I decided to flee. Having in my possession such a valuable document, at night, I kissed my brother goodbye, and let myself down from a third story window through a broken grate, grabbing hold of the rain spout. It was pitch black, because, to my good fortune, there was a short jump. My brother would have come with me as well, but he was unable to push himself through the grate, like me, who was small and thin. He told me that he will jump from the train. I went over the fence (which was not being guarded particularly well), and went off to Tarnopol to a pig farmer with whom I had become acquainted in criminal detention, who sat with me for a couple of weeks (because he had insulted a German). He gave me his address, and said to me that after the three months, when I will be set free, that I should come to him. Upon my arrival, he was very glad to see me, and in order that the Germans not seize me for some other work, he sent me to one of his brothers-in-law, in the village of Velyki Haji. From time to time, the pig farmer would come, and we laughed and danced, and poured out all sorts of recrimination on the *zyds*.

At the home of this brother-in-law, where relatively speaking, I was in good circumstances, I remained until the liberation.

It is worth appending what my brother told me, after the liberation, he had gone through, since the time we became separated.

Traveling on the train to Germany, and coming to the outskirts of Lemberg, when the train began to proceed more slowly, he began to cause a rebellion among his group of thirty young gentile hooligans, only Ukrainians, to the effect of 'where are they taking us?' practically screaming – why should we let ourselves be exploited to do heavy labor? The Ukrainian people have suffered enough already, etc. He held forth with a whole speech. The gentile hooligans got so worked up that they immediately broke open the door of the moving train, and began to jump. He was one of the first. The soldiers, who lay on the roofs of the train cars began shooting and a few fell, but the larger part fled, taking my brother along to their home, and set him up with a priest in Kopecznic, There he did a variety of work, raising pigs, feeding cattle, field work. In time, he became the sole manager of the residence. The priest was very satisfied with him. Whenever he talked to the priest, the priest spewed hatred for the *Zyds*, that , thank God, we are now rid of. A gentile woman also worked for the priest, as a servant, who constantly told him what she had seen as a witness, what they had done to the *parszywe Zydy*. She told him of such frightful scenes that it shook up my brother, despite the fact that he knew about everything. My brother would run out during such storytelling. The gentile woman used to wonder, and she carried a special enmity in her unclean heart towards my brother about which he first later became aware of later.

One time, my brother had gone to the livestock pen to get some straw, and he took note of two Jewish girls, abandoned, frightened, and with tears in their eyes, they begged him to be permitted to sit until nightfall, after which they would depart. My brother wept inwardly, and said to them, that he is going to bring them bread. However, they were afraid that he was going to bring the police, and wanted to flee. He returned to them and said to them, "*Shema Yisrael.*" I am also an unfortunate Jew like yourselves. And so, they remained there. He made a pit in the livestock pen, and hid them, and he took them out every night to give them air and food.

After a certain interval of time, he heard an alarm given, that the servant was shouting: – *"Zydy"– !* He blanched with fear, and went out. He saw an elderly Jew who, pitiably, was standing there, and shivering. The servant, in passing by a bale of straw, which was near the livestock pen, discovered the Jew. In response to this alarm, the entire village came running, and began to beat the Jew, until the gendarmerie arrived, at which time the Jew was already dead. The gentile woman shouted that my brother Ivan had most certainly hidden the Jew, and who knows how many more he has in hiding. The police began to shout at him. My brother shouted even louder that he had no knowledge of anything of this sort, but he was certain that the servant had hidden the Jew, and was trying to blame him. They ordered drink to be provided, and a bottle of whiskey was immediately provided. In drinking this down entirely, they said to him, that he should take a scythe, and help them make an inspection of the entire yard. His heart nearly didn't stay in its place, and going with them into the livestock pen, they ordered that the straw be moved from exactly the place where the two poor sisters lay hidden. He moved the straw indolently. They walked onto the thin boards with which the pit was covered. The boards began to crack, but being inebriated, they didn't notice anything, and ordered the straw to be put back, and began to search in another spot.

He breathed a little more easily. And so they continued to search in this manner, for perhaps two hours, gave him a slap on the back and said: *Molodec Ivan!* And they went away. For two days, he was too frightened to go near them, until it wore off, and he brought them food. He kept them in this manner until the Russians came.

When the Russians arrived, he brought the two Jewish girls into the priest's home and said: Here are the Jewesses that were being sought, and that he, Ivan, is also a Jew. Don't stand there like a dummy! – my brother screamed at the priest who became entirely confused – give them food, let them wash themselves clean. Give them something to wear, and today, you will serve food! He turned the gentile female over to the proper authorities.

He did not stay there very long, and with the girls, he traveled off, and went through quite a bit more. In the end, he married one of them, and today can be found in America.

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A Gentle Christian Woman Saved Me

By Chana Szpizajzen-Weissleder
Taken down by Yaakov Schwartz

Page 701: *Jews being driven by the Germans*

Years have already gone by, since the Hitlerist bandits tore us away from our dearest, and nearest, by the most frightful torture and variety of killing methods. Years have flown by, since the angry black clouds covered our lives and made them dark. The German murderers have permanently extinguished the shining personalities of our Tomaszow community. I cannot forget all of the terrifying images that I saw with my eyes. Some of the time, I think that the more the years go bay, the pain becomes that much more intense. The images of the great nightmare become all the more clearer and distinct.

During the years of the great calamity, and in the first years afterwards – I was as if I had been deafened – living as if under a great din. Often, I did not even have the strength to sense the great pain, and first now – years after the great terror, I now begin to sense the great pain of our great misfortune. In the process of daily routine, I pause for a while, and perhaps more clearly than before, the nightmare of those days eats on me. I see the terrifying images of the first *aktion* in Tomaszow, where we were rounded up like beasts that were being pursued, fathers and mothers, aged 32 years and older onto the Piekarsky *Gasse.* I hear the wailing screams of the victims, in the gruesome night when they were taken off to Cieszanow, and afterwards to Belzec. I see the images in sharp relief of so many Jews from Tomaszow on their last tortured journey, and among them my nearest and dearest, who were taken away to Belzec, and my dear sister at the lip of the mass grave. And I feel, literally, as if my heart stops.

After killing out all of the elderly people we, the younger ones, began to work at forced labor, which for the slightest deviation, or imprecision, one was shot on the spot. We no longer had any homes, and I began to suffer from hunger and want. Barefoot and naked, in the most intense cold, to this day, I cannot understand how nobody caught a cold. I began to look in the garbage bins for a variety of leavings, such as potato peels, and I once found some pieces of dried out bread. However, a German once noticed me doing this, and gave me a good beating, and afterwards I was afraid already to look. From day to day, our numbers became less and less. At that time, the *Judenrat* consisted of three people. One time, while working in the field of a *Volksdeutsch*, a German approached me and shouted at me: Come here! ... I looked at him, and saw his two thieving eyes spitting fire, and a terrible fear gripped me (perhaps because a couple of minutes earlier, I had heard the cry of *'Shema* Yisrael,' and afterwards shooting). I began to run, and in a single breath jumped over fences, and the murderer pursued me, the bullets flew and whistled in my ears, and neither living nor dead, I ran into the premises of a peasant woman, and she hid me in a clothes bureau, putting her life at risk along with that of her entire family. With a murderous shout, the murderer stormed into the peasant woman's house, with a revolver in his hand. The peasant woman showed him in which direction she saw me running, and he ran out in that direction. Understandably, he did not find me. That evening, she took me out of the bureau for a couple of hours, and she rescued me until I came to. When I noted tears in her eyes, it gladdened my bloodied heart. She kissed me and consoled me, and she told me that she had a good hiding place, and she will hide me despite the fact that she know she is placing her life in danger, and that I must stop crying, because Holy Mary will protect me from all danger.

And this is indeed what she did. She hid me in a double attic, and every night she brought up food to me. She also told me that her son knows that I am hidden here, but that I should have no fear, because her son is a good person, just like her. Once a week, when there was nobody in the house, she would take me down, gave me a good washing, braided my hair, and cleaned me up. She gave me food to eat, and took me back to go to sleep. And why was she so good and full-hearted to me – why did she constantly kiss me and cry – did she have certain convictions about this, different from others – I have no answer. One time, as I lay in the attic, I heard frightful shouting and a volley of shots, and the barking of dogs, and the wild laughter of the murderers. My skin crawled, and I held my breath, and looked out through a small crack. I saw how they were leading a large colony of Jews, men, women and children. The weeping tore the heavens, along with my heart, seeing how a mother was carrying a small child, and it was crying loudly. The S. S. murderer tore the child from the mother's arms and crushed it underfoot. To this day, this gruesome image does not depart from my eyes. At that time, a scream involuntarily tore itself out of my heart, and burst sympathetically into intense crying. And in this way, the gentile woman, Elizabeta Wazna, or as she was called, *Koitonya*, hid me for the entire time, during which she was my savior, or better said, my mother.

Up to a certain day, when she came up to tell me that the Soviets are here. No person in the world can fell such a fortunate minute. For the first time, I went out into the street. My 'Mama' kept on crying, asking that I not go away. And indeed, I remained with her for a while longer. I did not find a single Jew in Tomaszow. Later on, a few, half-dead Jews, in small number did come, who had also been supported in a variety of circumstances. I did not recognize Tomaszow at all. It was one big cemetery with graves of 40-60 people at a time...

Dark Days In My Life

By Feiga Pess'l Bergman

Page 703: *Feiga Pess'l Bergman*

Page 705: *The Evacuation to Cieszanow by the Germans*

The Jewish *shtetl* of Tomaszow Lubelski was small, the poverty – great. How the couple of thousand Jews made a living among the many more thousands of gentiles, is incomprehensible. Bot one did not grovel, and didn't ask too many questions. Nobody blamed God, one conducted a Jewish life, children were married off, etc. My daughter got married in Warsaw, and close to the outbreak of the war, I traveled to Warsaw to my daughter. The war broke out immediately, and after extensive bombardment, the Germans occupied Warsaw. The well-known Warsaw Ghetto was created shortly afterwards, and I, along with my daughter and the entire family, along with all the other unfortunates, ended up there. I began to feel the terrible pangs of hunger, the fright that comes from the continuous sound of shooting, and the Jewish blood that began being spilled, more and more with each passing day. A gnawing longing befell me regarding my mother, sister, brother-in-law and their little children, whom I had left behind in Tomaszow. One time, my daughter had the opportunity to persuade a Christian to smuggle me out of the ghetto. She paid him 600 zlotys. On a certain night, he took me out of the ghetto, and directly to the train. He wrapped my face in cotton, and on the train, I sat in the guise of his sick mother. At all time, he plied me with a variety of medicines, and in this state of abject terror, I was taken as far as Zamość. From Zamość I traveled to Tomaszow in a coach. In Tomaszow, I still encountered many Jews, as well as my mother v"g, with my sister and brother-in-law and the little children. Understandably, everyone was in hiding. Once, a German gendarme was killed, and it was said that the Jews killed him. Immediately 40 Jews were taken in, and a short while later were all shot to death. Among them was also my brother-in-law, Shevakh Bergenbaum.

When the order was issued for all men an women over the age of 32 to present themselves at the square, many people dragged themselves to the wagons and autos that had been previously prepared (a st part of the people had hidden themselves) , I myself also went to board. But Abba Bergenbaum of the *Judenrat* shouted loudly at me, that I don't belong here, because I am from Warsaw. When he shouted at me, a German cam up to me and gave me a heavy blow with a stave. I fell down, and with all my might, I got up and fled. Even from quite a distance, I could still hear the frightful crying and from time to time, a shot. At that time, all of the hapless Jews, among them my dearest and nearest, were taken to Cieszanow, and a little later, to Belzec.

Running back, and not knowing where to go, I saw an incident as follows: A Jewish man had lain down with his face down (he had apparently seen that Germans were approaching behind him). When the murderers passed by where he lay, they said: Oh ho, a dirty dead Jew lays here. When they left, the Jew picked himself up. At that moment, I felt an inner compulsion to live. I came to a Jewish family, and with tears in my eyes, I begged to be allowed to lodge for that one night. I was, however, not permitted to do so, because everyone was afraid, something of an irony, of fate that a Jew did not want to have another Jew spend the night with him. However, indeed, not far from this Jew, I was allowed to spend the night. At night, the S. S. bandits shot everyone there. I heard their wild laughter, proclaiming that the street was already *Judenrein.*

In the morning, I left, and entered a village where I specifically went to see the Soltys, but he was not at home. I wept bitterly, and his mother took pity on me, and she hid me in the attic, and told me that I should leave immediately in the morning, because she is very fearful, because the penalty for hiding a Jewess was

death. Very early in the morning, she gave me bread, and I thanked her profusely and went off. Wandering about, and not knowing where to, I meet up with a *Volksdeutsch*, who says to me that he thinks that I am a *zydowka*, and where am I going. I laughed out loud, and said to him that I can't even remember the last time I saw a Jewish woman. Apparently, he was not good at identifying people, because my hands and feet were trembling, and my heart was pounding fiercely. At the same moment, a number of sleighs drove up full of Germans. On seeing them, the gentile made haste to get away, and I stopped and put on a very artfully contrived smile, which flitted across my frightened face. They rode through never giving me a second look. I went along further, and further along I encountered a *Volksdeutsch,* who in this case already, was carrying a rifle. He asked me where I was going, and whether or not I was a *zydowka,* and again I laughed, and mumbled: Jesus Christ, And as soon as he saw Germans approaching, he began to hastily flee (to this day I do not know why). The Germans began to pursue him, and in that time, I hid myself. It was in this manner that I arrived in Tomaszow. I entered an empty home, because exactly a day earlier, the second *aktion* had taken place. Being only a couple of minutes in this bare house, three young gentile hooligans entered, and cried out gleefully: *Oh! Mama! Zydowka!* One shouted, give me money, the second wanted gold. When I told them that I had none, they assaulted me, and began to beat me. I gave away 45 zlotys to them, which was all that I had, and now they said, they are going to fetch the gendarmerie, and ran out. I was badly broken by the beating, and tears flowed unceasingly from my eyes.

Having become aware that there was no longer a single Jew, I set off for Rawa Ruska, because a gentile told me that there still were a lot of Jews in Rawa [Ruska]. I underwent a great deal of fright in the process of hiding myself from passers-by, until at the outskirts of Rawa [Ruska], I heard frightening gunfire. I was not able to enter the city, because it was cordoned off. A gentile stops me, an elderly man, and says to me: I see that you are a Jewess, but if you want to get to your fellow Jews, who are currently being shot to death, you can go by a second way right here, giving me an indication with his hand. I saw that I had nowhere to go, so I went back.

Night fell. A light snowy rain slapped me in the face. I became very cold, and for the first time, I began to beseech The Almighty that death should come to me more swiftly. But as if to spite me, my heart continued to hold out. Along the way, a gentile hooligan, riding a bicycle, met up with me, and he beseeched me vigorously to accompany him to the gendarmerie. I told him to leave me alone, because Holy Jesus would punish him if he accosted me, because I have a sick child at home. I then showed him a small flask of medicine that I always kept with me. However, he did not let me go, and going along with me for perhaps a kilometer, we came to a roadside rest place. A Christian woman emerged, and he said to her, seeing as how he had intercepted a *zydowka*, she should permit him to telephone to the requisite place. The Christian woman hollered very loudly at him, telling him that she knew me to be a decent Christian woman, and she had met me in church many times. He let me go, and went away. She gave me something to eat. I thanked her with a full heart, and went on again, till Belzec.

At first I saw Germans loading cattle on the train. A gentile woman, who was leading her cow, recognized me. Out of fright, she kept crossing herself: *Oh, oh ty jeszcze zyjesz*[154]? She asked me. Here, hold onto the cow, and I'll bring you something to eat, and flee this place, the faster the better! For me, it no longer mattered whether she was going to bring me food, or she was going to call the murderers. She brought me a small bottle of milk and a bread. I thanked her, and continued onwards. Now again, I encountered a *Volksdeutsch* who had a gun. He recognized me, and I also knew him well, because he would regularly come to our house with his father, in which we did business. He grabbed me savagely by the throat, telling me to

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154 You are still alive?

go with him to the gendarmerie, and if not, he will shoot me on the spot. Despite the fact that I wanted to die already, I nevertheless did not want to fall by the hand of such a murderer, and with tears in the eyes, I beseeched him fervently to let me go, reminding him of a favor that my husband had once sold him a good cow, and his father would always tell us about this cow brought them a very, very great deal of good fortune, and with God's help, the war will come to an end, and I will give him, and continue to give him much to drink. The truth be told, I did not know myself what I was saying. The girl who was standing beside him said: *Staszku, chodz* – and they went off.

I went along further. Seeing a hut in the woods, I entered. A gentile woman lived in this hut who was a frightening evildoer. She carried on a variety of illegal businesses with the Germans, and for money, everything could be done with her. However, I had no money, so I cried very intensely in front of her, and spoke extensively with her, and using a variety of arguments, I showed her that should she conceal me, then 'Holy Jesus' will forgive all of her sins. I convinced her, and she took me into her hut and gave me food to eat. I washed myself, and she constantly said to me, that I should interceded with my Jewish God to forgive her for the great sins that she has committed since the Germans have arrived here. And in this fashion, I remained with her the entire time. Some of the time, her face reflected a profound sense of sympathy. In those moments, she was like a mother, but on those occasions when she was drunk, she would always grab an axe and hoarsely scream: *Ja cie zabije, parszywa zydowko!*[155] At those times, I would go and hide, until she calmed down. It was in this state of trouble, suffering, hunger and need, in a devastating state of frightful fear, I remained with her for a long time.

On a certain day, Reizl Brahman ע"ה blundered upon her, with a child in hand, and begged for a piece of bread. The gentile woman told her that she already had one *zydowka*, and cannot accommodate any more. I spoke with Reizl. She wept intensely, indicating that she can't hold out any longer. And then she left. But not much time elapsed before I heard the shot which they had fired to shoot her with the child in her arms. The tears choke me when I remind myself of all these tragic experiences.

For a full five years I wandered like an animal being pursued, and lived under such frightful conditions that the human imagination cannot conceive. It was in this manner that I lived through, and ultimately survived that frightening Hell, until I heard that joyous shout: We are liberated!

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155 I will kill you, you mangy Jewess!

Joel the Wit and His Wartime Experiences

Transcribed By Yaakov Schwartz

Page 710: *Joel the Wit at work, in his capacity as a comic at a wedding in Berlin, immediately after the war.*

There was not a person in the *shtetl,* who did not know R' Joel Handelsman, or R' Joel the Teacher, as he was called. The happy, full-of-life comic, who effervesced with joy, humor, witticisms and bon mots. There was not a wedding, that R' Joel would not be in attendance. Even at a quiet wedding (as it was called) where there were no musicians, R' Joel the comic had to be there, because if not, such a wedding was already declared a total failure. His pretty melodies with is clever and appropriate words – adapted to whatever milieu he was in – would cause people to hold themselves by their sides with laughter, and it was not only one broken heart that he would revive and gladden.

He led a quiet modest life, and earned his livelihood in a decent and honest fashion. A bit of it came from his role as a Wit, and a bit from the fact that he was a teacher, who would teach the little children how to write, calculate, etc. He was also a dedicated member of the Talmud Torah, constantly running about, and watching over the poor children, to see that their lot should come out better, and not for any reward.

He was beloved by all, and his demeanor elicited respect. His constantly good-looking patriarchal beard added a special grace to his appearance. It was just like this kind of a truly dear Jewish man that I recall him, from our erstwhile home that has ben cut away.

I visited his daughter who lives in Haifa, and I was stunned when she showed me a packet of several notebooks covered in writing that were her father's v"g which was a veritable wellspring of Yiddish and Hebrew poems: How beautifully and poetically he gives a refrain to the beautiful summer sunset, in the evening in Tomaszow; satire; prose: how artfully he portrays that 'the world is bankrupt.' In a word, this was a Jew who was saturated with knowledge.

His daughter handed me a wrapped packet of small papers, put in an order, numbered, and there, all of his frightful experiences are documented, from the year 1939 to the liberation, what it was he went through during the Nazi regime. And it is to wonder at the heroism, of how such a Jew, in his later years, had the strength, in the ghetto, in all the hidden holes, to write down all the details, all the horrible tortures that he survived. How did such a Jew have the strength in him to write, in moments of danger to his life, in attics, in cellars, in a variety of bunkers. Where did such a Jew get the energy not to part with his writing instrument, along with the little bits of paper, and to write in a time when he had to look death in the eyes hundreds of times, from which he, himself, could not extract himself alive.

But his great and strong sense of security did not lead him astray, and he was saved from murderous hands, and survived and lived through all of the *aktionen,* from all of the fires, and emerged alive. And if I am to call this heroism, then every day of his sordid life in the ghetto, and still remaining a human being, that was his greatest feat of heroism, and if one is to talk of miracles, this would be his greatest miracle. And in documenting this great calamity, he certainly wanted history to know what Hitler ימ"ש had done to our people.

Here, with minor emendations, I provide what R' Joel Lehrer ע"ה wrote down in these scraps of paper.

The Beginning of the War

Memories from Tomaszow Lubelski from the year 1939, and how I survived the frightful war, until the year 1946.

I remember that it happened in the year 1939, on a Thursday before night, after the market day, suddenly German airplanes flew down upon our city of Tomaszow, and began to bombard us in a frightening manner. From a strong blow, I fell down the steps, and lay their pale and banged up. Somebody picked me up, and held me by the hands, and ran with me behind the houses, and we lay there in a corner trembling from fear. The airplanes flew back again, in the direction where mostly Jews lived. They dropped incendiary bombs. Immediately a frightful fire broke out. Many people ran out of the city, into the fields and meadows, so the murderers shot at them with machine guns, and very many fell dead. At night it became quiet, and the dead were collected, and also the people who had been burned in the houses, and as it was told, there were more than 200 dead and burned, mostly women and children.

My daughter and I, and her husband, were afraid to remain in the house, so we ran to the edge of the town. We abandoned the hose, without care, and spent the night with a Jew. However, we saw no purpose in trying to remain here, the airplanes were constantly flying overhead, and so we ran to the nearest village, and begged our way into the home of a gentile whom we knew. We paid him well, and he permitted us to stay with him for a number of days. But he only allowed us to sleep at night, and for the entire day, we had to lie in the forest, not far from the village, trembling out of fear for the airplanes that were flying by.

In this manner, several days went by, until the gentiles in the village became aware of the fact that he was sheltering Jews. So he drove us out, and no longer permitted us to remain in his house. We then went on to a second village, spending the night in the forest, and in the morning, proceeded further, trembling out of fear. We already heard shooting on all sides, until we came to a small shtetl, Jarczów.

Yom Kippur in Jarczów

Exhausted from wandering, we entered the home of the *Shokhet*, this being the eve of Yom Kippur before nightfall. The women blessed the candles, the people in the *shtetl* rushed to *Kol Nidre*, and suddenly German military forces arrived with many autos, and began shooting in all directions. A terror fell on all the people. We fled quickly from there, as well as all the people of the *shtetl*, with bundles on our backs, and tiny children in our hands. We fled, leaving homes abandoned, and we keep on running, not knowing where to.

I, a Jewish man 80 years of age, exhausted from running on this terrible Yom Kippur eve, a night in which the bit of moon was also angry, and seemingly in a deliberate fashion, hid itself, my feet gave out from under me. And, as luck would have it, here, we stumbled into a front line position, where the Germans were fighting with the Poles. The bullets flew over our heads, and here, we see people falling dead. I, my daughter and her husband, a frail man, laid ourselves down on the ground in a field and were afraid to pick ourselves up. The gunfire was frightening. Around the villages, a great fire burned. When it quieted down a bit, we picked ourselves up again, and again ran with our hearts pounding in fear. I, however, was no longer able to go on. So my daughter and son-in-law practically carried me in their hands, and fled further on with me. With all our might, we dragged ourselves till [we reached] Lubicz.

In Lubicz

Once there, we entered the home of a Jewish man of our acquaintance. With sorrowful faces, they tell us what had transpired there on the previous night. The Germans had arrived there. By nightfall, they had doused the synagogue in benzine, and put it to the torch. After this, the Germans drove out all of the Jews to save the synagogue. The Jews ran, and the murderers beat them with staves. One Jew has the opportunity to extract two Torah scrolls from the burning Ark. Immediately, they ordered all the Jews to strip naked, and to dance around the synagogue, and they beat them on the head with rubber truncheons. Part of the murderers sprayed water on the naked Jews. Off to the side, the Germans stood photographing this sorrowful scene. Afterwards, they were told to quickly run off.

After hearing out this story, you can understand what happened in my sad heart. I lay hidden already, and was afraid to show myself. In the meantime, we heard that the Russians were already in Tomaszow. In traversing ten kilometers, we encountered Russian soldiers and vehicles. Our hearts became a little lightened, and in longing, went back to our home.

Back in Tomaszow

Returning to Tomaszow, and being there only one week, we hear the very sad news that in the course of several days, the Russians must leave Tomaszow, and the Germans are returning. With embittered hearts, those few Jews went about, [asking] to where are we to flee now? The Russian soldiers advised us that anyone who wishes to travel with them, they will take as far as Rawa Ruska. And so, quite a number of people jumped aboard the Soviet vehicles with their belongings.

Tragically, we could not leave on that day, because a son of mine, from Jozefów had literally just arrived in Tomaszow with a sick boy age 7, in order that he receive medical attention, because in his town there were no doctors, and here, it was difficult to get access to a doctor. There was a terror in the city, with the Germans drawing closer, people literally passed out from fear. There were no longer any Russians, and so people hired gentile wagons, and paid whatever the gentile owner asked. We also hired a wagon, and packed a few things on it.

As we were getting ready to travel off to Rawa Ruska, to our great misfortune, the little boy, my grandson, died. Accordingly, we had great troubles. There was nobody available to deal with the dead child. Everyone was packing up their wagons, and on the other side, the gentile [wagon owner] does not want to wait. I ran around and cried, begging mercy, asking for help to bury the unfortunate child, but nobody want to hear. Everyone was in a hurry to get away before the murderers arrive. So we did everything ourselves. The gentile, though, did show some patience, and waited for us until we returned from the cemetery.

With an embittered heart, my son went off to Jozefów, and we traveled off to Rawa Ruska.

In Rawa Ruska

Arriving in Rawa [Ruska], we were beset by new troubles. Nobody let us into their homes, and every home was full of people. All the synagogues and study houses were packed with people, men, women and children. Outside, it was just like it was in our hearts: a driving,, cold rain, our possessions strewn about the street. Some Jewish man took pity on us, and helped us thrown our packages into a cellar of his, and took us into

his house to lodge for the night. On the second day, what do we do next? We had no money, but since my son-in-law was a tailor, he got work, and was able to earn money for bread. We spent two weeks with a teacher whom we knew.

In the meantime, we became aware, that whoever wanted to travel into Russia, especially craftsmen, can travel by train. Seeing as we were just wandering about on the ground, not having a place to rest, we decided to travel.

We Travel Voluntarily to Russia

With out pitiful bit of possessions, we rode to the train station, and placed our belongings in the car. There already were several Tomaszow families in the car. We breathed a bit more freely, and thanked God for the boon of having been able to be alive. The echelon departed on the third day. We received bread along the way. In several days, we arrived in Zmerynka, the Vinnitskaya *Oblast*. Immediately, some Jewish representatives came to us, and coincidentally asked if on the train there is a tailor who can sew women's clothes. My son-in-law immediately presented himself as a good craftsman. Immediately a car was brought, we got all of our things together, and rode into the city, a residence was allocated to us with lighting, and a bit of furniture, and food and drink were brought in. Immediately all of the most important people of the city came to see us, the Rabbi and the ritual slaughterers. They impressed upon me that it was possible to be religious here. They brought us kosher food, with new kitchenware, because this is what I had required. We were provided for in this fashion for two weeks time.

After this, my son-in-law was taken into a store to work, and he began to earn a little bit at a time. And we, began to live for ourselves. Slowly, we got used to standing in a line for bread, water, and all other products. My son-in-law also did a little private work in our home, and we began to make 'a living.'

My son in Jozefów was also taken by the Russians in their vehicles. We saw them riding through Zmerynka, but they continue to travel further on. They were stopped in Kherson. There, he and his wife worked in a factory, the children went to school. In October 1940 I traveled to my son and was there for over four weeks. On November 20, I traveled back to Zmerynka.

The Outbreak of the German-Russian War

In July 1941, Germany began to bombard the Zmerynka train station. A panic ensued, a terror. Men, women, children, all ran to hide themselves in the attics, in the cellars. Now, we were fearful of remaining in Zmerynka, and so we fled to Meziriv, a village eight kilometers from Zmerynka. There, several hundred Jewish families were already to be found. Two weeks later, the Germans arrived there. They immediately set up a Ukrainian militia, and Jews began to be seized for forced labor, to disassemble the houses and lay the stones to pave the roads. I was not spared either, and I was forced to work, being rewarded with staves leveled at our heads.

On a certain day, an order was issued that all alien persons, wh are not residents of the local area for any length of time, must return to their own region, and in a period of 24 hours they are not to be found here any longer. If this is not so, the penalty will be death. You can appreciate that we immediately left Meziriv and went back to Zmerynka. The few things that we had taken and had with us, we had to abandon, because the murderers did not permit anyone to take anything with them.

In Zmerynka Under the Germans

In Zmerynka, the Germans were already up to their ususal tricks. We re-entered our home, and lived with fear and terror. Many of the people in the city had already evacuated themselves deep into Russia, but I also saw that many families remained in place, and also convinced me that I should remain in this place, and that they will not permit me to succumb here. Also, I did not feel that I had the strength to make a trip to such a distant location, but my daughter and her husband did not want to leave me on my own. With a broken heart, I told them to depart however more quickly, and said to them: you are still young children, and you still need to live and derive pleasure from the world. I have lived my life already, and I have great faith in God that he will look after me. They obeyed me. We poured out a wellspring of tears at the time we took leave of each other.

They seized the bare necessities, not having taken a great deal, and went off to the train station. However, the cars were already filled up with people, and the militia drove them back. I look: my children are returning in tears. My emotions paralleled those of the biblical Jethro: On one side, I was happy that my children were returning to me, but from the other side, it pained me, that they were unable to save themselves from the German murderers.

When we returned from Meziriv to Zmerynka our house lay empty, with everything having been plundered. The Germans drove Jews to labor, in the area of the train station, near the bridge. I was afraid to show myself in the street, so that they wouldn't cut off my beard. Accordingly, I hid in the house constantly, and documented and detailed everything that the murderers perpetrated against the Jewish people.

On a certain day, I went out to the gate, and in a moment, a tall overfed German ran up to me, grabbed me by the throat and shouted: Filth Jew – to work. He led me to the main office building. There, three other elderly Jews were already standing, whom the German had seized. He drove us to the outskirts of the city, and told us to run ever faster, while continuously beating us to make us run faster. In this fashion, we ran about a couple of kilometers, to a large open field. I became severely exhausted, with my feet giving out, and trembling, I fell. Following a savage outcry with a blow to the head, I was barely able to get up. The German dragged me off to a machine so that I could pump air into the tires, but I could not move, having exhausted myself from running. In the meantime, a second German came by, and the first one went off. I began to weep intensely, and begged him to let me go. By chance, he was a 'good' German, and he had sympathy for me, and took me by the hand and led me away from the place. And it was here that he began to cut off my beard. So, again, I began to weep, and beg, and I fell to his feet. Go home quickly, you despicable Jew! He shouted at me hoarsely. With the last of my strength, I began to run, using back streets, and arrived home barely alive.

My children had been searching for me, not knowing where I might have gotten lost. They had already cried themselves out. When they saw me, they began to cry again out of great joy. We thanked God that I had come back alive. [After this] I no longer went out of the house, but I did find out what happened to the other three Jews that had been driven to labor along with me. [Of them] only one returned, beaten, bloodied, and with his beard cut off, and the other two, pitiably, never came back at all.

In this manner, we lived with the murderers from August 15, 1941 till the month of November, in frightful hunger, an a terrifying fear of impending death. A *Judenrat* was created which, on a daily basis, provided several hundred Jews, with womenfolk, to do work, to load wagons with provisions, to carry stones to straighten out roads, and along the way, the murderers beat them on the head with staves. Any Jew whose work was not satisfactory, was beaten, bloodied, or killed altogether. There had to be victims that fell every

day. We were still fortunate, that the Germans provided work for my son-in-law, and accordingly, they spared us from this labor.

In the Ghetto Under the Rumanians

In the year 1941, the Germans took control of a place at the side of the city in order to make a ghetto for the Jews, and that the Christians living there were to relocate themselves into the city proper. On a specific day, an order was issued that in 24 hours, the Jews were required to move into the places that had been designated as a ghetto, and that no Jew could be found outside of the ghetto under penalty of death.

A tumult ensued. All the Jews grabbed what little they had, and occupied the houses, several families to a house. We also entered a house with several families. On November 5, all the Jews were already situated in locations inside the ghetto. Then, the ghetto was surrounded with barbed wire. At the entrance gate, a sign proclaimed that any Jew that would dare to step out of the ghetto, will be hanged. In the course of several days, a black terror descended on the ghetto, and a Rumanian Jew was seen to have been hung on the gallows near the gate, with the sign: For stepping out of the ghetto, he received this punishment. Several days later, another Jew was seen hanging on the gallows, and in this way, a different Jew was hung every few days. It is not possible to describe the terrifying experiences through which we lived.

We Jews lived hemmed in this way for a full three years in the Zmerynka ghetto, approximately two thousand families, from 1941 to 1944. [We lived] in hunger, fear, and we stared death in the eyes hundreds of times. But, we also had miracles, whereby there were always times when *aktionen* were supposed to take place, and yet they were postponed. It seemed because the manpower was needed for the great and heavier work, at the bridge, at the station, at the railroad tracks and the roads.

A Rumanian-Jewish Doctor – Head of the Ghetto

There was a Rumanian-Jewish doctor in the ghetto who became the leader of the *Judenrat.* He was also well *acquainted* with the Gestapo, and assumed the responsibility of sending Jews out every day to do work, as many as were required. At his order, each individual was required to present themselves to be registered. H created a Jewish militia, that were sent out every day to cal out, or to seize people for work, with a note from the doctor, that the people must come at five o'clock in the morning to the *Judenrat.* There, Germans were already standing with rubber truncheons, and led the Jews off to work. Every day, the Jews returned 'home' beaten, bloodied, and no day went by that someone wasn't killed by one of several means.

The doctor directed the work very strictly, and woe to the Jews, whether man or woman, who did not present themselves for work exactly on time. Under those circumstances, the doctor would wink to the militia, and them would immediately strip the victim and administer a whipping. And the doctor stood by, and sated his sadistic appetite, until he saw that blood was drawn. The Germans and Rumanians smiled and laughed wildly, at how well their doctor knew his job, as well as they did, and in some instances, even better than they did.

The Germans took over the rail line in the vicinity of the station, and the Rumanian forces was stationed at the ghetto, standing guard over all the Jews, assuring that they wore white bands on the sleeve of their garments.

I, at every opportunity, aching and hidden, continued to write. In it, I found a solace for the frightful hunger from which I suffered, but even more so from the great pain of the famished children.

The doctor issues an order that everyone must make a money contribution for the command, and he would then work out for his militia to go to the bazaar to buy up foodstuffs. For this purpose, he created shops in the ghetto, so that the Jews should have a place to buy. However because of the high and very dear prices, the majority could not buy, but he, the doctor, made a good business out of it for himself.

From time to time, gentiles would steal into the ghetto with products, and would barter food for other items, such as clothing. Whatever we had was sold away.

Dr. Hershman and His Activities

In order to ingratiate himself with the Jews, the doctor created a group of people to straighten out the synagogue, so that the Jews could pray. On a certain Sabbath, he, indeed, gave a speech in the synagogue, to the effect that since he had been sent here, it will be a great boon for the Jewry in general, because he enjoys great protection from the Rumanian authorities, because while even still in Rumania, he was well acquainted with the commandant, and to the extent possible, he will see to it that, god forbid, no evil will occur. He immediately selected a man to be the *Shammes* for the synagogue, that he should take care that it be clean and orderly in the synagogue. For this, the *Shammes* will be excused from labor. It was in this manner that he drew the religious element close to him.

After this, he worked out with the commandant, that the Jews should have the right to leave to go to the bazaar for two hours to make purchases. However, this was to be only with a note from the doctor, and for the note, it was necessary to pay 10 rubles. These notes were bought, because to buy in the [ghetto] shops was considerably more expensive. It was permitted to be at the bazaar from 12 Noon to 2PM, and the militia kept watch. And whoever did not return the note to the doctor by 2PM had to pay a fine of 25 rubles. The tens of baskets brought him in a pretty sum of money.

He also made a bath in the ghetto. But his intention was for his own purposes. He issued an order that every individual was required to pay three rubles a month, and this will give the right to use the bath twice a month. For a child of at least five years age, it was required already to pay the three rubles. The tax had to be paid whether one went to the bath, or didn't go. Whoever did not pay the tax on time was arrested and placed in a dark cellar, shut behind an iron door. This, again, brought the doctor many more thousands. Every day, he demanded something else for the commandant. Here a gold watch, there other sorts of valuable things, and it had to be produced without any excuses. He, himself, required funds to pay the militia their monthly stipends. He also wanted to see to it that there would be a hospital created in the ghetto, with a pharmacy, and a kitchen for the poor, where free midday meals would be provided for poor people. To this end, he conducted a registration for the second time, requiring that the number of people in each family be registered, and also which ones want to sign up for the pauper's kitchen for a midday meal. The registration must be completed in three days time, and every family had to pay a monthly fee in accordance with the assessment of the doctor.

From the commandant, came an order, that in addition to the white band that everyone wears on the sleeve, it is required to sew on a Yellow Star of David on the lapel of the garment, and anyone encountered without a Star of David will receive the most severe punishment. On once occasion, I went to the doctor, and beseeched him fervently to excuse me from the three rubles assessment for the bath, because I had no money.

He replied: Go among the houses and get three rubles together, and I am giving you one hour's time to pay. If not, you will be arrested and put into the dark cellar!

He also had a complete office operation. He sought out the prettiest women from the ghetto who would.... work in his office. He sat in a separate rather nice room, with a guard who stood at the door and did not let anyone in without a permit. He retained a bookkeeper and a treasurer. The militia went about constantly, and whoever they encountered without the Star of David, was brought to the doctor, and was fined fifty rubles, or arrest with confinement to the dark cellar without food. Many were taken out of the cellar already dead, or bloodied by 25 lashes.

Produce began to arrive from Rumania and a kitchen was immediately created where midday meals were distributed to the poor people without charge. We wondered at this miracle. Who was it that had these hapless Jews in mind? To this day, nobody has given an answer to this. Ten rubles was taken for a midday meal, from those who had the means.

Precisely on Shavuot, an order was issued from the commandant, that the entire population of the ghetto has to come out onto the open space near the *Judenrat*, and everyone was to take along their document. Rumanian conscripts ran about, driving everyone out of the houses, men, women and children. They searched in the attics and in the rooms. It grew dark. With a pounding heart, and with weeping, everyone had to go run to the designated location. I lay in bed with a bandaged head, and when the soldiers saw me this way, they drew back, conferred with one another, and permitted me to remain in bed. My children took leave of me, shedding many tears. The soldiers drove them out, and I remained alone, with my saddened heart pounding out of fear and terror. The thoughts whirled around in my mind.

The entire command stood on the designated place, and examined everyone's documents, and made an entry in a book of theirs, including everyone's trade. The entire day passed in this way. By nightfall we were ordered to return to our homes. We thanked God that all we suffered was a fright. These sort of inspection *aktionen* ,as they were called, took place several times, and we were able to get through them with good results.

Dr. Hershman continued to run his businesses. If he merely perceived an attractive woman, he took her to work in his office complex. And seeing that my son-in-law was a tailor of women's clothing, the doctor sent him work to sew clothes for his female employees. Because of this, we were excused from labor, and received notes to go to the bazaar to buy. Many times the Rumanian soldiers would barricade the bazaar, and under a variety of pretenses, took everything away from the women who had bought a bit of goods. My daughter had bartered something for a bird, and immediately a Rumanian gendarme hastily ran up to her with a shout that it was not permissible for her to eat chicken! He dragged her, with the chicken, to the command, and she was arrested. Everyone knew that it was a rarity for a person to emerge from arrest alive. So, the doctor was notified that the tailor's wife had been arrested, and he had her released.

On one occasion, Dr. Hershman became aware that a certain Jew, Ostrowski had the idea of submitting a complaint to the commandant. The doctor then issued a judgement that this Jew was to be tied up with a rope and a policeman should hold onto the end of the rope, and lead him around the ghetto with a whip. The Jew was then to shout out, 'such is the punishment for a Jewish informer.' He also wore a sign that said "The Jew is an informer.' A while later, the Doctor became aware of a Jew in the ghetto who had written up a complaint against him. The Jew was immediately arrested, and thrown into the dark cellar. No food was

given to him for a couple of days, and the Jew was taken out of the cellar already dead. It became dark in the ghetto, but there was a fear of speaking out.

In Brailiv Under the Germans

Approximately eight kilometers from Zmerynka, there is a shtetl called Brailiv. In that location, there were Germans and not Rumanians. The German murderers preyed on the people there with their full force. In that location, they had already conducted two *aktionen,* having butchered and killed, and buried many alive. At that time, 360 men, women and young men fled from there to Zmerynka, who paid the doctor a large sum of money to have him absorb them there. Despite the fact that it was not permitted to flee from one location to another, but for such a large sum of money, the doctor permitted himself to do this, and he registered them. A short period of time went by, and this was in July 15, 1943. An order came from Brailiv to Zmerynka to the doctor, saying that since they were short 300 people there, and according to what they had become aware of, that these people are to be found in Zmerynka, that he is to surrender these people immediately, since they are required to do light work. They are to be sent to Brailiv in three days time.

Not thinking very long, the doctor sent his militia to inform all of the 360 people who had so registered themselves, that tomorrow, at exactly eight o'clock in the morning they are to present themselves at the *Judenrat,* and he also told them to that they should come dressed clean and primped. They are needed for light work. The order was carried out. Exactly so, tomorrow, everyone stood beside the *Judenrat.* A few women were missing, so they were searched for. It happens that in my home there were three women who were supposed to present themselves, a mother and two daughters, indeed members of our family. They were led out of our house and led to those already standing by the Judenrat. There, they were counted and divided into five groups.

At the same moment, the Gestapo arrived abruptly, with wild shouting and drawn guns, and surrounded the five groups, and ordered the Rumanian soldiers to leave. The great calamity was clearly perceived. Immediately, they became aware that not far away, there were pits that had already been prepared. A darkness descended on everyone's eyes, and a commotion and bitter weeping broke out. The sounds went up to the heart of the heavens. The soldiers ran around in the ghetto, drove the people into the houses, so that no one would dare to come out of their house, otherwise they would be shot. A darkness descended on the ghetto.

Very soon, the first group was led through, guarded all around by the murderers with their drawn guns, and it happened that they were led precisely past our window. How bitter and immobilized our hearts became when we took note of the mother and her two daughters in this group. With pitiful wailing, they raised their hands to the heaven and tore the hair from their heads. We fainted away from seeing this frightful and sorrowful scene. An outcry ensued, and fountains of tears were shed. And in this manner, all five groups were led off to the pits that had been prepared.

We learned that exactly at the same time, the entire Jewish population of the *shtetl* Meziriv had been gathered, several hundred families, and were also brought to these same pits. A few were shot, and all the rest were buried alive – – and it was form this very same *shtetl,* that we had been driven out, fate having decreed that we would remain alive. But from that day forward, a black terror descended on all the Jews of the ghetto. Everyone went about in fear and terror. We trembled in fear that the German murderers should not, God forbid, retake the control of Zmerynka, in which they would certainly have exterminated all two thousand Jewish families who were to be found in the ghetto under the most execrable conditions. We could

not recover after this incident. It was in this way that we struggled along, in frightful hunger, and constant fear, until the year 1944, when we already began to hear that the Soviets are driving the Germans back. Then, the fear fell upon us even more greatly.

How We Were Rescued

On March 15, 1944 we heard that the Soviets had already taken control of the Vinnitsia Oblast, thirty kilometers from Zmerynka.[156] So we Jews hid ourselves in secret cellars under the earth. Many people took the risk and fled to hide with people they knew. My children, as well, fled to seek a hiding place with a Christian of their acquaintance. I stuck myself into a secret cellar. There it was packed full of people with small children. We stood and trembled with fear, underground, and in the dark.

On the second night, we suddenly heard heavy fire and immediately we heard wild shouting from the German bandits. The Rumanians immediately retreated further. In the dark cellar, we stood pressed one against the other, and trembled. We already heard the heavy pounding of the murderers. They had begun to drag people out of the attics, from bunkers. At that precise moment, a small child began to cry, but the mother was, pitiably, forced to asphyxiate her own child, because if not, we were all lost. We already could feel death. The gentiles showed the Germans where many Jews could be found, and where they lay hidden. With a great deal of noise and shouting, they tore down a wall of our hiding place, and drove all of us Jews out of the nooks, rewarding us with their staves, and continuously shouting: The despicable Jews are still alive – and beat us over our heads..

Bloodied and half fainting, we were driven to a place outside of the city, and we were all ordered to dig pits. The gentiles who had run along to observe this wonderful spectacle, helped to dig out these long pits for the Jews. We Jews dug, and spilled tears. Nobody can imagine what went on in our hearts. We all said our final confession, we already could see what was standing in wait for us. The crying and weeping must have reached the seventh heaven. The Jews who had hidden themselves with Christian acquaintances, were driven out by their hosts. My children were also driven out by their Christian host, and they remained standing on the street, frightened. They went into a destroyed room. A gentile came along, with a scythe in hand, and he shouted: Flee from here, and if you don't I will kill you. With great fear, they exited their location, and the Germans seized them and drove them to the pit. Along the way, they encountered many Jews lying on the ground, that had been shot to death. At a distance, I took note that my children also were already standing at the pit, taking farewell of life, the hearts all poured out, the sorrowful thoughts all mixed up in their minds. The murderers had seen to everything with German punctiliousness and everything was ready, and had taken to the task of loading the ammunition to exterminate the Jews – –

However, in that same moment, we heard heavy gunfire. The Russians, The Red Army, had come upon everyone and surrounded us all. A devastating panic befell the Germans, and they began to flee, leaving all things and everything. However, they opened a very heavy fire on the German murderers, and the younger ones among the Jews also grabbed guns, and shot at them from all sides, and turned those bloody murderers into ash and dust. They all fell like flies.

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156 The time line of The Second World War indicates that on March 8, 1944, a widespread Russian attack, west of the Dnieper in the Ukraine, forces the Germans into a major retreat.

And so, this is how we were rescued, and thanks to Go, we remained alive. To the memory, and with the great request from all Jews, I wrote out, in memory of the great miracles that we had, "The Last Times and the Great Miracles in the Ghetto of Zmerynka," written in rhyming verse.

The Last Times and the Great Miracles in the Ghetto of Zmerynka

On the 25th Day of Nissan at the Noon Hour,
The whimpering and keening, among the Jews of Zmerynka, ended.
Two thousand Jewish families were in great need,
Here, they were rescued from a frightful death.

After three years of suffering in the ghetto, days and nights,
Help arrived unexpectedly.
The miracle occurred in the year 1955 on the 20th of March,
When the few remaining Jews awaited deliverance.

From suffering in the dark cellars, days and nights,
God sent us salvation unexpectedly.

Two thousand Jewish families were granted such a boon,
That their salvation came exactly at the last frightening minutes.

And only a few days earlier,
There was a fright and a terror without bounds,
With great terror and fear at every step,
On which the murderers had spilled so much Jewish blood.

The Germans stood guard for six kilometers around Zmerynka,
And killed off the entire Jewish population.
Their plaintive voices could be heard far away,
They were buried alive.

Jews in Zmerynka trembled at every moment,
God forbid, not to fall into the hands of the murderers.
They had already specified a variety of plans,
How to exterminate the few Jews remaining in Zmerynka.

They went about very energetically
And all one heard was the shouts of '*Juden Kaput.*'
By March 19, pits had been prepared ion a number of places
Into which the Jewish bodies were to be flung.

They stood ready to shed Jewish blood
To shoot them down with their automatic weapons.
So God interdicted their ominous plan
And angrily turned the plan back on them.

Our miracles were decided so far
That all the murderers, the Germans, were all shot down.
The Russians were sent precisely as if ordained by heaven
And created a mass tumult among the Germans.

The Soviets surrounded them in such a way,
That the Germans needed to flee Zmerynka hastily.
At that time, it was a pleasure to watch,
How the Germans fell like flies.

They left behind a great cache of supplies and ammunition
Over which they could no longer retain control.
Their Hitlerist pedigree was eradicated,
They fled like the winds.

Their plans were interdicted
To tear out the bridges along with the ground.
They had laid many mines
Between the railroad lines.

That was their aim, their view,
To eradicate the city of Zmerynka in the blink of an eye.
But their ideas were for naught,
Against a few Jews under the aegis of their patriarchs.

The Red Army around all the perimeter
Gave them a whiff of their caduceus.
The few Jews, who here survived, with terror and fear,
Gave praise to their Holy Creator.

And a thanks to God for this great privilege
That we were awaiting for the salvation.
Our joy was boundless and without measure,
The Jews in Zmerynka celebrated with joy and happiness.

I have documented this miracle as a sacred memorial
A permanent joy for all generations for all years.
To thank God and to render Him praise
That we were permitted to go on living.

So that this miracle does not become forgotten from our hearts,
To celebrate this day as a festival, with drinking and eating.
To tell [our] children of God's wonder,
And to give charity to the poor with a full heart.

There should be an end to war
And we should yet exact vengeance from the Germans.

There should be an end too our troubles,
We should be free of fear and terror.

Our sole request at this time:
We should live to see a Jewish state in the Land of Israel....

– – – Up to here R' Joel Handelsman ע"ה recorded his experiences on a variety of scraps of paper, from which I have transcribed, albeit with a bit of difficulty.

After the liberation, he, along with his one remaining daughter and son-in-law, came to Szczeczin. They were there for a short time, and the 'underground' conveyed them to the D. P. camps in Berlin. I met R' Joel in Berlin, a happy and lively man, with witty things to say, just as he had always been. He was yet active in Berlin at Jewish weddings, singing and making everyone merry.

The 'Joint' procured a certificate for him, and sent him to the Land of Israel. Here, he was settled in the best old age home, where he was active as a representative and in addition, received a pension. It was here that he could first now sing and make the old folks merry. He led services from the podium, and he was the Torah reader. And it was here that he lived to see the creation of the Jewish State with his own eyes.

He had a great boon: he passed away in the Holy Land of which he had always dreamed. He passed away a laughing and smiling individual, and did not permit his children to weep: I thank and praise the Lord, may He be blessed, that I come here as a Jew to be buried in Israel. About which I had been so fearful.

He passed away in his eighties. Accord his memory great respect.

The Testimony of Maria Kopiecka

Pages 730-1: Facsimile of the original German text of the testimony.

[Translator's Note: What follows is a translation of the Yiddish version of this testimony that is provided]

This testimony was taken down by the police inspector Herr Marceli Rosenberg of the UNRRA Police at the D. P. Center in Stuttgart-West concerning the witness remarks of the Polish woman Maria Kopiecka, born on 10.12.1922 in Rawa Ruska, Poland. The pre-war address: Lemberg, Kopernika 10, z. Zt. In Ludwigsburg, Kinderheilanstalt, Hospitalstrasse 3, D. P. Card G. 009703466. Kopiecka declares the following:

In the year 1942, I lived in Tomaszow, the Lublin District. Walter Panzer was appointed there as the *Landeskommissar*, and my friend, Hania Schaibin of Tomaszow was employed by him. The largest extermination *aktion* carried out in Tomaszow which entailed the extermination of approximately one thousand Jews, took place in the fall of 1942. This was on the night of Sunday, into Monday. I do not know the date. On Sunday, Panzer ordered the leader of the Judenrat Mr. Bergenbaum, to come, and demands coffee, a tablecloth and utensils. Bergenbaum brings this for Panzer.

The Jews think that Sunday an *aktion* will be carried out, and therefore are seeking a variety of means to conceal themselves. Bergenbaum hides his wife and child in a cellar together with other families. He, himself hides in the cellar of the municipal council building.

The *aktion* begins at midnight. As a Polish woman, I am able to move about freely and see everything. I especially observe Panzer. Immediately after the start of the *aktion*, Panzer begins to search for Mr. Bergenbaum before everyone else. To begin with, he is unable to find him. After several hours, I can clearly see how Panzer pursues Bergenbaum. For this purpose, Panzer holds his revolver in hand. Before dawn, Bergenbaum is shot by Panzer's own hand.

In the intervening time, all the Jews are driven together in the market square by the gendarmerie and the Gestapo. Those who are unable to run fast enough are immediately shot. Panzer goes through the city, escorted by higher Gestapo officers, directing the *aktion*, gives orders and accepts reports. I am interested in what happens to my acquaintance. I go to Hania Schaibin in order to help her. There, I learn that Hania has hidden her mother and gone to work. She believes that as Panzer's employee, she will be allowed to live. I call on Panzer's residence and learn from Panzer's wife that Hania is not their either. I then hurriedly go to the market square, and see how Panzer brings my friend to the market square and personally shoots her. Hania pleads with Panzer for her life, but he laughingly shoots her. Later, Hania's mother is also brought to the square, and shot by Panzer. Panzer also shot his employee Ader and his child.

On the square, those unfit to be transported are shot. The others are transported to Belzec for extermination.

I took note of the fact that at least once a week, Panzer would travel to Belzec.

While still in Tomaszow, I took note of Panzer's address in Germany. I am now writing a letter to his wife, and have received an answer that she, her husband and children, are all healthy. The address states: Walter Panzer, Krefeld am Rhein, Kaiserplatz 31.

I request that I be allowed to be present at his arrest in order that I be able to tell the truth to his face.

– Maria Kopiecka

Assembled for YIVO by David Grossdorf – Yiddish: Y.M.

Statistical Inquiry

ZYDOWSKY INSTYTUT HISTORYCZNY
W A R S Z A W A

Al. Gen. Swierczewskiego 79
L.D. 995/62

*Warszawa, dnia*_____ 196___r.
Telefon 302744

To the Tomaszow Yizkor Book Committee

In response to your letter of 2.5–62, we wish to advise you that in the year 1941 there were 1450 Jews living in Tomaszow Lubelski.

Recently, we approached the Tomaszow municipal council, asking about the fate of the Tomaszow Jews during the Hitler occupation, however, to date, we have not received any reply.

We enclose the response to a questionnaire from the high commission for the investigation of the Hitlerist crimes that was filled out in 1945.

Director of the Archive
T. Berenstein

Page: 735-7: Facsimile of Questionnaire and replies (in Polish)

[Translator's Note: In what follows, the questionnaire and the responses are aligned together for ease of understanding]

Translation from Polish

Regarding the Mass Executions and Mass Graves

Questionnaire	Responses
1. Date and Place of the Executions	1. In the year 1942 throughout the entire city.
2. Method of Executions (Shooting, Hanging)	2. Shooting
3. Ethnicity of the Murdered (Poles, Jews, Foreigners) How many people were killed From where were the victims brought Names, ages, occupation, addresses.	3. The liquidation of the residue of Jews that had hidden themselves from the deportations. Approximately 100 persons, residents of the city. Zucker, Fersht, Katz, Stempel, Shayndl Bliank and her children. Various older people. The rest of the names – unknown.
4. Is it known what the victims were accused of?	4. Because they were Jews.
5. Who carried out the execution?	5. Gendarmes
6. Are the names of the perpetrators known?	6. Ludwig (not alive) Prokop, Sierpinski (not alive), Derger (not alive)
7. Were the corpses burned, or destroyed by other means?	7. Buried either in individual or mass graves.
8. Where were the corpses hidden?	8. On the place of execution.
9. Description of the grave site	9. Individual or mass graves
10. Was an exhumation of the dead performed?	10. No
11. Is there a basis for an eventually order to perform an exhumation at a future time?	11. There is none.
Location: Tomaszow Lubelski Gmina: Tomaszow Lubelski Powiat: Tomaszow Lubelski Voievode: Lublin	Seal: Municipal government in Tomaszow Burgomaster (—) St. Jedrzejewski Appended to document 275/45 Of XI 3 1945

The municipal court in Tomaszow Lubelski in the person of the Judge Jerzy Dubiszewski listened to the testimony of the County from the Tomaszow District, [given by] the Burgomaster of the city of Tomaszow Lubelski.

Family name and name: Jedrzejewski Stanislaw; Age: Born on May 5,1889; Residence: Tomaszow Lubelski.

As a witness in accordance with article 107,452 § 1 p.c. i 255 K.P.K.

Who after warning with regards to the responsibility for incorrect testimony, declared in the above questionnaire. He also added:

The responses in the above questionnaire have been verified by me personally on the basis of reports from residents of the Gmina who were questioned by myself, from personal observations, and things that I saw at the place of the camp (execution, grave).

The testimony was read and signed

Signatures: (–) St. Jedrzejewski
(–) J. Dubiszewski
Municipal Judge
Yiddish: Y. M.

A Few Words About the Questionnaire

By Y. Moskop

As it is apparent, the Yizkor Book Committee approached the Yiddish Historical Institute in Warsaw about news and documents about the annihilation of the Tomaszow Jews.

In their response to the Committee, a questionnaire was enclosed from the High Commission to investigate the Hitlerist crimes, which was filled out by the Tomaszow municipal leadership under judicial oversight.

In their reply, the Institute also recollects that their approach to the Tomaszow municipality about news concerning the fate of the Tomaszow Jews during the time of the Hitler occupation, has as of the latest, not been answered.

Taking this important document in hand, and immersing one's self in every line, its words are more and more incomprehensible. And here is why:

In our record, there is a copy of a document in which the Polish Christian girl Maria Kopiecka declares that she personally saw the *aktion* in the fall of 1942 in which about one thousand Jews were led out onto the market square. The regional chief of the Gestapo, Walter Panzer, then shoots the president of the Judenrat, Abba Bergenbaum, Hania Schaibin (Yoss'leh Shilem's daughter) her mother and his employee Ader with his child. Not one of these names is mentioned in this document from the municipality.

Let us be precise in our reading of the replies to this questionnaire: [Translator's Note: questions 1-3 and their replies repeated]

So, in the case of a hundred Jews, residents of the city, that were shot, names – only five, the rest – unknown! Is it possible for a person from Tomaszow imagine that out of a hundred Tomaszow Jews, only five were known to the Municipal government? However, the Burgomaster, Mr. Jedrzejewski declares that his responses to the questionnaire are supported by his own personal observations, and also by the questioning of other city residents. So all together they did not know more than five Jews? All those who survived know that Abba Bergenbaum and Israel Pfeiffer were found by the Gestapo in their hiding places in the building of the Municipal Council, and were shot afterwards. Did the Burgomaster and all the other interrogated Poles also not know these two prominent Jews of the city?

Let us go further: 6. Are the names of the perpetrators known? – Answer:. Ludwig (not alive) Prokop, Sierpinski (not alive), Derger (not alive). So, of the four murderers in 1942, three are not alive in 1945. And the fourth? Is he Polish, or German? Well, this question is not in the questionnaire; but if the murderers were not alive, they did know to answer this, even thought it was not in the questionnaire. And the murderer Panzer, the Chief of the Gestapo, who carried on with all of the extermination *aktionen*, did they not know him? His name was not known? Does this make any sense? No, no, and again no!

The intent of the answers to the questionnaire is entirely clear: namely, to protect the murderers, to deflect an investigation against them, which *prima facie* would reveal many murderers among their friends. They did not want to recall the names of the victims which could disclose traces of their murderers. They limited themselves to four murderers of which only one was alive, a Prokop, who does not have a first name, and one does not have any idea with certainty where he is.

This bring us to the thought of how much Jewish blood lied on the minds of those who, after the victory over Hitler, took high positions in the liberated Poland, and how porous is their pride in themselves, that they, and only they, the adherents of the political line that they represent, helped the hapless Jews against their Nazi murderers. All the facts indicate the exact opposite.

My Tortured Brothers & Sisters Who Fell In Sanctification of The Name

By Yaakov Schwartz

The pen trembles, to write of your tribulations,
My body, unlike yours, was not subject to pain,
This white piece of paper looks so pitiful,
Buy my heart continuously trembled within me.

In the middle of a clear day, you saw unpunished crime,
Like a cold-blooded stab to the heart with a knife,
Murder, tyranny, killing, bestiality and plunder,
And the eyes might sparkle like a window pane at sunset.

The stones did not become soft from blood,
But a great suffering, unfortunately, descended upon you.
The walls did not melt from hot tears
But stubbornly, you were silent to the stars.

The murderers flayed the skin off of you,
Now they don't know about this, nor do they want to know.
With song they gathered and sorted the hair,
And intend now to remain blameless and in the clear.

Today, one speaks of this calmly, and in hushed tones one says:
That you were driven naked to the pits,
With whips and dogs, dragging one or another,
Shooting one here, and beating one there.

Nowadays, even I am used to hearing about this,
And it only causes a light shudder of the eyebrow,
It caused only a sharp spasm in the heart –
Nowadays, I too, am used to hearing about this.

You were sorted out in large camps,
You were led like calves taken to the slaughter,
In freight cars, eighty-ninety-a hundred people
A long, secret train car pulled you along.

Pulled, pulled, the wheels yet made a reverberation.
Air was lacking for the compressed lung,
And the tongue was in a white foam.

And the rails responded with their own reverberation.
Later on you were brought to Belzec,

The murderers opened the doors with shouts
And with crooked mouths, then burst into a savage laughter —
Oh, my dear ones, what could you have possibly been thinking of then?

Again, half fainting, you were quickly driven,
To the right, to the left, ordered to disrobe,
Take off the clothing. Line up the shoes
And run quickly into the baths, but quickly! Quickly!

Nowadays, even I am used to hearing about this,
And it only causes a light shudder of the eyebrow,
It caused only a sharp spasm in the heart,
And nowadays, I too, am used to talk about this...



"Bones Lie In Belzec"

By A. H.
Wroclaw

Bones lie in Belzec
Strewn about, sown, scattered,
Orphaned bones in Belzec
The memory of a tragic time.

Echelons proceeded
From near, from far, from foreign places,
My brothers were led, by the millions,
To Belzec, where they were burned up.

They were driven together
Exterminated. Without a tumult, with no outcry,
The only thing that remained of them
Were shards, bones and ash.

Now, the bones lie, neglected
A snack for crows and dogs.
No one deters the ash
From being scattered by the wind.

And people, beasts, they come
And grind the bones underfoot
They think that they will find
Pieces of gold at the least.

So the bones lay there, dumb

Strewn about the Belzec field,
And rotting, bent shards
Bearing witness to today's world.

The bones lie in piles
They lie without any order
In one of the greats of all graves
Of my people that were killed out.



The Sorrowful End of 500 Years of Jewish Settlement in Tomaszow

By Sholom Licht

Page 747: Poor Jews going to collect charitable donations

The Beginning of the Destruction

We Jews, the putatively wise and prescient people, politicians and forecasters, capable of eliciting things and watching out for ourselves, the so-called barometer of the world, have to admit that we were blind and deaf, not to anticipate the great and awesome calamity and frightening catastrophe that was so profound in its scope, that since we have been a nation, we had not ever lived through such a level of destruction. Even the most frightening of the pessimists, and the most vehement of the doomsayers, did not foresee the enormous misfortune of the Hell that awaited Jewry in general, despite the fact that Hitler made it clear and specific, in full public view, underscoring his murderous extermination plan for all of world Jewry. And it is particularly noteworthy, that many Jews saw a solution to their plight through a war, not taking a full account of what a war means in the first place, and especially a war of extermination waged by Hitler, especially against the Jews.

It is true that the difficult and unbearable circumstances were the principal causes for this. The first were the poor people, which by the indigenous American standard of living, even in the simplest fantasy, it would not be possible to imagine what it meant to be a pauper, or wretchedly poor, a bloodily poor person. Without much explanation, this meant a person who had no means even for a bit of dried out bread, being naked and barefoot, not having any heat, and with no prospect that this situation should change, and that he could earn a living to feed himself and his family. The one who already was able to earn enough for a bit if bread, did not have enough money for clothing, and certainly no means to provide for a child. It is sufficient to recall, that Tomaszow, which had about thirteen hundred Jewish families, approximately 400 families took bread and Challahs from the '*Lekhem Aniyim.*' It is worth remarking that not all of the poor people could bring themselves to take the Challahs from '*Lekhem Aniyim..*' The writer of these lines knew families that had been financially ruined and beaten down by life, who had nothing with which to recite the *HaMotzi* blessing, and despite this, under no circumstances did they want to benefit from '*Lekhem Aniyim.*' Only R' Nahum Shammes, ז"ל could devise a variety of stratagems how to see to it that they would have bread on the Sabbath...

Poverty and anti-Semitism encircled Polish Jewry like iron pincers to choke the life out of them.

After Pilsudski's death, anti-Semitism became more aggressive, in which even the 'better among the gentiles' wrapped themselves in the notorious '*Owszem*' politics with all of its gruesomeness. The Jew was driven out of every economic position. On one side, the individual and official 'boycott' against the Jewish merchants and craftsmen was intensified, and on the second side, the taxes were jacked up, especially against the Jews. The tax authority assessed the income of the small businessman who did not keep books, to the extent that it wanted to, and demanded taxes on this arbitrary basis, and among the large merchants who did keep an official set of books, they nullified the books for no reason or deficiency, only with the single motive of being able to negotiate taxes that had no limit on them, supplemented with an added large amount of money as a

fine, and some of the time with an optional penalty....of a free ride to Kartuz Bereza (the Polish Dachau, which instilled a fear and terror on the entire Jewish population).
There were no immigration possibilities available on the face of it. The doors of all the countries, even in dark mountains, or laces where the black pepper grows, were locked with seven hermetic locks. It was also not possible for the larger masses to emigrate to the "Land of Israel." To obtain a certificate to make *aliyah* was, for the average person, simply a dream. Even '*Halutzim*' who had gone through training, had to wait for years until their turn came, and tragically, tens of thousands of them did not make it, and they perished at the hands of the gruesome Hitler forces in the gas ovens.

Even those who did, as it were, have something to live off, meaning that they could get through the day, had absolutely no prospect or possibility to set their children up to make a living for themselves. Commerce for the Jews shrank day by day. In most small towns, there were no factories, and craftsmen working from their own homes were in overabundance. How does one say it: there were more ritual slaughterers than chickens. In the larger cities, the gates of the factories were closed to the Jews. In the heavy industries, admission for Jews was unofficially strictly forbidden. This situation had an impact on the ability of getting married. In every household, grown up young men wandered about, as well as mature young women who were all unemployed, having nothing, with no prospects, and no goal. Their entire energy was directed into political parties and organizations that many times led to infighting among one's own.

Parent, observing this, went out from aggravation and sorrow. All of this made life bitter and unbearable. Added to this, were the frequent attacks by predatory anti-Semitic Poles, and 'Boyaks.' Out of frustration, the people lost their common sense. Not seeing any way out of their great troubles, they said in a mood of resignation: Let there be a war already, it can't get any worse than this....

They were no longer competent to make an objective assessment of what a war implied for humanity in general, and especially a war with the Germans and had clearly set an objective for itself explicitly and in detail to wipe out, kill and eradicate all of the enemies of the Jewish people.

The community comforted itself with weak arguments: this [sic: German threats] was only theory, demagoguery, a 'good horse' to ride on to get through, but the reality will be different....the Polish maxim was till being used: '*Diabel nie taky straszny jak go maluj*,' The wind is not a frightful as it is pictured.

The people still recalled The First World War, and they thought the trajectories of the second war will follow those of the first.

War nerves had become exhausted since the year 1938, with the *Anschluss* of Austria into the Reich, and afterwards the annexation of Czechia and Poland's '*Zaolzie*,' Nervousness simply gave out more than the [imminent] war feeling. When two acquaintances met, instead of greeting each other with a 'good morning,' one would pose a real question to the other: what do you say, will there be a war or not?

And since the partnership of the Poles with the Germans, in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and Goering's visit to the Bialowieza forests to hunt, official anti-Semitism became stronger, and at the same time, the intensive broadening of the sentiment for war: there were often calls for volunteers against 'air attacks,' partial mobilization of various age groups, new taxes every Monday and Thursday, compulsory loans for a defense fund. Two weeks before the outbreak of the war, the Starosta ordered the populace with its Rabbis, to call the entire Jewish community together in the Great Synagogue. All the study houses and smaller houses of worship were locked up in order to make people come to the Great synagogue. The Starosta

then demanded a 'voluntary' loan for the air force, and immediately presented the previously prepared list with fantastically high sums: the most impoverished person had to give a minimum of 100 zlotys, and the wealthy people were forced to give between 5-10-15 thousand zlotys. The worst occupier of these lands had never levied such an extortionate demand for contribution on such a poor populace, and all this had to be paid on demand, literally – –

Until that dark hour on Friday of the portion *Ki Tavo* was born, when the bitter imprecations are read from the 'Proving' (September 1, 1939), when the radio described the bitter news that the Germans had, without prior warning, or a declaration of war, attacked the borders of Poland, and bombed Polish civilian cities, communicating thereby the horrible results of the murderous bombardment. The first impression was like a sharp blow from an axe had hit on our heads; Instinctively, we sensed that something unnatural and frightening had occurred. The catastrophe, especially for the Jews, had begun.

The Anxious Mood

The first days of the war were only an emotionally difficult period to live through, something of a premonition of the sort, '*Mazlia Khazi*' could be sensed, but 'in reality,' factually, the war was not heard in our vicinity. No foreign 'air appearance' of bombardment took place. The community sat glued to their radios. From the first days of the war, the Warsaw newspapers no longer reached Tomaszow because of crippled transportation. The 'Pantofil-Post' mixed with Jewish fantasies created stories: By tomorrow the French will arrive with the English, and they will drive the Germans out; Most of all, the Starosta Vielikowski (incidentally, a Jew from Bochnia who converted to Christianity, before his name was Grossman) sent, every day, to call other important people in the community and activists, and relayed to them a variety of false 'news' about 'great' Polish victories from the 'undefeated' heroic Polish army, and about 'secret' world political sentiment that is in favor of Poland. And the radio bragged about the Polish 'Cavalry' that had conquered West Plata – All of this served to raise the spirits a bit.

Homes Are Requisitioned

In the meantime, on Monday, the Starosta began to requisition a number of houses and a number of residences for the evacuated families of high officers and elected officials, especially from the border territories in the Posen region, who were well-known for their ideas about consuming Jews.

In the meantime, the 'first' of the Jewish refugees began to appear from Silesia, Katowice. On Tuesday, and autobus arrived with Jewish refugees from Cracow. The Rebbe of Cieszanow with his children, the Rabbis Meir and Yekhezkiel on their own initiative arranged for all the refugees to be taken in by neighbors, who simply volunteered to share their lodging with them. For larger families, empty dwellings were rented, and the necessary household items were immediately provided. On Thursday at four o'clock in the afternoon, a large assembly was called for in the community hall, in order to organize a Help Committee on a larger scale, with a community kitchen, special dormitories, because from hour to hour, the number of refugees requiring help continued to grow.

The Bombardment

Unfortunately the Germans were ahead of us by a couple of hours. As is known, Thursday was the market day, in which the gentiles from all of the surrounding villages would come to buy and sell. This Thursday, the 'market fair' was significantly larger, because the peasants wanted to buy up whatever was available, because in a war, there ensues a shortage of all merchandise.

At one in the afternoon, the drone of steel birds is heard and a squadron of 15 heavy bombers flew down upon us, just as if they were searching for a military objective. Several wise guys even cracked a question: Are you one of us, or one of them, are you our planes or those of the enemy? For 'ours' they are flying too high, and for the enemy's too low... but in a few seconds, the matter became clear: they spit out dynamite and fire, explosive and incendiary bombs. Mostly, they concentrated their bombing on the densely packed 'Jewish Quarter,' where the Synagogue street with the Praga, marketplace and Krasnobrod Gasse [were located].

In its entirety, the bombardment lasted only a few minutes, and the result was a frightful one: 150 dead, with fires in every nook and cranny.

During the bombardment, people did not know what to do with themselves, where to run from The Angel of Death. Part ran to the meadow, others to a neighbor's cellar, a third into the garden, the fourth into an orchard. The cries of '*Shema Yisrael*' rent the heavens.

And when the bombardment stopped, it was then that the real panic set in. The destruction was already recognizable in every corner. The dead already were strewn all over the streets, the fire was burning, and with a quick pace, was spreading. But people went to look for their kin, to see if they were still alive, or needed help. The panic and disorder is impossible to describe.

Had and organized rescue arrived immediately, which would have taken control of the situation, it would have been possible to have saved a great deal, especially in putting out fires. However the confusion dulled everyone's senses, and nothing was done to put out the fires. It is interesting that even the municipal fire brigade did not even take out their equipment, and everyone was preoccupied with taking an account of their family, to find out if they were all alive, and those that had people who were killed, or burned, or wounded, certainly had no patience for putting out fires. And so, the fire leapt, unimpeded from roof to roof, from street to street, the wooden houses burning hellishly like an 'eternal light' for the victims who were killed, and the tongues of flame shot upwards, as if they would ascend into the heavens like living witnesses and reports about the frightful murders that the German angels of destruction perpetrated against the defenseless, poor, and peaceful Jewish population in Tomaszow.

The Results of the Bombardment

On that bloody Thursday the Synagogue, the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, the Belz *shtibl*, Rabbi Yehoshua'leh's *shtibl* the Hasidic *shtibl*, the Kielce *shtibl* the Chelm *shtibl* and annex, R' Nachman's minyan, the Yavneh School, the Mizrahi minyan, the school street, the entire Praga up to under Wola and Kosciuszko *Gasse,* the Krasnobrod *Gasse* with all of its surrounding side streets, and the west side of the marketplace, were burned down.

The purely Christian neighborhoods remained untouched, such as the 'Suburbs' and the aristocratic 'Parcela.' In total about 500 Jewish houses were burned down.

After the destruction, many families fled Tomaszow, as well as neighboring villages. However, life had already been transformed into a Hell. First, the curse of 'and where there were ten women there was only one oven,' came to reality. In a house formerly occupied by one Jewish resident there were now fifty Jewish souls. The peasants did not want to take in any Jews, because the Germans dropped leaflets from the skies, that if the peasants will take in Jewish refugees, then the villages will be burned down. Polish anti-Semites seized upon this as if it were a delicious roast.

Meanwhile, things grew worse at the front. The Polish military did not have the strength to hold a position at the front. The civilian population was very mixed up: part of them fled to Warsaw, and from Warsaw, they fled to Lemberg. A large part was drawn to the Rumanian border, where the government officials were fleeing, and all of these roads pass through Tomaszow. The panicked state of mind played itself out in all of its nuances. Those who were n the midst of fleeing were warning themselves not to move from their places, because the Germans was bombing all of the roads, and the gentiles do not want to offer so much as a drink of water. The thought was that whatever will happen, will happen in the same way, in one's own home.

Brought to Rest in Burial

In the meantime, it was necessary to do right by the dead, and give them a proper Jewish burial, and tragically, this was not so easily done, because many of them had literally been totally dismembered and blown to smithereens. No complete limb remained, a hand, a foot, a spleen, a liver. It was those who were incinerated that had especially disintegrated. It was necessary to gather up the blood and limbs in wooden barrels and bury them in this fashion. The regular Hevra Kadisha no longer functioned. For purposes of offering praise, let it be recalled here those who volunteered who concerned themselves with the burial of these martyrs: R' Nahum Shamash הי"ד, Rabbi Meir Rubin ז"ל (let his superhuman will be emphasized here, because by nature he was squeamish. When one time, by accident saw a dead person, he could not eat properly for weeks, and here he busied himself with corpses that were so terribly mangled and shattered), and many others.

The Entry of the Germans

The troubles that emerged from the bombing became a daily event, but [at least] there were no further victims, because the community had become trained, and was able to hide itself in the villages and forests. Only at night, did a portion of them return to the city, to spend the night and forage for something. This is the way it went on until the Wednesday of the eve of *Rosh Hashanah*. On that day, the German predators took control of Tomaszow. Some simply saw a resolution in this, because the slings and arrows of warfare and the random wandering about the villages the fright from the bombardment, simply sapped their essence. Everything proceeded on the basis of 'it couldn't possibly get any worse.'

As soon as the Germans occupied the city, they took control of strategic positions, and the principal military force then marched further on to secure all of Poland.

They organized a municipal citizen's militia. Which in the first couple of hours a few Jews participated, but who were summarily sidelined.

On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the Rabbi gave the bath house operator an order to heat up the baths in the *mikva*, so that the Jews should be able to bathe themselves in honor of the holiday, especially after having to wander around in all of the mud. Life began to function again.

Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur Under the German Occupation

In the remaining houses of worship, such as the Sanz, Ger and Husyatin, Radzyn, Trisk, Zionist *shtiblakh,* etc. as well as in many private houses, services were conducted just like in previous years, with the blowing of the Shofar, but with an embittered and clammed up heart. The Germans did not interfere, but only in a few of the minyans, they took out a couple of Jews and photographed them wrapped in their prayer shawls.

The first signal of pursuit of the Jews began on *Shabbat Shuva*[157] (in that year Rosh Hashanah fell on Thursday and Friday). They ran about the houses looking for Jews to do labor, and especially sought out elderly Jews with white beards, and a patriarchal appearance. They gathered about fifty of these elderly who had this sort of distinguished type of appearance, and forced them to load a wagon with straw, and in that time they made sport of them, calling over young Polish gentile hooligans and telling them to spit in their faces.

By Sunday, they were running around the houses cutting off beards, and some of the time tearing out half of a cheek. However, they could not spread themselves out too much, because the remnants of the Polish army had fortified themselves in the forests near Tomaszow, and began to give a substantial resistance to the Germans, such that the city found itself in the center of hostile positions. The Poles fired on the city from the forests, shrapnel and cannon shells gouged holes in the houses.

On a certain day, the Germans drove out the entire Jewish populace, and crammed them into the yard of the new Catholic Church on the Lemberg *Gasse,* and surrounded them with armed troops. From the outset, nobody knew the reason for this. Afterwards, the Germans said that seeing that many Polish prisoners had fled, the Jews are therefore responsible. The community became terribly frightened, but before dawn, the gathering was broken up, and told to go home. However, sadly, two parties were taken away after this process of being driven out, and they never returned. Among them: Fyvel Holtz, Yuda Goldman's son, and others. Also, at that time, the Germans shot Yeshay' Lehrer and Blind Nahum.

On Yom Kippur, prayer was no longer conducted in the houses of worship, because the fire from the battling military forces, became intense. I said my prayers in the private home of the *Rebbe* of Cieszanow. By nine o'clock in the morning, we had already completed the *Musaf* services. In the end, the shelling stopped, and the Germans said: 'Here comes the filthy Russian.'

Interregnum

Two days before *Sukkot,* the Germans left the city, but no Russian military had yet arrived. The Poles, along with the remnants of the Polish military in the forests, planned to organize a pogrom against the Jewish population and rob them of their possessions. The Rabbi and the important members of the city community approached the priest, and asked him to pacify the Poles, especially the Polish military that was concentrated near the Catholic Church, but sadly, to no avail. The miracle that happened was that on the eve of Sukkot,

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157 The Sabbath between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

towards nightfall, a Russian assault team on a tank, which said: My dear Jews, go to bed, now all will be tranquil, our guys are coming.

Under the Russians

On the morning of the eve of *Sukkot*, the Red Army marched in. All of the Jewish communists, Poles and indigenous Russians went to meet them with red banner and music.

They immediately organized a civilian force, created a municipal militia at the head of which were people who had been c0ommunists. The Jews who were left without a roof over their heads, were relocated and settled in the aristocratic quarter '*Parcela*,' in such a way, that the Christians had to share their domicile with the poorest of the Jews. Jews breathed a little more easily.

There were many wounded Jewish soldiers in the hospitals, and the public school along with the gymnasium were transformed into temporary military hospitals. A committee was created to convey food to them. Rabbi Yekhezkiel Rubin especially had a great part in this undertaking. He also collected the names of all the wounded soldiers and the names of their families, in the event that someone should die, that notification could take place accurately, and in particular to avoid questions relating to married women whose husbands could not be properly accounted for.[158] It was in this way that life proceeded normally on the eve of *Sukkot* and the first two days of *Sukkot*.

On Saturday night of the first day of *Hol HaMoed*, a rumor began to spread that the border between Russia and the Germans will consist of the 'Kherson Line,; and the Germans are going to return to the Bug River, such that Tomaszow will gain fall back into the hands of the Germans. Jews began to get restless. The Russians, and their civilian authorities lied. They said that their enemies had spread this false rumor, and that this panic monger should be turned over to them. Stalin does not retract his foot from any place in which he sets it down. Now, they distributed ammunition in the villages. But the rumor that the Germans were returning, grew ever stronger.

The Reason I Left Tomaszow

On Sunday, I went into Kudlic's 'Traffic' to buy cigarettes. He was one of the most important of the local Polish citizenry, a quiet man, and a member of the municipal council. He says to me:

– I do not envy the Jews, when the Germans return.

– What do you mean? I ask him.

– He answers, it is very simple. We Poles will take revenge on you Jews.

– Why? I ask him.

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158 Under Jewish law, a woman could not be properly declared a widow, and suitable to be re-married, without specific knowledge of the death of her husband.

– For having greeted the Russians with song and dance.

– So I ask him, Well? And what of your own, meaning the Poles! Did they not participate in this as well?

– He answers, Yes! Correct! They did indeed participate, but you must hold yourselves to a higher standard, because you are stepchildren... and if you have transgressed, then you will be the first to be punished. One is more forgiving with one's own child...

–Then I ask him, but what are we, as loyal citizens, guilty of? Do you not know that I, along with 95 percent of the Jews took no part in this, and we are opponents of communism.

– Yes, true! We know all of this, but on the day of reckoning, the innocent suffers much more that the true guilty.

And we will never forgive the Jews. Only blood will arrest our lust for vengeance.

I returned to my father, one of the most respected Jewish people in the city, and said to him, Father we must flee, not so much from the Germans (because in the end, they were not initially so frightening) but from the vengeance of the Poles. For sure, the Germans are not going to defend the Jews. And so, we set out for Rawa Ruska and a panic ensued in the city. People commenced to flee, despite the explicit opposition of the Russian authorities and its municipal servants to hangers on.

A mass hysteria possessed the populace. Get to Rawa Ruska, but that was not so easy to accomplish. For the use of a horse and wagon, it was necessary to pay that same day, and a little later, that could not even be procured for any sum. The militia guarded the roads, and did not permit any merchandise to be transported. People set out on foot, and with tiny infants on their shoulders. Along the way, one caught a small wagon, or a military freight truck. The entire road from Tomaszow to Rawa Ruska was black with people.

In Rawa Ruska

In that location, there was an influx of refugees from all corners. We receive bitter tidings of how the Germans were behaving in a gruesome and sadistic way towards the Jews. We heard a frightening report about the severe torture they subject the Rabbi and the community leaders of Przeworsk.

In the end, I broke faith, and wrote a letter during *Hol HaMoed,* to my parents. I still remember the beginning of the letter: ב"ה, at the time of the Festival, Monday, the third day of *Hol HaMoed Sukkot*, the first day of the first year of my exile... the year 5700. Here, in Rawa Ruska, I felt a premonition that this wandering in a fresh new form of exile, will not be numbered only in days and months, as some wanted to delude themselves int believing, but that it will drag on for years.... and despite that, I beseeched my parents to leave everything behind, and save themselves. I wrote a bit about the murders that were already known, how the Germans behaved themselves in similar cities in Galicia. However, my letter already did not reach my parents in Tomaszow, because the psychology of fleeing was already so great, that on that night, they set out on foot for Rawa Ruska. My letter was turned over to a neighbor, and was very helpful, since many of those who were stubborn, reversed their decisions and left Tomaszow in a timely fashion. But however more people came to Rawa [Ruska] from the entire vicinity, Especially from Cieszanow, Narol, Lipsk, and Nemirow, life, especially for the refugees became a Hell. People did not have a place where to lay down their heads. All the study houses and community buildings became occupied. For a small residence of the most

impoverished kind, legendary sums were paid, and later on, it was not possible to get any such place for any amount of money. People had to spend the night in the streets, and because of this, many returned home.... to Tomaszow (in the initial period, the border was not strictly controlled).

In addition to this, one is a living human being that has to eat, and not everyone had foodstuffs to take along. Even when the very wealthy, like the lumber merchants and others, couldn't take along their lumber... and to make a living from ephemeral means was not possible for all, such that everyone suffered from hunger and cold, and the essential thing is we had no roof over our heads.

The Germans Occupy Tomaszow for the Second Time

The first time around, they hardly bothered the Jews. They demanded that places of business be opened up, and that life should return to its course. Regarding the Jews, they presented the reply that for the majority, and especially the people of means, had gone over to the Russians, and all that remained was a small collection of paupers.

After three weeks of tranquility, on a Sabbath day, the Germans drove together all the Jews in the *Tchayneh* (The *Ludowy*) and beat them murderously, for no rhyme or reason, and ordered them to sing Hatikvah... and also other Yiddish and Hebrew folk songs. Falek Ritzer led the choir. And afterwards, more beatings.

In the end, an order was laid before them from the higher authorities, saying it is a military command, that has to be carried out immediately and exactly with the greatest attention to detail: Tomaszow is a border area, and it must become *Judenrein.* You can either go over to the filthy Russians, or travel far into the country, past Lublin. Any Jew that will show himself in Tomaszow, after 24 hours, will b beaten to death on the spot.

About three hundred families, with their tiny infants, went off to Belzec, in order to be able to cross over to the Russians. Tragically, the Russians did not grant them entry, and they remained in the forest in the pouring rain, waiting for a deliverance, that the Russians would open the border.

Efforts to Obtain Entry Permission from the Russians

Children, and part of the elderly managed to get across the border illegally, and conveyed the sorrowful condition of the residents of Tomaszow that lay beside the border. Hundred of Tomaszow Jews lived in Rawa [Ruska]. In the end, the Tomaszow [Jews] in Rawa Ruska] came together and decided to send a delegation to the chief commandant of the border area, and to appeal to him that he should take pity on the hapless Jews and permit them to enter. The delegation went to the former Tomaszow Rabbi, הרה"צ R' Ary' Leibusz Rubin זי"ל, who had also taken up residence in Rawa [Ruska], and asked him if he would grace their delegation. The Rabbi answered: My dear *balebatim*, no thing would be difficult for me to do, in order to help our brethren who are languishing at the border, but regrettably, you do not assess the sad reality in which we find ourselves under communist rule, where a Rabbi is considered irrelevant and unclean. My presence with you will only denigrate your request, and in the interests of the matter, it is better for me not to appear there. The Jews, who had become used to the fact that in Tomaszow the Rabbi should stand at the head of any initiative, did not agree with the Rabbi's point of view, and even out of order, they continued to request that the Rabbi accompany them.

You can understand that the Rabbi did go with them. When they entered the office of the commandant, a colonel of the border corps, his first question was about the Rabbi, as to who was this person, – because of

his massive tall build and patriarchal appearance. And his traditional rabbinical garb, which drew his attention. So they said that this was the Rabbi of their former community, which ad evacuated itself here, among you. His first answer was: The Rabbi must leave. With us Rabbis are detested, and not wished to be present. You are no longer in Fascist Poland...
Having no alternative, the Rabbi exited, and in tears, the delegation begged for mercy for their brethren cast about, who are languishing in the cold, under the open skies on the border, and who are suffering from hunger want, along with the elderly sick and young infants.

But his reply was a firm Russian '*nyet...*'

No amount of crying and pleading was of any avail... and the delegation left disappointed and in shame.

A New Delegation is Sent to Lvov (Lemberg)

The Tomaszow Jews did not relent. The pain and suffering of their *landsleit* gave them no surcease, and it was decided that possibly in Lemberg, where the central occupation authority is located, they will be able to act more expeditiously on this matter.

The delegation consisted of the following people: Yekhezkiel Rubin, Yitzhak Meir Pflug, and Ella Heller. They obtained a recommendation to see the highest level of the party hierarchy (who had a close family relationship to a certain community activist from Tomaszow, and with his effort, the delegation was received by the senior commandant of the entire border corps, an N.K.V.D. General. He spoke to the delegation in the Polish language, hearing out the sad situation of the Jews, that lay on the border in the cold and snow. He answered very firmly that he regrettably cannot grant the permission. When Mrs. Ella Heller, who was part of the delegation cried, saying that he should show compassion for the innocent thousand lives, he answered that today we are at war. In the gears of world politics, millions of lives are being ground up, and [compassion] plays no role. Do you want a thousand lives to alter our politics? I personally have sympathy for you, but in this connection, unfortunately, I am unable to help you. You are only aware of Jews from Tomaszow that have been driven out. I am aware also of similar people who have been driven out from other border areas. Through there, Hitler's spies are being smuggled in.. And we have to be alter to them.

When the Jews heard about this suspicion, they responded by asking how could it be possible that a Jew would be a German spy? Hi answer was, yes, indeed, and the delegation went away with nothing.

The Jews were forced to remain under German control.

The Fate of the Jews Who Left Tomaszow

Page 762: *A Jewish Family, Wearing the Yellow Badge*

As I have already mentioned, the housing issue in Rawa [Ruska] was literally catastrophic. This, despite the fact that the Jews had spread out to the neighboring towns such as Zolkiew, Kulikow, Most, Lemberg, etc. Despite this, it was impossible to survive, and in the end, the Russian authorities sent down commissions that recruited laborers into Russia. Jews from Tomaszow, who were acquainted with Russia from the time before the First World War, and knew of the richness in natural resources and the abundance there, signed up to go there voluntarily. It was especially the common folk, which consisted of tradespeople, who volunteered to travel to Zmerynka, Berdichev, Zhitomir, and other Ukrainian cities. Part of them traveled to the Urals, or

even further. Needless to say, the recruiters promised the best of fortunes, but not all had the fortune of being settled. And part did not want to go out of religious considerations. As soon as a couple of weeks passed by, bitter letters began to filter back, expressing disappointment and embitterment. Because of the censor, they wrote in a code, I am here a month already, and I have not yet seen Mr. Sugar. A second person would write, Mr. Milkman is a seldom visitor in our house, and a third would write that the Butter Family is unknown in these parts. All of these innuendoes were understood by everyone, especially after the passage of a couple of months, and a portion had the ability to flee and personally gave an account of the great tribulations, indicating that they had almost nothing, and whatever is available, it is necessary to queue up for hours in a line to obtain.... (*otcherit*). Also, life was becoming unbearable, and when they arrived, they called out for those standing in the rows, that these people come from Poland, where they hadn't seen sugar for twenty years... let them step out of the line. All these bad tidings caused part of the Jews to illegally cross the border back to the Germans, and the majority who did stay, did not want to take Russian citizenship.

The Passport Transaction

After the former Polish areas had officially and 'voluntarily' been annexed to Russia as *Zapadna Ukraina* and *Zapadna Belarussia*, all the residents had to obtain Russian passports, because in Russia, one cannot exist without a passport, just like being without a soul. It was simply impossible to move around or obtain work, because wherever you go, you have to be certified.

In the larger majority, the refugees did not want to take such passports... they argued that they were Polish citizens, which is occupied by the Germans. We ask for a temporary right, transit passports, or passports for stateless people, but not Russian passports. All of these people, in the summer of 1940, were sent off to the Siberian Taigas, or similar far north detention locations.

A few were imprisoned or sent to camps, and families to '*posholka*s' (the story about their slave labor needs to be dealt with separately). I will only provide an overall summary about these Jews who were the 'lucky ones' who remained in the *Zapadna* , but sadly, almost no one survived. Because, they were brought down by the Germans, when the Germans again took over all of Poland. Of those who 'voluntarily' traveled to Russia, with the exception of the Jews who lived in Zmerynka, which had been allocated to Rumania, regrettably here too, a small portion survived. Of the Jews who were sent to Siberia, or imprisoned in jails or camps, in the far flung and remote areas of Russia, they make up the surviving remnant of the Tomaszow Jews, who are strewn and sown in the four corners of the earth. The majority made aliyah to the Land of Israel, and an important segment to the United States of America, with a remnant in Canada, and South American countries. Only a small percentage remains in Europe.

The Fate of the Jews Who Remained in Tomaszow

In Tomaszow, a nice Jewish group re-formed itself a little at a time, out of the old-time residents and those who were newcomers. The Jews began to show themselves in the streets warily, attempting to earn a zloty, and having assumed the burdens of the difficult life under the Russian, they made peace with their fate, and hoped to survive the war under the Germans.

The Germans even issued the order that Jews were required to wear arm bands with a Star of David as a sign to be able to recognize a Jew. Yet, Jews made their peace with this, so long as they were granted the right to live, and to make a meager living to buy bread.

The Judenrat

No ghetto was set up in Tomaszow to begin with in the first period. Jews were naturally concentrated around the marketplace, but a *Judenrat* was created comprised of all the circles and literally with party endorsement (despite the fact that such did not really exist under the Germans). It was created with Yehoshua Fishelsohn as the Jewish Elder at its head. The purpose of the *Judenrat* was to provide workers for the German occupation, and to be helpful to Jews who were in need, who were eliminated from receiving the various forms of social assistance provided by the community authorities.

Then, suddenly, came the first contribution fine imposed on the Jewish community in the sum of three hundred thousand Reichsmarks. The Judenrat argued that the most wealthy Jews had fled, and only the poorest remained. The German answer was: you have sucked enough Polish blood, take it out of your hidden treasures. Jews gave away their marriage rings, the last of what they possessed, and put together the required sum.

The Jews were also required to furnish and arrange the residences of the German officials, who lived in Tomaszow in a large number, because it was a border city, with all of the required necessities of a home.

Religious Life

As is known, no sort of religious activity was permitted, and officially even no synagogue existed. Ritual slaughter was strictly forbidden through the military authorities, but despite this, Jews nevertheless promoted their religious life with the greatest devotion.

The ritual slaughterer was R' Baruch Hurwitz, the son-lin-law of R' Mordechai Joseph. The Rabbi was the Rabbi of Jarczów, R' Pesach Zitzammer, the teacher was R' Meir Klarman and David Rubales. Nahum Shammes carried out all of the community activities, as well as the minyan which took place in his house.

The *Hevra Kadisha* existed officially under the *Judenrat*, because they were very active in this field, as well as the *mikva*, which functioned, because the *Judenrat* managed the baths. Well, it was possible by smuggling, to warm the *mikva*. I also wish to note that Baruch the *Shokhet* was also the *Mohel*, and even though few births took place, but if it did occur, it was Baruch *Shokhet* who performed the ritual circumcision.

Tragically, the end was a sad one. A gentile informed to the Gestapo that the Jews were practicing ritual slaughter. This was in the winter of 1941, and the Gestapo issued a position that there will be an open court set up in the middle of the marketplace at the end of Lwowska – Rynek – Koscielna, in the Czyny garden and requested that a butcher block be brought there. Then, a spectacle was arranged, and they brought two elderly Jews who had not yet shaved their beards, and had very long beards. These were Simcha'leh and Nehemiah'leh the teachers. Each of their beards were tied with a strong rope, and the rope was attached to a metal sled runner. Baruch *shokhet* was sat on the sled, with the reins in his hand. A member of the Gestapo with a whip in hand, then sat down on the sled, and he beat the two teachers in the face worse than one would beat a horse. And it was with their beards, that were tied to the sled with rope, that they had to drag the sled to the designated place. Understand that the Gentile hooligans and their women were convulsed with laughter and glee by watching this....

The city commandant then went up to a special tribunal, and conveyed to the gathering the horrifying murder... of the Jewish Chief Rabbi. He dared to slaughter a calf according to the Jewish ritual, and to cause

such sorrow to a dumb creature, and simultaneously short-changed the Christian populace with the taking of their product. For this reason, the Chief Rabbi will be punished by having his fingers chopped off from both hands. And the Polish police dragged the *shokhet* and put his hands on the butcher block, and cut off his fingers.

After the sentence was carried out, a Pole ascended, who was a collaborator with the Germans, and gave a speech in Polish and pointed out the great humanitarian feelings of the German people, because, in reality, the *shokhet* had deserved the death penalty, and the Germans were so generous to him by sparing his life. Only his fingers were chopped off, in order that he will no longer be able to repeat his crime, to slaughter in accordance with the barbaric Jewish ritual. Accompanied by loud and lusty applause, they began to assault the Jews with snow and staves, until they disappeared.

During the Difficult Years of Dying

I do understand that you will think this is most certainly an error on the part of the writer, or at most, a hyperbolic description, because how is such a thing possible? We have already heard of dying moments, or dying hours. But never of dying years. However, my dear brothers, when a single person dies there is still room for dying hours. However, when an entire nation dies, and yet by such bizarre and cruel deaths, then, tragically, there are dying years.

And the error is made by those who did not live through this, or do not want to understand. The death sentence passed over the Jewish people was issued on the day that the German people placed the leadership of their country in the hands of that dog like destroyer Hitler. The sentence was carried out on the day of 17 Elul 5739. It was on that accursed day when Hitler initiated his global slaughter in the form of a military attack on the land of Poland. The gruesome death dragged on, and stretched out until the day that the Allies defeated the Hitler beast, with his barbaric hordes. And if, in the first months, or that first year, not all apprehended the satanic game, after a year of the toll exacted by Hitler, there was no longer the slightest doubt harbored by anyone, that we were all candidates for the Hitlerian Angel of Death, and it was only a question of who would go first, and who would go later, either by an easy death – a bullet in the head, or an excruciating death by starvation.

The Collaboration of the Poles with the Germans

Page 767: *The funeral procession of the Polish Prelate (the Senior Cleric), in the Jewish delegation, the escort consisted of: Ts. A. Eliezer Lederkremmer, Rabbi Rubin, Sh. Shiflinger, A. Eidelsberg, Chaim Chaimowitz, Chaim Putter, Yitzhak Bernstein, Meir Bluter, and others.*

Before I turn to conveying the last and sorrowful chapters of the ultimately tragic and catastrophic end of the Jewish populace in Tomaszow, in my thoughts, the incomprehensible question swims about as to how it was possible for the Poles, who lived door by door with their Jewish neighbors for over 500 years, worked and traded together, and with many of whom they had very friendly relations, they, who were witnesses to how the Jews built up their cities, and generated new sources of income for themselves and their neighbors, the non-Jews. They, who knew very well the decent hard-working life of the poor Jewish craftsman, and the refined behavior of the Jewish people, who in all instances of need, helped their neighbors, and almost never had a murderer or serious criminal emerge from their midst. Why is it that they did not help the Jews in such a time of trouble. And not only did they not help, but the majority of them from boor to intellectual, from the freethinker and one without faith, to deeply devout Catholics, ran along with, and collaborated with the

German occupier to exterminate and cut down Jewry. Their hands are permanently stained with pure and innocent spilled Jewish blood. And those would did not participate directly in the devil's dance to spill Jewish blood, stood by and derived pleasure from the others who were doing this, that they were pleased to see a Poland that was *Judenrein*...

According to my understanding from what I lived through, saw, and heard from neighboring towns, there is almost not a single Pole that is known to be innocent in connection with the extermination of the Jews (we are not here talking of the very few Righteous Among the Gentiles, whose percentage is not even one in a thousand, who put their own lives at risk to save a Jew. As we know, every rule has its exception, and regrettably, in Tomaszow, there was not even one in ten thousand).

The Permanent Enmity Towards the Jew

Anti-Semitism found its support on the so-called three legs:

1. The Religious Motivation. The teachings of Christendom, that the Jew crucified their Lord. That the Jew is permanently cursed, and cannot be saved so long as they persist in adhering to the Jewish religion. And this was handed down as a legacy, from generation to generation, with all of the fanatical libels. I can remember, when I would accompany the Rabbi to prayer, we would have to pass by this poor gentile woman, who was almost entirely supported by the Rabbi with the Jewish neighbors. When she would want to frighten her child, she would shout to the child, if you obey me, it is good, and if not, I will turn you over to the Rabbi, and he will slaughter you, in order to have Christian blood for Passover.

2. The Economic Structure. Jews are rich, Jews are the merchants, who suck Polish blood, and earn their money easily, and they were consumed with envy. The fact that they would drink to excess, saying that the Jew has enough of an income, but the fact that the Jew lives with a careful accounting, splitting every groschen in two, that they didn't want to know. All they saw, was that all of the businesses belonged to the Jews.

3. Patriotic – Poland for the Poles, which also derives its root from envy, because the Jew was the most loyal element for the regime. By nature, the Pole was wicked and stingy, someone who was arrogant, and was not gracious towards the success of others, as the folk saying said, he is a Pole in his moustaches, religious and reactionary, lazy and worthless, short on means, with great lusts and appetites. For all their personal and national shortcomings, in the Jew they saw their scapegoat. If every time it was an individual question between a Pole and a Jew, the Polish parties made a major issue out of the 'Jewish Question.' They would blow up out of proportion the fact that the Jew is responsible for our misfortunes, and as soon as we will get rid of the accursèd Jew, we will be saved. And in the final years, the anti-Semitism ricocheted and spilled about like an angry sea. And by nature, the Pole is not independent [in thought] and they were strongly influenced by their German neighbor. Above all, they saw the great success they were having with anti-Semitism, and all of this made them full partners in the extermination of the Jewish populace.

The Ultimate Liquidation

Despite the fact that Jews were immediately required to put on the Jewish emblem, the so-called '*opaska*[159],' no confined ghetto space was created in Tomaszow. Jews just became concentrated around the neighborhood of the Zamość *Gasse* with their living quarters constantly shrinking. And if the '*opaska*' was forgotten, or were found in a gentile neighborhood they were punished by imprisonment and a monetary fine. At first, large fines were levied against the Jews. Afterwards, all businesses and assets were confiscated. Jews were not permitted to have more than 500 zlotys, and later this was reduced to 300 zlotys. The bread ration was lowered from 30 deca [grams] per day to 20. Jews were required to go do forced labor, and were beaten and abused, and some of the time, beaten to death. But all of this did not yet mean the end. Only when they began to directly send people to the death camps, then everyone saw the ultimate extermination.

The German Tactic

The first step was to instill a general fear on the general populace, like a hangman's noose around their throats, and especially towards the Jews. Despoil their property, putting them down and insulting their honor, as they did in Tomaszow by picking out the elders asking them to wrap themselves in their prayer shawls and carry the Torah scrolls and march in a military formation to the marketplace. There, they were forced to spread out the Torah scrolls and dance on them, accompanied by beatings and hitting. Then began to taking of people to work for those between 12 and 50 years of age, those older, and the children, conveyed to Belzec, leaving behind the prominent. [The Germans] were constantly making exceptions, in order to permit the thought to steal into one's mind that maybe I will be lucky to remain alive. The German tactic was to deceive with lies, and part of the time with the truth, in order to awaken hope, that there is in fact a possibility of being rescued for the price of obedience, in order to dampen the thought of uncertainty and the impossibility of rescue, which can lead to an uprising, because there is nothing more to lose. And it was to cause everyone to think that they don't mean me, my work is too important....and always there was yet another *aktion*, where a transport was sent off to the World to Come, which was literally seen almost to be good, and this supported the fantasy that I will be the lucky one to live through the war.

Noteworthy and terrifying was living with the sadistic tortures of the Germans, which were more gruesome that the severest tortures of the Inquisition. Thereby, life became dear and important, and the will to live was so great, that for the price of wanting to remain alive, they went unimpeded to their death, because somewhere or another, deep in one's heart, there flickered a spark of hope to be saved, at the last minute, and it is worth enduring it all to live to see the minute of resolution and freedom.

For others, these tribulations took away all their capacity to think and reason. All of their senses became dampened, and they were transformed into automatons, that are required to obey every German command, even to go into the ground. The feelings of a father towards his child were killed off, brother to a sister, and the connection to kinfolk. Those who attempted to escape were subjected to the most terrifying of tortures, and deliberately employed the Poles for this. Jews were to be psychologically broken upon seeing that the entire surrounding vicinity is poisoned, and for the price of a kilo of sugar, every Pole will sell his soul to the German authorities. This was the secret why Jews went entirely unimpeded to slaughter. On the one side, one did not see a ray of hope, and on the other side, they permitted you to live for another hour, maybe in the last minute a possibility of rescue will arise. In 1942, the sending of transports to Cieszanow began, and

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159 The Polish word for a band.

from thence to Belzec. The well-connected were sent to Tarnawatka, but all of this led to one, single end and purpose, to exterminate Tomaszow Jewry, and all of this was directed by the German Panther.

An Example of German Barbarism

It was already after the gruesome *aktionen* in which no children remained in Tomaszow, a part having been torn apart by the German executioners, or thrown alive to the dogs, and the rest were transported off to Belzec into gas ovens. There were to be found two seamstresses, that worked very diligently for the German officers, and kept everything in very good order regarding their position, and they satisfied the German families veery much with their sewing. In the end, they were able to quarter their children with a gentile, and the Germans gave them their solemn German promise, that their children will not be killed or sent away. This was already in the winter of 1944, on a frosty day, they had already accumulated a large reserve of clothing. So they took the ladies and their children, and seated them in wagons, and the women understood that this was now their last journey. So they asked the Germans, where is your solemn word, that you will not kill our children. The Germans replied, you can be certain that we, trustworthy Germans will not relax our solemn word, even to the filthy Jews.

They locked the mothers in the municipal abattoir, stripped the children naked, throwing them into the Balan's River, dipping them in water, and while they were still alive, rolled them along the earth until they froze to death. After a number of hours, they brought the mothers there, and said to them, we kept our German promise. Here you have your children, untouched and nicely bathed. Apparently, the mothers went insane from this tragedy. The Germans took them, along with the children, and threw them back on the wagon, and led them to the Jewish cemetery. They forced the mothers to dig out a large pit, and throw their children in, and at the edge of this grave, they shot the mothers.

An Act of Martyrdom

Regrettably, it is necessary to also confirm that the Germans succeeded not only to exterminate the body, but for the price of saving one's life, they also corrupted the soul. And not one person who became a member of the *Judenrat,* with the most decent of intentions, didn't, in the course of time sink low... and fall morally. It is not important to give an accounting of names, because you should not judge your fellow man until you reach his place, and such a place, with those kinds of tests should never again appear in the world.

There were, however, people, whom these troubles uplifted. I wish to recollect one of these here, so that he is forever remembered as a martyr and a hero, and that is the martyr Yehoshua Fishelsohn ז"ל.

Yehoshua Fishelsohn was a man of the common people, through and through, who during the First World War (when Tomaszow was occupied by the Germans, and later by Austria) took the post of city burgomaster, for which he received a commendation from the German authorities. He would carry around a letter of thanks from von Papen[160]. When the Germans created a Judenrat, they appointed Yehoshua Fishelsohn as the Jewish Elder, and he effectively and diligently worked at his position. He sent people to work, he distributed help

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160 Franz von Papen (1879-1969) was a German nobleman who held a series of high positions in the German military, and was appointed German Chancellor in 1932 by General Paul von Hindenburg, the President of Germany. He is credited with having manipulated the German political apparatus to get Adolf Hitler installed as Chancellor in 1933.

to the poor, etc. That was up to the point when the deportation to Belzec began, which had been billed as people are being taken for work. And Yehoshua Fishelsohn received a demand from the German Panther, the Chief of the Gestapo, that by noon tomorrow, he was to provide the ultimate list of who was to be sent away.
Yehoshua Fishelsohn arrived at the appointed time, but without a list. So the Gestapo Chief asked him if he has the prepared list, because the German knew him to be a very punctilious person. To this Shia'leh Fishelsohn replied as to whether the Chief would permit him to give a reply. Yes, please [was the reply].

Shia'leh then says to the German, hear me out. I took the position as the Elder of the Jews in order to maintain discipline, and to respond to all of the German demands. But to betray my brothers and turn them over to be killed does not require my cognizance. I am giving you a full accounting, and that I am entirely in your hands, and you can do with me what you will, but I will never stain my hands with blood.

The German immediately drew his revolver and shot him on the spot. May his memory be for a blessing.

Jewish Partisans

So long as the Jews still lived under the illusion that part of Jewry would survive the war, and everyone thought that he would be among the fortunate ones, they did not want to go into the forests, fearing the responsibility for the ones left behind who would be held responsible for the deeds of others.

However, when 90 percent of the Jews had already been driven out to Cieszanow and Belzec, and only the barest remnant of the young people remained behind, it was clear to everyone that this is the devil's game, and it cannot get any worse. They had lost every spark of hope, and part of the young people decided that they would arm themselves at any cost, and go into the forests. This grou0p consisted of Mendel Heller, a locksmith and mechanic, Shimon Goldstein and Meir Kalechmakher. Their greatest difficulty was in acquiring arms. The Polish paramilitary had hidden it, and a couple of Jews were shot. Despite this, it was possible for them to obtain a rifle and a revolver, and with these, they went off into the forest. They killed several Germans in the Rogozno Forest.

In the evenings, they would come to Rogozno, and bring food for the children of their families who had been hidden in the Rogozno yard.

The Poles informed on them, and on one night, when they were in the yard, the Germans surrounded them, and after a short battle, they all fell. ה"ד

All of these previously mentioned facts of German brutality, in the Tomaszow area, I assembled over the course of time, and took down from eye witnesses.

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The Survivors in Russia

By Chaim Joseph Lehrer

It began on the eve of Friday of *Hol HaMoed* Sukkot, when the radio described that Ribbentrop ימ"ש was in Moscow, and had concluded a treaty with Molotov about the partition of Poland and designated the boundaries. It was in this manner that it became known that Tomaszow will go over to the Germans. I think it is worth to convey, in summary, what we lived through in the city during the two weeks with the Germans. This was the time when, on that known Thursday of September 7, 23 Elul, when the Germans in a matter of a few seconds, dropped 10 bombs, and thereby claimed 60 victims, and in the span of several hours destroyed practically the entire city, with the incineration of the part occupied by the Jewish populace, with the Synagogue and the largest part of the study houses.

It was in this way that the Jewish populace began to leave the city, except for those who remained without a roof over their heads, most fled fearing the bombs. When the Germans entered [the city] on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, they did so not so forcefully, but immediately after Rosh Hashanah the battle started with the Poles, and the well-known Monday arrived when the entire Jewish populace was chased out of their houses, onto the Lemberg Gasse, up to the point beyond the City Hall, opposite the new church, and arrayed tanks and machine guns opposite them. An order was immediately issued for the Jews to run back, and you can understand what sort of impression that made. In addition to this, hearing the way the Germans how the Germans were relating to the Jewish populace, when they arrived, it is understandable that immediately after the Sabbath of *Hol HaMoed*, the Jewish populace began to flee to the Russian side, and the first city there was Rawa Ruska. The first of these were the Rabbi of Cieszanow ז"ל and R' Yaakov Lederkremmer הי"ד. but, many did not want to take the wandering staff in hand. However, when it was seen that day by day there were fewer and fewer Jews, they too were swept along and also fled.

The writer of these lines had already left with the last on Simchat Torah, and still had the need to travel back to Tomaszow at a hour after crossing the border in Belzec, and by that time the border guards shot at those who wanted to travel through or pass through. As 75% of the Jewish populace had gone over to the Soviet side, the largest portion settled in Rawa [Ruska]. It is necessary to also recognize that the Jews from Narol and Cieszanow, which also remained in German hands, also fled to Rawa [Ruska]. One can imagine the situation in Rawa [Ruska], especially the issue of living space. It was such, that many went away to Lemberg, to Zolkow, as cities not far from Tomaszow. But here, the question immediately was posed for those who had fled with nothing to wear or eat, who did not have the means with which to even get through the day. In Rawa [Ruska] there were no places where one could work, such that the people began to go off into Russia, to which the Soviet regime gave 'shelter.' Most of these settled in the Ukraine, primarily in the Vinnitsia *Oblast*. Many of them immediately returned to Galicia, but the largest part remained there, of which, tragically, very few were saved, when the Nazis occupied the Ukraine. The larger part of those who remained here, not far from their ancestral home, settled in a little at a time, but it was then that the edit about passports was promulgated. This means that one had to take a Russian passport, and then travel 100 kilometers over the border, and if not, one would be returned to the Germans. a small percentage took this offer, but by far the larger part did not take it. Then on a certain Friday, on June 29, all the Polish refugees who were to be found in Galicia, and also Christians, were gathered up and shipped off to Siberia, from northern Archangelsk in Komi to the far east Yakutsk area.

Where Did the Rawa [Ruska] Echelon Go To?

After fifteen days of traveling, they were taken into the Altaiski Krai, whose capitol city was Barnaul, and the second city was Biysk, about which I will have further occasion to write. Those who were rounded up in Lemberg were sent to the Marisk SSR. This is between Ufa and Kazan. Those who had for the first time hidden themselves in Rawa [Ruska] were, the second time, sent to the Archangelsk Oblast, such that the Jewish populace of Tomaszow was totally spread out over all of Russia, and thanks to that, as we Jews say, even this is for good, the larger portion of them were saved.

How Did They Survive Living in Russia?

It is necessary to divide the period into two parts: from June 1940 to the end of 1941, and from there to the liberation in 1946.

The first part is, when all the Polish refugees were sent to the Taigas, and thrown into barracks. It is necessary to emphasize, that these expelled people, despite the fact that they were exiled, and they were called *spetzpriselnetsehs*, their situation was still bearable. It was worse for those who fell into prisons. These were the ones seized at the borders, or in closed camps, such as individuals without families. As indicated above, the largest part of the [Jews of] Tomaszow, were sent to Altaiski Krai. It is necessary to emphasize that even though this area was Siberia, it was one of the best areas in Russia. The soil there can be compared to that of the Ukraine, or the Caucasus. Apart from fruit, which cannot grow their because of the freezing cold, we had everything there that was exceptional, and the milk there is known as the best in all of Russia. The echelon from Rawa [Ruska] that arrived there, was immediately divided up and sent to different regions, and in many regions they were divided up into a variety of barracks. It was such that in one location, between 10 and 30 families could concentrate themselves. It is also necessary to emphasize, that along with the families from Tomaszow were families from Narol, Cieszanow and the Hubinek vicinity. Here, life was not the same for everyone. It was dependent on the attitude of the authorities, and primarily if the barracks was near something of a Russian settlement, so it would be possible to buy some sort of foodstuffs. But the essential thing was to be able to sell something of what had been brought along from one's home. The worst case was for those people from Tomaszow who fell into the Sarakinsky Region, where the [Rabbi of] Cieszanow זצ"ל fell in, along with many others from Tomaszow. The best was for those who were found in the so-called 152 barracks. What the Jews did there, was what all Polish exiles did. It was necessary to chop, or better said, fell trees in the forests, [a resource] with which Russia was blessed. It was rare that anyone had experience with such work. You can imagine what it was like when someone was put to this sort of work that nobody had ever done, and had never even seen how to do it, apart from those who had dealt in forest products. It is also necessary to be aware that the trees there were from 10 to15 times older that those who had to take them down. But there was no choice, and one began to accustom one's self to this life. There were already many victims at the felling of the trees. The work consisted not only of felling the trees, but also of clearing off the branches, and burning the branches while they were still wet. The latter work was largely handled by the women. The hardest labor was the stabilizing. This means, that after the trees were taken out onto a storage area, and cut into blocks, they had to be stacked 5-6 high. In some of the places, this was accomplished with the help of horses, but in the majority of cases the work was done by people, and also the lowering of the blocks into the water after the winter.

Where Did They Live?

As previously stated, the exiles, as they [were quartered in] what was called in Russian in '*posiolkas.*' These were barracks found deep in the forest. Many of them were there yet from Czarist times, but the larger portion were from the modern period. There were a variety of such barracks, some large, some small. This means barracks of between 10 and 20 rooms, and part of them smaller, from 4-6 rooms. And in many barracks they threw together up to two families in a room, and in some locations where there was not such a shortage, each family had its own room. It was only thanks to the fact that each *posiolok* had a bath, was it possible to make it through.

What Did They Live From?

As previously said, everyone was required to go to work. Anyone who did not go was open to a charge of dereliction that carried with it a jail term of 3 months. But apart from that, it was mandatory to go to work, because if not, you could not receive any bread, and those who did go to work, received bread. Every worker received between 1 and 1.20 kg, but note everyone equally. Children, and those who were not capable of work received 400 grams. In addition to this, each worker received a portion (*lapasz*) of noodles with water, or kasha, in the morning and evening, and also at noon at work in the forest. This was received from the kitchen. There were some places where this was distributed as a dry product, to be cooked by the recipient. From time-to-time, one would receive a packet of sugar, oil, butter, sweets, but this by itself could not satisfy hunger. This was especially true of those would did not work, and who received almost nothing beside their bread ration. This was apart from whatever could be grabbed in the region, or in the occurrence that it would be possible to additionally purchase from the local residence some potatoes, milk, butter, and occasionally a bird, In the previously mention barracks, 152, from time to time, they would even be able to slaughter a cow, which was slaughtered by R' Yaakov *Shokhet* ע"ה.

But all this was the case until the war with the Germans broke out. When the war with the Germans broke out, the first thing that happened was the cutting of the bread ration. Workers received no more than 500 grams of bread, and children and people in general, only 150 grams. And the cooked foodstuff was barely distributed once [daily] and also not regularly. There was no speaking of other things. The more the Germans penetrated into Russian territory, in hindsight, the situation worsened. We literally starved. The only thing that provided some sustenance were the red berries, and mushrooms, that grew in the forests. But in this frightful and difficult condition, a ray [of hope] showed itself for the Polish refugees.

Amnesty for Polish Citizens

At the beginning of Elul, all the Polish refugees were called together, and advised that in accordance with the agreement with Premier Sikorski, all former Polish citizens are free, and can travel freely to any Russian cities that they desire. You can imagine the happiness that reigned. True, nothing changed with regard to the issues of survival, but it lifted the spirits of the people, and accordingly, the work was no longer seen to be so severe. And it was permissible to gather together. It was possible to arrange for prayer services for the Days of Awe without encumbrance. But here a question posed itself: To where does one travel? To travel to European Russia was out of the question, because the Germans were already at the gates of Moscow. The possibility remained to stay where we were, that is to say, Siberia, but to travel out of the Taigas, and to get into the nearest cities, or to travel to Central Asia in Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and that vicinity. The ones who decided to remain in place did the best, for a variety of reasons, which I will describe later on.

However, many decided to travel to Central Asia, principally those who lived in the Troitsky Region, including the writer of these lines. Apart from the fact that the climate was warmer there – despite the fact that in the warm lands people suffered frm the cold in those months that were cold even more than in Siberia, because in Siberia we never lacked for wood – because many thought that frm Central Asia, it would be possible to travel with the Polish Army past the Russian borders. Regrettably, those people that came there, suffered frightfully.

The Wandering Through Central Asia

As previously mentioned, all those from Tomaszow who lived in the Troitsky Region decided to travel to Samarkand. However, at that time, this was not among the easiest things to do. It was wartime, and refugees from European Russia fled to Asiatic Russia by the tens of thousands, and all the trains and train stations were full of the military and refugees. And the distance to travel from Altaiski Krai to Samarkand was a distance in excess of 3,000 km. So it was necessary to hire wagons. the writer of these lines, and one other person traveled to Novosibirsk, and from there to Barnaul, and after a great effort – and it is necessary that at that time we were big shots, and were looked at differently that before – were found it possible to rent two wagons for the baggage, and the people had to travel by passenger train.

To describe the entire voyage until these 70-80 families arrived there in Samarkand, would take too much paper. Suffice it to say, that the ride from Biysk to Samarkand, that normally has to take at most 5 days by passenger train, took more than two weeks. But the important thing, is that when the Jews arrived in Samarkand, a darkness descended over their eyes. People in thousands, lay in the streets, refugees having fled there from all over Russia, and liberated Polish refugees. And it was here that the first victims began to fall, because we lay in the streets and it was starting to get cold. But more importantly, the frightening typhus epidemic began to seize control. Many were taken and sent off to collective farms. Also, the writer of these lines with several other families were sent out of Samarkand and after several more weeks of traveling around, with an echelon, we came to a collective farm in Kirghizia, in the Osh Oblast. But the largest part stayed in Samarkand, however, the epidemic tragically took may tens of victims from among the Tomaszow exiles.

I wish to return to the Tomaszow residents that were in the other regions of Altaiski Krai, those from the previously mentioned Sarakinsky Region. They did not move from the place, but rather integrated themselves into the life of small towns such as Salair, Gur'jevsk, but regrettably, suffered greatly their during the initial period. It was there that the Rabbi of Cieszanow and his son R' Meir ל"ז died immediately. Later on, others frm barracks 152 also traveled to Central Asia. Part went to Uzbekistan, in the Fergana Region, and a second group to Kazakhstan. But those who did best of all were the ones who went to Biysk. That was the place with the largest number of people from Tomaszow. Also, people from other vicinities came there, and it is possible to aver that the plight of those from Tomaszow in Biysk was the best of all. Also, certain families went to Barnaul. Larger groups of people from Tomaszow were in Djamboul, in Tashkent in Leninabad. But there certainly was not a single larger location in Central Asia and Siberia, where people from Tomaszow could not be found.

The Situation After Liberation

In the first months of the liberation, it was very frightening for many, and many did indeed die, mostly from disease and many from hunger. Later on, people began to get used to their new life a little at a time. Many wandered from one place to another, where circumstances were better. Those that fell into a collective farm

tried with all of their might to get themselves to a city, because in the city it was possible to earn a living, and apart from the work, principally, it was possible to buy foodstuffs.

From a political point of view, the Polish citizens from August 1941 to February 1943, felt themselves to be free citizens. In almost every location where there were Polish citizens, there was a Polish delegation, where many received support. Polish schools were opened. A change came at the beginning of 1943, when the Soviet authorities broke their relationship with the London-based Polish Emigré regime, the so-called Sikorski regime. At that time, the passport ruling started up again, but this time not the way it was in the Western Ukraine, were we were not forced. This time, it was a case of 'putting pressure on, until you said yes.' This means simply, that no one had a choice in the matter, but had to accept a Russian passport and become a Russian citizen. A small number managed to avoid doing this, and received the so-called non-citizen's passport, that is to say, an international passport. At that time they began to implement military conscription, but here the situation was not the same in all places. In the largest measure, people were mobilized into the Polish Army, which was created by Wanda Wasielewska. In certain locations – in the Russian Army, but in large part, the Polish citizenry did not want to trust going into the military, but chose rather to be mobilized into the labor force, meaning factories and munitions plants. However, not paying mind to this, the Poles felt like Polish citizens, and hoped that with the end of the war, that they will be liberated. The Soviet authorities saw this the same way, because they permitted the formation of Polish commissions under the direction of Wanda Wasielewski in all locations, the so-called Z. P. P. – *Zwiazek Patriotow Polskich*. The commissions has the objective of carrying out a propaganda campaign for a people's democratic order, and at the same time ran a social help activity for Polish citizens. The largest part of these commissions consisted of Jews, because there were no [gentile] Poles there. and were there were gentiles, they worked in partnership, because at that time in Russia there could not be any talk of '*kroma yevreiev*.' And in this way, the Polish Jews acclimatized themselves to the Russian Soviet way of life. The largest portion went to work. Here the work was not so heavy as in Siberia. Many took to skilled labor. The intelligent segment went to work in offices. The worst were those who remained in the collective farms or factories.

The First News of the Holocaust

The hopes to be liberated emerged in the beginning of 1944, when the Germans ימ"ש began to suffer one defeat after another in Russia. We hoped and felt that the liberation was drawing near. However, from the other side, the closer the Russians drew to Poland, the more we became aware of the destruction wrought by the Germans. We became aware that we no longer had any homes. We heard this already by the end of 1943, but we did not want to believe that this had happened. And here, letters began to arrive from people, and also people who were returning from the front, and conveyed everything exactly, such that the human imagination could never conceive that something of this nature could happen. There were isolated individuals, especially those who declined to travel home, as they said, they have nobody to whom to return, and do not want to see the destruction. However, the majority gradually inured themselves to the troubles, and only hoped that Poland will be liberated from Nazi hands, and will have the possibility to return to their ancestral homes. The first hope actually was realized, and realized quickly. In 1944 and the beginning of 1945, Poland was liberated from the Nazi beasts by the Soviet Army, but the second hope weighed continuously heavier on the heart. The first problem was that we were now *de facto* Soviet citizens, and the situation regarding the ability for a Soviet citizen to travel out of the country is well known, being just like in ancient Egypt. Secondly, as mentioned above, the news that we received was that there was no question of traveling back to our ancestral homes, with the exception of a few cities. Despite this, help did arrive, precisely when the tragic news arrived on a Saturday, similarly, on a specific Saturday in 1945, after the

capitulation of Germany, the radio in Russia described that Modziewski, the Polish foreign minister was in Moscow and concluded an agreement that all former Polish citizens, including Jews, from all areas that Poland consisted of until 1939, have the right to once again adopt their former Polish citizenship can are permitted to travel home to Poland. But this didn't happen so quickly. In the meantime, the populace got used to the Russian way of life, and also, after the German capitulation, life became a little easier, from the standpoint of way of living. Many participated in providing the social help of the previously mentioned Z. P. P. commissions. A large number of Jews received help through packages requested from the Land of Israel by way of the *Landsmanschaft* organizations. however, the principal help came from the valuable packages that the Polish Jews received from 'the Joint' and the '*Va'ad Hatzalah*' in America. This came through Teheran. The question of survival was eased considerably, in comparison to what was the situation in 1942-43. Those years can be called the years of hunger, especially for those who lived on collective farms.

Finally, several months after the agreement was concluded between the Polish regime and the Soviets, regional commissions began to travel around in all locations where there were Polish citizens. And were they not? There practically was no location where you could not find a Polish Jew. And the same could be said for the Tomaszow Jews. They were located in every place in Russia. In European Russia, the Caucasus, Siberia, West and East, Central Asia, and all five republics. But the largest Tomaszow community was in Biysk where indeed, things were the best for them, such that they drew other people from Tomaszow there continuously from other places where they might have been found.

Traveling Back to Poland

Let us return to the commissions. The commissions arrived and carried out the return of citizenship to all the Polish citizens that requested it. We have to emphasize that almost 99% took this option, to the exclusion of one percent, as previously mentioned. Among those from Tomaszow, I am aware of only one person who was in Tokamak in our *oblast*. However, when we would be released and be able tot ravel home, we still did not know. Meanwhile winter approached, and finally, in the beginning of 1946, we became aware that in February, the first of the echelons of Polish citizens were beginning to move. The process was as follows: a couple of weeks before the liberation in each location, a further regional commission arrived, and everyone was given a tag. On one side, it was in Russian, and on the other side, Polish. The exact day was not known. People made predictions, but not much more. In the location where the writer of these lines was, it was said on *Shabbat HaGadol* that the echelon was coming on Saturday night, and that we would have to travel on the eve of Passover, which fell on Monday night. So it was, that in the course of several hours, we had to pack up our bit of modest belongings, that each of us had. However, it is necessary to emphasize that this was planned. It was precisely calculated when each echelon has to depart, and on what line it has to travel.

The return trip took about five months, from February to June. It went through four border points: Bialystok-Brisk, Kovel'-Chelm, and Lemberg-Przemysl. One or two echelons passed through Belzec. So it was after six years in exile, that the Tomaszow exiles returned to Poland, but tragically, not to Tomaszow. Because there, in the initial period, no Jew could even spends the night. That was only possible in the new territories that Poland had taken from the Germans, and a part of the group went to Lower Silesia, to places such as Wroclaw, and Richbach, and the second part went to Szczeczin. A small number of families took up residence in Lodz, or Cracow, but this was not for very long, because the largest part immediately left Poland to the [D. P.] camps in Germany. Those that remained, almost all left Poland after the establishment of the State of Israel. to the extent that I am aware, about 2 or 3 Tomaszow [Jews] remained in Poland.

When we conclude the chapter of the exile of Tomaszow in Russia, we see that a large part of the Tomaszow Jewish populace were actually rescued. True, a large part died in Russia. The larger part of those who took passports and remained in Galicia, those who voluntarily went withe the first echelons and settled in European Russia, all of these were killed by the Germans when they occupied the territory in 1941-42. Apart from very few families, who were under the Rumanian occupation in the so-called Trans-Dniester. A large part died in Russia from hunger and disease, especially the older people. However, most were saved. The largest part of these are to be found in the ancient homeland in Israel. Others emigrated to North America, with the help of 'the Joint,' and a part of them are to be found in Latin America.

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At the Site of the Destruction

By Dov ben David Schwindler

To the Memory of My Mother
My Brothers, & Sisters, ל"נ

During all of the days of the Second World War, I practically did not stop in trying to find ways of discovering the fate of my family members that had remained behind in Tomaszow, our city, under the hegemony of the murderers. Especially after I had been drafted into the British Army, at the beginning of 1943, I wrote to the International Red Cross, the Polish Consulate in London, and The Jewish Congress in the United States. But in every instance, I received only one answer: we are sorry, but we are unable to be of assistance.

When the war ended in 1945, and the entire world became aware of what the murderers had perpetrated against Polish Jewry, a hope continued to flicker in my heart that perhaps, in spite of all this, someone might be left from my family, and with a resolute decision to reach the place in which I had left my family in 1940, I began to plan my trip to Poland. And this was not among the easiest things to do. Transportation did not exist, and the roads were all damage. At that time, I was in the city of Venice in Italy, and a group of five of us people organized themselves, among us an officer of the rank of Captain. We presented ourselves to the command, and told the entire truth, requesting a leave of fourteen days to Milan, an auto with gasoline, and a few days worth of food. We received all of this, but instead of traveling to Milan, we rode to Austria, reaching Vienna. With the effort of our officer (he had a friend in the offices of the Four Powers), we received the proper documents with signatures to be able to pass. On the basis of this, we received permission from the Russians to enter Poland, and after two days, we reached the border city of Szczeczin. We were there for barely an hour, and we continued on to Cracow. At that location, we received permission from the local army command that was everywhere in the country, to remain for two weeks. Here, the group broke up. and I continued on to Lodz. Here, I was received with much respect. I was one of the few residents of the Land of Israel that got this far after the Holocaust. I did not want to tarry, and on the following day, I continued on to Warsaw. I did not recognize the Warsaw of the pre-war years, and now walked over wreckage. In the community building of the Praga there was a list of all Jews that remained alive after the Holocaust, including among them those who had returned from Russia. I pored over these lists for hours upon hours, but found no trace of my family. Despite this, I continued on to Lublin. This was in November 1945, and the cold was unbearable. There were very few trains, and thousands of people waiting for the train that was only capable of carrying several hundred. When the one train a day arrived, cries went up to the heart

of heaven. People fought with one another, and getting on board was worth your life. Thanks to my insignia as a British officer, that I was wearing, I was able to get on board without difficulty and I reached Lublin. My first trip was to the local Jewish community. Among the list of those who survived, I discovered some of the members of our people, including the solitary ones who were survivors from Tomaszow, who were saved by hiding in the surrounding forests. I could not get anything from them concerning the fate of my family, but one told me that not one of them remained. They attempted to persuade me not to travel to Tomaszow, because it was fraught with life-threatening danger. The members of the A. K. took people off the vehicles, and anyone who looked to them like a Jew. they wanted to deter me from going, but I could not pass up this opportunity. I decided, despite all of this, to go to the city.

There were no buses, so I traveled on a freight truck. After six hours of travel, I reached the place where I was born and raised, and lived for twenty years. My heart pounded furiously, and I confronted the reality. My first trip was to the house of a lieutenant in the Polish Army before the war, Gozowski. I ran the entire length of the Krasnobrod *Gasse,* where my parents lived from the beginning of 1940, to Domludowy *Gasse.* I found the house shut, and so went down into the yard. There, I tripped over the implements of the soap manufacturing that belonged to my father. Apparently, I fainted, because when I came to, I saw that I was lying on the snow that was on the ground, and a young girl was standing over me, asking me what I was doing here. I answered by saying that I was looking for the Gozowski family. she gave me the address of a store on the Lwowska *Gasse,* and there I found Mrs. Gozowski. She immediately recognized me, turned pale, and told me everything. My father and Mordechai ל"ז were taken out on Yom Kippur of 5704 [1944], in the middle of worship services in one of the houses, and shot them to death in the Burcki Forest. My mother and my little brothers ל"ז were sent, at the end of 1944 to a place from which they did not return. My sister, Shoshana ל"ז was shot at the hands of a Pole from Tomaszow, the minute she stepped out of Chernofitz's house, where she had hidden herself during the course of two years.

Everything was clear. For a minute, I wanted to go to the place where my house had stood. It was difficult to find the location, since the entire area had been plowed under. the local residents had torn down all of the houses in the vicinity, and cleaned off the space. After some searching, I found the garbage pit, that once was the center of our yard, and that is how I identified the place.

I stood on the wreckage, the remnant of my well-branched family, and tears ran from my eyes. Here the illusions ended, and in this place, my last hope came to an end.

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In Tomaszow, After the Holocaust

By Moshe Taubenblatt

Page 791: *Assembled bones in Belzec, immediately after the liberation, which are being brought for a proper Jewish burial.*

First from the right: Meir Strasberg; Third: The Bokser

I do not believe that, with my writing, I am going to reveal anything new, about the murder and killing of the German cannibals, in partnership with the Polish Amalekites, who in concert and cold blood, in a calculated fashion, cruelly and brutally exterminated our nearest and dearest by subjecting them the most heinous deaths, that the Devil himself had not yet devised. They were such gruesome tortures and deaths that the greatest despot and tyrant would not have conceived. Rather, I wish to deal with my recollections and feelings about what I lived through, when I visited Tomaszow when it already was '*Judenrein.*'

I was in my birthplace of Tomaszow in the year 1948. It is impossible for me to convey my feelings and thoughts in writing, when you arrive in a city where you were born and raised, lived and were active, took part in, and participated in its growth and development. In a city that was shot through with the roots of Jewish people and Yiddishkeit, a city for which the Jews invested their minds and muscle, and a city which a proud Jewish life sprouted with both hardship and joy. Every pebble was familiar and every blade of grass dear – and even lived in good relationship with the non-Jewish neighbors – and here, a few years later, you do not encounter so much as a trace of a Jew. Everything has been wrecked and destroyed, torn out by the root, there are no Jews. There are no houses of study, and you see with your own eyes, how the murderers, whose hands are still smeared in blood, have occupied your [former] homes. They have adorned themselves with our valuables, and every glance from the Gentile skewers you, as if to say, what are you doing here? A wind of hate and enmity blows, and not just one person says to you with disappointment that the war ended too soon, the accursèd and disgusting Jews are still alive! It was precisely in such sorrowful moment that the entire chasm of Jewish tribulation opened for me, and the torture and pain of the annihilation of the six million Jews sat on my heart. Now, I first felt our huge calamity and tragedy with its full keenness. The sorrow pressed down on my soul. I felt like I had to cry, but for whom? In the presence of our bitter enemies who seethed with satisfaction when they saw how our brothers and sisters were being led to the slaughter, in front of those who took part in searching for and revealing the bunkers of the hidden Jews, and tracked them for the purpose of turning them over into the hands of the executioners/ In front of those 'good gentiles,' who sold a Jewish life for two pounds of sugar – no, I will not give them the satisfaction of such a display – I will not cry!....

I went to my house, in my nest where I raised my family. There, I encountered Poles (for whom I had done favors). And their faces reddened from murderousness with the question, Moshka! What are you doing here? Flee while you are still alive, because your life is at risk every minute. I thought, surely their mothers raised them on befouled blood, to have instilled in them such wicked instincts, to have so soiled the creation that calls itself 'human.'

On the second day, I traveled and entered Belzec, our train station, that for us served as the gate to the wider world, and tragically, during the time of the war became transformed into the gate of Hell – Hell is perhaps too mild a metaphor, because even Dante's Inferno does not describe such gruesome scenes, as were perpetrated on the Jewish people, by the Germans and their Polish collaborators in Belzec. I visited the concentration camp, these are ordinary barracks that are found several kilometers from the train station. A small track connects the station to the camp. The barracks stand deep in the forest. All the Galician Jews from Cracow, Lemberg, Stanislaw, Tarnopol, and also our Tomaszow Jews, all, pitiably, were annihilated in Sanctification of The Name, in the Hell of Belzec. As the gentiles related to me, all the Jews were immediately taken to the barracks after their arrival. The barracks were woven through with electric wire, and when they were all inside, the doors were hermetically sealed, and the electric current was turned on, such that in several second, they all died of electric shock. Later, they were put into pits, one level of dead, followed by one level of wood, and benzine was poured on top of it, and the corpses were cremated. The fire

burned day and night, and the fire could be seen tens of kilometers away. A local gentile told me that in their village, which was ten kilometers from Belzec, the fire from Belzec could be seen every night. The stench of the burned corpses could be sensed in all the surrounding little towns and villages. Years went by like this, and in this fashion, our brethren, the Children of Israel, were exterminated. This is what I was told by the local gentiles who lived in the nearby villages.

And when the Germans suffered their ultimate defeat, and retreated, the Poles descended on the graves, to extract teeth, and to search for possibly hidden diamonds. The commandant showed me that all these things had been documented. I encountered mass graves from which human appendages protruded. I tried to intervene, but without success.

On the following day, after my visit to Belzec, I went to the Jewish cemetery, but a darkness descended over my eyes. They did not even spare the cemetery. The headstones had been ripped up, and used them to pave the streets, or put them under the thresholds of their houses. The graves were trod upon and defiled, with horses and cattle grazing the entire field. No trace remained of the Rabbinical tents. Here and there, a headstone still sticks out, overgrown with grass. But the Poles tear them out for their own purposes of construction or paving. In my full view, a gentile rode up, with two gentile hooligans, and tore out several headstones and carted them off. I was afraid to protest, because it would have been a risk to my life. I gently made him aware that this was a cemetery, and that one should not do this, but he continued to do his chore. And it was in this way, that the cemetery was desecrated in my presence. I was at the municipal building, and registered a strong protest against this, but the Russian authorities who were in control, were cut from the same cloth, and did nothing. With cunning and cynicism, they said to me, that it would be best for me first to leave the city, because they cannot be responsible for my life. It incited the local gentiles, who are still infected with Nazism, to see that a Jew is walking about for three days already, which they refer to as an example of Jewish chutzpah.

At night, I lay in bed, and I could not sleep for fear of the Polish murderers on the one hand, and from the severe tortured experiences concerning the destruction of my city and people. Nightmarish thoughts hounded me, my blood seethed, and demanded vengeance. My heart became clenched inside of me. Lat at night, I dozed off, and an image arose in my mind that I find myself in the synagogue, which is overfilled with worshipers, all wearing a *kittl* and covered in their prayer shawls. Only their faces are uncovered, and shine like the sun. I see relatives and acquaintances, but it is difficult to recognize them. They are illuminated like crystal, appearing beautiful and majestic, with an aristocratic bearing. Then, it seems to me that the Rabbi ז"ל ascends the podium, but he is much taller than he was in real life. He says, '*Rabbotai*,' today, here, we have one of our brethren who is alive, let us all bless him, and I hear a shout of the Priestly Benediction, '*Yevarekhekha*'... I felt stronger and more confident. then the head of the congregation says, R' Moshe, we know and feel what it is that is reflected in your heart. You are planning and want to take revenge. Your blood is boiling and seething within you, demanding vengeance, and with justification, you wish a restitution for that which they did. But in the world below, there is no punishment that can be appropriate for the wickedness of the gentiles. the worst of all death is weak, pale and anemic to be accorded the term 'vengeance.' You must leave vengeance to The Lord, who can do all things, and he will already see to an appropriate punishment. The day when the fire will burn as if in an oven, will arrive. Time may pass, but the Lord, Blessed be, is very patient and stands above the fray. They will now drink from the cup of hemlock in perpetuity, and God's curse will follow them forever. And there are many ways to the oversight. But the one act of revenge that you can – and must – take from the gentiles, is that the ones who have remained alive, the one from a city, the two from a family, have to, once again, spin that golden chain and continue Judaism. Continue the life that the martyrs led, and continue to be the Holy People, and the Nation of Priests. for you,

with your own eyes, have seen how deep and low the gentiles have sunken. How morally fallen they are, how thievishly cunning they are, and how the animal instinct roils within them. How horrifying and unclean they were in their relationship to their millennial neighbors. Shout out loudly, and plant the awareness in the hearts of your children: *He Separated Us from those who Stray!!* See to the Jewish culture, in which all of you took pride, and it was for it that you knelt and bowed, and nurtured. Learn something from these events, and once again, tell the Lord, who created us in his honor, and separated us from those who stray, and who gave us His True Law, – and indeed, endure forever, and for that reason, He planted the life of the world in our midst, and the People of Israel live. Live, and continue to live despite the anger and ire of all those who hate Israel in all generations.

It was with this sweet dream that I then went on my way – and with that thought I resumed my life's journey.



Tomaszow [Jews] After the Holocaust

By Leah Moskop-Friedlander

Page 792: *Leah Moskop-Friedlander*

Page 794: *A Memorial Gathering of all the Tomaszow [Jews] in Germany after the war.*

When we conclude the chapter about Tomaszow in the history of Jewish life in Poland, we, naturally, cannot leave out those who remained from this sacred community, after the Holocaust.

We will divide this group of survivors into two parts. The first part will be about those who left Tomaszow before the Holocaust, this means, those who emigrated from there to a variety of countries over the entire globe. and the second – what emerged from the fire of Hitler, a few limbs sawed off, or remnants of entire families.

Understandably, a fundamental research about these survivors would be very necessary, but regrettably, we will try to outline what it is that we know.

Just as was the case in other cities in Poland, during the last quarter of the previous [sic: 19th] century, people began to emigrate from Tomaszow. The stream went to the United States of America, after that, to Canada, and the South American countries, mostly to Argentina. It is interesting that in Johannesburg, South Africa, there is at least one family from Tomaszow, from the 'Mincers,' from the beginning of the current [sic: 20th] century. A few years ago, the Tomaszow Jew, Yehuda Mincer, R' Shmuel Mincer's son, was, for a time, the burgomaster of Johannesburg. Today, the family has substantially expanded there. In the period between the two world wars, the gates to America were virtually sealed shut, and as a result, the immigration spread to all c0ountries where there simply were possibility for this. The place that absorbed the greatest immigration at that time was the Land of Israel (then still Palestine). The root of that immigration lay principally in the anti-Semitism and in the severe economic conditions. But there were also ancillary factors that had their impact on this. The immigration to Palestine came as a result of the awakened national identity among, large segments who were inspired by the Zionist ideal to build a stable home for themselves there.

Here, in America, the Tomaszow Jews spread themselves over a variety of cities in the country, single families, and smaller groups. In contrast, the largest part of them settled in New York, and even organized themselves into a *Landsmanschaft* society, which was organically connected to the Jewish community in Tomaszow itself. This *Landsmanschaft* exists to this day, under the name '*Hevra B'nai Tomaszow.*' Its president is Joseph Lehrer, and the secretary – Mr. Shmuel Shiflinger.

The second part of those that remain. those who were uprooted from their homes, directly by the Hitler criminals, in the greater majority, spent the war years in Russia, from which they returned to Poland after the war. But they no longer had a [sic: welcome] entry into Tomaszow, because it was a mortal danger for a Jew to even spend the night there. The same was true in all the cities and towns, apart from the few points where the Jews concentrated themselves in larger numbers. These Tomaszow Jews were also drawn to these very centers, and their, they joined the great mass stream that led to the German borders, and Czechoslovakia. From there – in camps that had been prepared for them by the Allied authorities, on the territory of West Germany, Austria and Italy, they found temporary shelter, until they opened up possibilities for immigration.

The larger part of these, our wandering landsleit, found a stable home in the State of Israel, where they integrated themselves into the social and economic life they found there. There, they also were organized into a Tomaszow community, with a charitable treasury for the residents of the city. They show a deep understanding for the Memorial Book, in which they take an active part.

Here, in America, the uprooted Tomaszow Jews began to arrive in the years from 1947 on, first only individuals, later, in 1949-50, larger numbers.

The first attempt, by the Tomaszow survivors in New York, to organize themselves into a single body, did not work. The old society, that called itself '*Hevra B'nai Tomaszow,*' did not want to take them in as a group. It was only a number of years later, that the society consented to take in a larger number of the newcomers as members, with specifically limited privileges. They did not want to admit any widows. No particularly close friendships developed between the old and the new members. There were always complaints of one against the other. And when individuals among the newcomers were suspended from membership for not paying their dues in a timely fashion, the idea that the newcomers would set up a society for just themselves took on more strength.

It happened this way:

In the Jewish press here, several times, letters appeared from the Tomaszow *Landsmanschaft* Committee in Israel, in which the latter complains that all of its approaches to the Tomaszow *Landsmanschaft* Society in New York, for assistance to the needy , are being ignored. At the same time, the good-natured lady, Ethel Zilbiger (Szpic) collected aid for the various impoverished *landsleit* in Israel, on her own initiative. The time had become ripe for an organized assistance initiative, and at one of the meetings of the Tomaszow Yizkor Book Committee, on October 27, 1956, a point was placed on the day's agenda also about an assistance initiative for our *landsleit* in Israel.

At that meeting, a permanent committee for assistance was created, which had to carry out a variety of assistance initiatives.

This committee carried out its mission completely. During this time, many times, Hanukkah and Purim celebrations were conducted. New Year balls, and also gatherings that were privately financed. All these funds that were gathered, were sent over to Israel to the local committee there, which then distributed the received funds to the most needy of the *landsleit.* On each occasion, the committee here, received an accounting with a list, as to how, and to whom, the money was distributed.

After a number of the newcomers were excluded from the membership in the old society, as previously mentioned, it was decided that the assistance committee would be transformed into a regular *Landsmanschaft* organization. A land parcel was purchased for a cemetery in New Jersey, and most of the newcomers left the '*Hevra B'nai Tomaszow,*' and joined the *'Tomashover Hilfs Commitet.'*

During the time that the assistance committee was in existence, about five thousand dollars ($5,000.00) was sent over for the needy in Israel and several hundreds for the charity treasury.

Finally, the *Tomashover Hilfs Commitet* donated to '*Ilenshil-Polio*' this was a polio foundation in Tel-Aviv, and auto with twelve special wheelchairs for crippled children. The unfortunate children were then able to be comfortably taken every day from their homes to school and back, with the help of this vehicle.

In this activity, Mrs. Anna Lehrman distinguished herself with her initiative and intensiveness.

The *Tomashover Hilfs Commitet* plays a very visible role among the *landsleit* in a social sense. Once a year, the members gather for purposes of electing the officials for the coming year. From time to time, in conjunction with the Yizkor Book Committee, it arranges for a Memorial Ceremony for the Tomaszow martyrs, and helps to maintain friendly relations among the members, who met more frequently on happy occasions or other opportunities.

The leadership of the *Tomashover Hilfs Commitet* consists of: Shimshon Holtz, Eli' Lehrer, Shammai Drillman, Joseph Moskop, the brothers, David Joseph and Hirsch Levenfus, Mott'l Helfman, Jonah Feldsehn, Leibusz Schechter, Mrs. Pearl Gelernter and Shlomo Weissleder.

The following ladies take an active part in all of these initiatives: Dvora Weissleder, Esther Feldsehn, Feiga Lehrer, Chaya Helfman and Mir'l Geyer.

In general, the natives of Tomaszow are not badly situated economically. They are represented in almost every branch of commerce, industry and labor, and feel in the freedom of America, a solid foundation under their feet.



The Tomashover Hilfs Commitet in New York

Portraits on Page 798 (Left to Right, Top to Bottom):

David Joseph Levenfus — Shimshon Holtz

Joseph Moskop — Eli' Lehrer

Mott'l Helfman — Leib'l Schechter

Portraits on Page 799 (Left to Right, Top to Bottom):

Hirsche' K. Levenfus — Shlomo Weissleder

Jonah Feldsehn

Pearl Gelernter — Shammai Drilman

Page 800: Shmuel Shiflinger, the President of the former Jewish Community leadership in Tomaszow

The Free Loan Society of the Tomaszow–Lubelski Émigrés

By Zusha Kawenczuk
Haifa

For the Sake of the Martyrs of our City ה"ד

On August 5, 1944, the first assembly of the *olim* from Tomaszow-Lubelski took place in the home of Meir Rind ז"ל. Thirty five people participated, at which time the sum of forty lira were gathered on request, as well as pledges for monthly dues. The following were selected to lead: Zusha Kawenczuk, Abraham Pearl, Yaakov Herbstman, Yitzhak Lederkremmer, Mordechai Zilberman, Benjamin Glatter, and from the villages: Israel Greenbaum, Moshe Eilbaum, Joseph Lancer ז"ל, Yitzhak Zilberstein. The first committee allocated positions as follows: Chair – Zusha Kawenczuk, Treasurer – Abraham Pearl, Secretary – Yaakov Herbstman.

The committee decided to get in contact as soon as possible with those comrades who did not appear at the meeting, and to get their commitment. The committee requested from its members to immediately supply addresses of their relatives, and people whom they knew from Tomaszow-Lubelski that were to be found in Russia... to the address: The Committee for the Assistance of Polish Jews, 26 Herzl Street, Haifa, The purpose was to organize the émigrés from Tomaszow-Lubelski for purposes of centralizing their addresses in order to facilitate the sending of packages to Russia. As a result of this, 120 packages were sent to Russia with clothing, and also matzos for Passover, in accordance with the address in the possession of the committee.

In the gathering and memorial service of the year 5722 [1962] seventeen of the members were selected as follows: Zusha Kawenczuk, Joseph HaLevi (Lakher), Moshe Gordon, Chaim Joseph Lehrer, Moshe Blonder, Yaakov Herbstman, Mordechai Ehrlich, Yaakov Laneil, Yaakov Minkowsky, Abraham Goldschmid ז"ל, Mordechai Honigsfeld, Yaakov Aryeh Witz, Yaakov Schwartz, Ozer Stahl, Gershon Katz, Sarah Kuppersztuk (Barnstein), Isaac Kruss.

R' Abraham Goldschmid ז"ל

Our comrade, Abraham Goldschmid ז"ל was plucked from the leadership of the committee in his prime, and we do not have his liking. He was beloved by all of us, and it was a delight to speak with him. He always had a happy face, and at no time did he ever exhibit anger. He was born in Zamość, and he father was a Rabbi there. He married the daughter of David Aharon Eisen k"z in Tomaszow. In the year 5710 [1950] he came to the Land of Israel, joined the Organization of Tomaszow–Lubelski Émigrés, and joined the committee that dedicated itself to the Yizkor Book of the Tomaszow–Lubelski Émigrés that were killed in the Holocaust and that died in Russia. He was an accomplished scribe, who penned all of the names [of the martyrs] in the Yizkor Book in the calligraphy of a Torah Scribe, without pay, voluntarily, and with complete dedication. He was survived by two sons who were scholars, that follow in his path. He passed away on 21 Tammuz 5723 [July 13, 1963]. The *Rebbe* of Gur שליט"א participated in his funeral.

We mourn his loss, and may his memory be for a blessing.

Page 802: *Committee Members (Left to Right, Top to Bottom):*

Mordechai Honigsfeld Moshe Gordon Joseph HaLevi Lakher Yaakov Herbstman Yaakov Schwartz

Mordechai Ehrlich Ozer Stahl Ary' Witz Isaac Kruss

Page 803: *Committee Members (Left to Right, Top to Bottom):*

Moshe Blonder Zusha Kawenczuk Rabbi Abraham Goldschmid ע"ה Dvora Weissleder

Yaakov Minkowsky Chaim Joseph Lehrer Yaakov Laneil Gitt'l Weinberg

The Yizkor Book Commission in Israel

By Yaakov Herbstman

It was clear, from the beginning of the activity of the Tomaszow Committee in Israel, that its central goal had to be the publication of a *Yizkor Book* to the memory of the destroyed city. This book will be the monument that will preserve its memory, and through which our children will be able to acquaint themselves with the times of their forbears, the atmosphere where their forbears were born, raised, and lived, one generation after another.

At this meeting of the committee, which took place on January 9, 1951, a *Yizkor Book* Commission was elected consisting of the following people: Joseph HaLevi (Lakher), Yaakov Minkowsky, Yaakov Itcheh Schwartz, and Yaakov Herbstman.

The Commission produced a circular in Hebrew and Yiddish (attached below) in which the importance of such a book was clarified, and leaders were designated for the chapters of the desired material. We requested that every theme about Tomaszow be documented, and in whatever language was convenient. We sent this circular all over the world, to wherever we had an address of someone frm Tomaszow.

It is worth emphasizing that the response was great. From Israel, Argentina, America, France, Poland, and other countries, we received an inspired assessment for the undertaking. At the same time, a wide variety of source materials were received for the book.

A characteristic incident from the response that the circular generated: from one of the 'People's Democratic' countries, we received worthwhile material from a resident of Tomaszow who signed himself as A. H., giving his address as a Post Office Box. My request to him to reveal his identity to me had no effect, until on an ordinary day, contact was broken off, and despite my efforts, I was not fortunate in being able to re-establish contact, and his identity has not been uncovered to this day.

The publication of a book, as is known, demands a great deal of activity, and commitment. We took special care to assure that the *Yizkor Book* should contain many written descriptions of Tomaszow, under the Hitler occupation, as told by living witnesses that lived through this frightful period.

The years of 1952-53 in Israel were years of 'austerity' constraints. It was hard to come by paper. Accordingly, we were pleased to accept the proposal of the American Committee, to transfer responsibility for publishing the book to them. We sent the gathered materials and pictures to America, and the Committee there, headed by Mr. Moskop stepped up to the task with enthusiasm.

At one of our meetings, when Mr. Gordon from America conveyed a report on the status to us, it appeared that the book would not express its purpose, if it is not complemented with material from the period of the extermination.

Because of this, I proposed at this meeting, to permit our member Yaakov Itcheh Schwartz, to take leave of his usual work for several weeks, and that he should travel to a number of smaller towns, and settlements, where the new *olim* from Tomaszow are concentrated, and to mine the material from them.

I proposed Mt. Y. Schwartz because I was aware of his commitment to creating the book, and knowing his 'weakness' for literature and writing, and in practice, we were certainly not disappointed. Our comrade Schwartz was successful in obtaining very worthwhile recounting and frightening eye-witness accounts of the first quality.

We followed the development of the book with concern and interest. We asked ourselves, whether we were so lacking in capacity, such that Tomaszow will not be privileged to have that which much smaller towns have been given? We raised this question at every memorial service that we held.

Now, finally, we have been privileged to publish this book, which should serve as a compensation to those who dedicated time and energy to it.

My profoundest wish, is that the book is effective in realizing its name. It should substantively memorialize the memory of our dear ones who were killed, and would that our children will be able to perceive from this book, the warmth, the beauty and the good, that was contained in our *shtetl:* Tomaszow-Lubelski.

Circular

Page 806: *Yiddish Version (translated below)*

Page 808: *Hebrew Version*

The Organization of Émigrés from Tomaszow-Lubelski
Israel Committee

Haifa, 2 Shevat 5711, January 9, 1951

Honored Folk,

In response to the decision of The Committee, and the resolution of the meeting of the Tomaszow *landsleit*, which took place in Haifa on December 17, 1950, we are approaching you to help us with realizing the publication of a [*Yizkor*] Book about Tomaszow.

The goal of this folio is to provide a permanent memorial to the memory of the martyrs of our city, in a suitable manner.

Since a consequence of The Calamity was that no Jewish community remains any longer in Tomaszow, the objective of the book is also to rescue the cultural and moral values from being forgotten, and the way of life that was created in the city by the Jews in the recent past, and in prior generations.

In order that the book reflect its important objective, we have to reach out to all those natives in our country and elsewhere, who are in a position to help out.

Accordingly, we are approaching you, to send to us – in the course of the coming 3-4 months – articles, experiences, poems, or any other kind of material, that you have in connection to these identified themes:

1. The History of Tomaszow, and the history of the Jews from there.

2. Monographs about the Rabbis and their 'Courts.'

3. The Synagogue, the *shtiblakh* and their *Gabbaim*

4. The Community and its Representatives. The Municipal Council and the Jewish Representatives

5. Charitable Institutions: the Free Loan Society, *Linat HaTzedek*, Provisioning Brides.

6. The 'Common People' and their way of life

7. As follows:

    a. Jewish Livelihoods, and the City Market Fair
    b. Sabbath and Festivals in the City

8. Yeshivas, *Heders*, Schools, Teachers and *Melamdim.*

9. The Founding of Zionist and Labor Parties, and the battle with the Opposition

10. Libraries, and Amateur Drama Circles

11. Parties, Youth Organizations, and their Leaders

12. Various Personalities

13. Relationship with the Gentiles

14. Jewish Life under the Nazi Occupation, the *aktionen*, life in Russia and in the camps.

We also desire pictures of the city, of the community institutions: the Synagogue, baths, inn, cemetery, etc. Pictures of community significance (at your request, we will return these pictures after we make a copy).

Writing can be done in any language. People who cannot write with style should not be intimidated. We will edit it, and provide style. The important thing is to get the content.

Every item will be credited to the name of the writer. We request that you write clearly (use of a typewriter is preferred) and on one side of a page.

Dear friends! The obligation that we have assumed is not a light one, and it is only with your help and the combined effort of all those from our town, that we will be able to make this a reality. Accordingly, we await your participation.

Because of the scarcity of addresses of all those who were residents, you are also requested to convey the content of this letter to others in your acquaintance, and friends from Tomaszow, who have otherwise not received it.

The address to which you should send this material is:

Yaakov Herbstman, 34 Hallel Street, Haifa

Respectfully yours,

Israel Committee

●●●

The Assistance Committee

By Yaakov Laneil
Haifa

Page 811: *(From the Right) Chaim Kraus. Ber'ish Hertzman, Moshe Blonder, Mordechai Ehrlich, Yaakov Herbstman (speaker), Brinker, Zusha Kawenczuk, Mordechai Honigsfeld (writing), Abraham'eleh Goldschmid ז"ע and his son.*

The Assistance Committee began its activity in 1956. I do not know exactly whose idea it was, but there is one thing that I do know: it came with the initiative of the Tomaszow Relief Committee in America.

In December 1956, funds arrived with an accompanying letter which nominated certain individual members as allocators of these funds, for needy, sick, elderly people, from our destroyed *shtetl.*

And it was, in this way, that in 1956, a new institution was established to offer complementary assistance along side of the Free Loan Society, that had existed for a long time already.

What moved our comrades in America to this specific initiative, to establish such an activity?

It was the tradition of complementary assistance activity, in all walks of life in the old *shtetl,* still pulses in the hearts of our comrades.

The activity in Israel was carried out in cooperation with the Tomaszow General Assistance Committee, and in accordance with the old tradition of 'Giving Charity in Secret.' The initiation of the activity was accompanied with doubt and opposition to the idea of distributing money as charity, which is unpopular in Israel.

However, in the course of carrying out the endeavor, when we dug into the various difficult social situations, all of us arrived at the conclusion of how far our American comrades had been right.

In the course of the years, thousands of dollars arrived, and were divided among the elderly, the ill, and helpless people which the *aliyah* had brought to the Land after the war. There were instances where these few dollars simply lit up the eyes of the unfortunate, and sustained the spirits of the disoriented.

We wish that even only part of the blessings be realized, that were showered by the beneficiaries of the help, on those who engaged in this activity.

May the hands of those who engage in this highly worthy activity be blessed.

The Tomaszow Free Loan Society in Israel

By Mordechai ben Ben-Zion Honigsfeld

Page 813: At a [seventh] Memorial Gathering: Jekuthiel Stempel reciting 'El Moleh.'

Immediately after the establishment of the State of Israel, the massive *aliyah* began of the survivors who remained literally as the 'smoking ember rescued from a fire,' who were left with no place for them under their feet. When the prophecy of our destruction and consolation came to pass – the [words of the] great Jeremiah who, with pathos, wrote: *'Once again I will build you up, and you will be rebuilt, my dear people Israel.*,' and when he added '*Help your people, the remnant of Israel, for lo, I bring you from the land of the north, and gather them from the corners of the world, including the blind, the lame, the heavy with child and the one giving birth, all together, in a great host, they will return here!'* Etc. And when the great host did return here, it did not return as the affluent child that returns after a long sojourn to its rich mother, but here it was precisely the opposite: the child was poor, and the mother stingy.

The host that returned here was broken and powerless, impoverished by the absence of everything! With frightened and bulging eyes. Such eyes can only be seen among people who have lost everything in life, their nearest and dearest, their entire worth and dignity. After such a cataclysm, and global upheaval that the Second World War left in its wake, and in which The Chosen People, The People of the Book suffered the most, the return to this place, indeed, took place in the manner expressed by the Prophet, when he said *'they will arrive crying,'* with the cry in their hearts and a heart rending loneliness for our nearest and dearest who were slain, that '*they will arrive crying*' then had a two-sided meaning. It was a cry of sorrow and anger, that our slain brothers and sisters did not live to see the Return to Zion, and as we see, they tragically paid for the establishment of the State of Israel with their sacred blood! As this remnant was able to return, from the second side, this was a cry of joy, that after two thousand years, the dream of the return of sons to their borders, had now come to pass! And as is self-evident, among this large host of people who were returning, a certain percentage of our Tomaszow brothers and sisters were among them, indeed, as the Prophet expressed it: Blind, lame, and half-people! Spiritually and physically broken. At that time, it was necessary to bolster these people both spiritually and in a material sense, to at least help that weak tree make its very first footprints! At that time, *landsleit* committees began to be formed in Israel, because: '*Among the impoverished, and the poor of your city, the poor of your city take precedence.'*

And as is self-explanatory, our Tomaszow *landsleit* were not self-supporting, and in the middle of the year 1949, the veterans and new *olim* came together at the home of our beloved Tomaszow *landsman* Rabbi Yoss'li Lakher, long life to him, at whose home we found a place to meet, and an open door for surcease, with all of the best for our mission, and this remains true to this day. Approximately the following Tomaszow *landsleit* came together at that time: Rabbi Zusha Kawenczuk, Yaakov Minkowsky, Yaakov Herbstman, Moshe Blonder, Chaim Joseph Lehrer, Yaakov Leib Witz, Ozer Stahl, Yaakov Laneil, Sarah Kuppersztuk (Borenstein) Yaakov Schwartz, Mott'l Ehrlich, Mott'l Zilberman, to be separated for long life, and Abraham'li Goldschmid ה"י and Shmuel Mermelstein ה"י, as well as myself, who is writing these lines. On the day's agenda was: help for our Tomaszow landsleit to new *olim*. At that time, the foundation was laid for the establishment of the Tomaszow Free Loan Society. Rabbi Zusha Kawenczuk was immediately selected as the Chairman of the Committee, Treasurer: Rabbi Joseph Lakher, and the secretariate of Mott'l Honigsfeld and Yaakov Herbstman.

To the extent that we each could, we contributed the first few pounds, and later on, we decided to have a Tomaszow gala event, that we would use to raise money for the Tomaszow Free Loan Society. It is worth remarking that, at that time, despite having approached our American *landsleit* for help, we did not receive that help very quickly. Accordingly, we then drummed up donations at every Tomaszow gala event such as: a wedding, *brit milah*, bar mitzvah, etc. And with these funds, we began to extend smaller denominated loans for constructive purposes, such as: housing, helping someone get started in his livelihood, arranging for an important piece of furniture in the home, etc. The Free Loan Society was always to be found in a difficult or critical situation. There were instances when the treasury did not have a cent, and people had to wait by the door until it became possible to allocate a small loan. There were also times when we simply gave people a pound to buy bread. And it was in this way that things continued until – a little at a time, our *landsleit* brethren in America caught on to the fact that they have to keep their *landsleit* in Israel in mind! And, a little at a time, money began to flow in from America. Also, later on with us, we carried out a larger fund-raising activity among those who had means here in Israel, and everyone contributed, each according to his ability to do so. In the process, the foundation was laid for our Tomaszow Free Loan Society in Israel. It is also worth mentioning, that every year on *Rosh Hodesh* Tevet, we arrange for the annual memorial service for our Tomaszow martyrs ה"ד, and whatever is raised at that memorial service is dedicated exclusively to the Free Loan Society.

At this opportunity, I wish to recall, and not omit, a very important detail about which our committee also took the initiative. Every year at the Yahrzeit of our unforgettable Rabbinical spiritual leader Rabbi Aryeh Leibusz Rubin, may his portion be in Eden, who was so beloved by us all in Tomaszow, we arrange a repast and celebration at the home of our own R' Yoss'li Lakher, in memory of his pure soul. May his memory be for a blessing.

And at the end, I want to wish all those who made some contribution to the Free Loan Society whether in America or in Israel, a very hearty *Yasher Kochackem*, with the wish that your hand be strengthened to continue further, and that this will remain as the most beautiful and dearest monument possible to our martyrs ה"ד.

Tomaszow People in B'nai Brak

By L. Wermuth

Page 816: *A 'Tisch' at the Yahrzeit in honor of the Rebbe of Cieszanow, The Righteous Rabbi R' Ary' Leibusz Rubin זצ"ל, the Rabbi of Tomaszow 26 Iyyar 5720 [1960] in B'nai Brak.*

As is known, *B'nai Brak* is counted as the principal Hasidic Torah center in Israel. Every branch of *Hasidism* or religious group has its corner. Regrettably, we from Tomaszow, who, thank God, have a larger visible presence, do not yet have our own *Bet HaMedrash.* However, we have organized a spiritual group that has the name of '*Group of the Followers and Students of the Righteous Rabbi R' Ary' Leibusz Rubin, of Blessed Memory, the Chief Rabbi from Cieszanow and of Tomaszow in Lublin.*' We gather together from time to time, and enjoy each other's company. We have also organized our own Free Loan Society, in the Rabbi's name. Regrettably, our financial means are not strong. We are hoping, that with the appropriate assistance of our *landsleit,* to broaden our activity.

The high point of our activity, is the annual gathering of all those from Tomaszow in honor of the Yahrzeit of our great and unforgettable and beloved leader and director, the Holy Rabbi from Cieszanow, our Rabbi the Gaon and Tzaddik, Rabbi Ary' Leibusz Rubin זצללהה"ת which falls on 26 Iyyar.

Year in, and year out, the people from Tomaszow in B'nai Brak, Tel-Aviv, Petakh Tikva, and vicinity, come together, as well as those followers of the Rabbi זי"ל and good friends from other cities, about two hundred people. We conduct a *siyyum,* and we wash up for a repast, refresh all of our memories, and relate stories about this impressive, elevated crystal personality of our *Rebbe* and Rabbi. [We tell of] his accomplishments and striving for Yiddishkeit, and especially about his commitment to young people, through implanting in them, his values of Hasidism and Fear of Heaven. We celebrate late into the night with song, praise, and Torah discussions. Every year, the get-together becomes larger and stronger, because in it, we feel a spiritual refreshment and an elevated nostalgia for our 'old home,' which was so dear and beloved to us. The principal committee consists of the following people: R' Sinai Greenbaum, R' Israel Wermuth, R' Abraham'li Gutwein, R' Yaakov Moshe Tepler, Yekhezkiel Heller, Ary' Wermuth, Yehoshua Niedergang, and Mendl Pflug.

The [Tomaszow] residents of Haifa would also come to our gathering every year, however, because of the large distance, they arrange for a separate celebration in Haifa, that is held at the home of R' Yoss'li Lakher. The committee consists of R' Abraham'li Goldschmid, R' Ben-Zion Schneider, and Ozer Stahl, and all of the Hasidic Tomaszow Jews in Haifa participate in this celebration. May his memory be blessed, and may the reward for his righteousness protect us.

Cornerstone Laying Ceremony for Talmud Torah Kol Ary'

In Kiryat Bobov in Israel in the Year 5724 [1964]

Page 817: *At the Occasion of the Cornerstone Laying of the Talmud Torah, "Kol Ary' " in the name of or Chief Rabbi from Cieszanow, The Righteous Rabbi Ary' Leibusz Rubin* זצ"ל

From Left to Right: The Chief Rabbi of Bobov, Rebbe Shlomo Halberstam שליט"א*, the founder of Kiryat Bobov, the son-in-law of the Righteous Rabbi from Cieszanow, Aharon Untzig, Moshe Eliach, Yekhezkiel Heller, Israel Wermuth, Yehoshua Heller, R' Elish Scharf, and others.*

Page 818: *The Cornerstone Laying (Continued)*

From the Right: Sinai Greenbaum, Yehoshua Heller, Moshe Blonder, the young man Ben-Zion Ary' Leibusz Halberstam son of the Rebbe of Bobov שליט"א*, The Bobov Rebbe, Aharon Untzig, Y. Heller, Mendl Pflug, and others.*

Memories of Tomaszow-Lubelski

By Shmuel Shiflinger
Former President of the Tomaszow Jewish Community

In the year 1906, as a student who was a political partisan, I was compelled to leave Lodz, together with thousands of others, because of a panic that was elicited by a well-known provocateur of that area, called 'Noah,' who cooperated with the Czarist police and precipitates a number of arrests. I took up residence in the far-flung city of Tomaszow-Lubelski, taking advantage of the fact that my grandfather, R' Israel Weinrib managed the Piaseczna water mill. Tomaszow then, made a very upsetting impression on me: unpaved streets, no electric lighting, sunken in darkness and mud, made up largely of old wooden houses covered in shingles, inhabited for the most part by an impoverished Jewish populace of small businessmen, manual workers, village itinerants and the unemployed. A small number of merchants, who provided for the Cossack Division that was stationed there, reckoned themselves as being wealthy.

It is worth to take note of the fact, that the Cossacks, though half savage, thanks to their own discipline, comported themselves in an orderly manner in the city. However, they manifested a weakness for pilfering. Because of this, Jews already knew that they had to be wary of them. Occasionally, one would purchase a stolen *mezuzah* from a Cossack, when he had nothing else to steal. It was told in this manner, that a Cossack one time to the premises of a Jew, a '*Khapina Rub*', a stolen Ruble, for 50 kopecks. That was the price of a theft. In the city, Jews would bend over in laughter at such pilfering bargains.

A Theater Presentation

Ignoring the oversight of the Czarist police authority, the young people began to get involved, a little bit at a time, in political and social ideas. under the influence of the neighboring city of Zamość. It was in this manner that organizations like the S.S. – Zionists, and the *Bund,* were created. Cultural life began to develop, with the arrival of the Zamość lawyer, Sobol, and the dentist, Yid'l Gerzon.[161] The youth would come together and keep company at their homes. Later on, Meir Baum, a carpenter from Chelm also came, who was a member of *Poalei Tzion*, who organized an amateur group who put on Goldfadn's play, '*Di Bubbe Yakhneh.*' Ignoring the stern looks of the rigorously observant, the play nevertheless attracted a large audience of observers. The children besieged the windows and the entrance to the theater, and the voices and laughter could be heard at quite a distance. Many months after the performance, in which Gerzon played the part of *Hotzmakh*, he was not to be envied. The kids would run after him in the streets yelling *Hotzmakh! Hotzmakh!* Look, there goes *Hotzmakh.*

It was more difficult for the Poles to get permission to put on a play in the Polish language. The policy of the Czarist authority was to make the population undergo Russification. It was also a requirement to teach Russian in the Jewish *Heders.*

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161 Both the Sobol and Gerzon families are well documented in the Zamość Memorial Book, though not necessarily these two individuals.

Dr. Zawadzki

The district physician, Dr. Feliks Zawadzki, his wife and only daughter, were the most liberal people in the city. It is worth making note of the fact, that for many years, the Doctor's wife, helped by her servant, on every Friday would carry and distribute packages with products to the poorest and the sick Jewish families in order that they have provisions for the Sabbath.

In 1910, Dr. Zawadzki organized a volunteer fire brigade in the city. Very few Jews responded to his appeal to join the brigade. Among those who joined voluntarily were: the writer of these lines, with his brother, Yaak'leh Rofeh, Chaim Mikhl Horn (a tailor), Menashe Kass (a porter) and Yoss'leh Lustig (a shoemaker). It is naturally a ver sad thing to say, that the religiously observant fathers of the Hasidic *shtiblakh*, did not permit their sons to put on a fire fighter's insignia, and take part in this important institution, which did wondrous work during conflagrations in the city, under dangerous conditions.

A Victim in Illegally Crossing the Border

Jews that wanted to emigrate, or who were politically suspect who wanted to save themselves from being sent off somewhere in Siberia, were given help in Tomaszow. The first of these groups were provided with '*polpaskehs*' (a document that gave permission to a resident at the border to cross that border) by some of the 'movers and shakers' using other names, or with a peasant who would smuggle them illegally across the border. The second of the groups, the political suspects, but with recommendations from the parties, were sent to us by several unreliable people, and they were turned over into more secure hands, to cross the border illegally.

On one day, the Jewish population was frightened by whining and confused screams from a strange Jewish woman, saying that her husband had been killed. Her husband, from Krasnystow, had come to Tomaszow ten days earlier, and was handed over to a peasant in the village of Jeziernia, who was supposed to smuggle him over the border illegally. It was agreed, that he would immediately write to his wife when he would successfully cross the border; but until now, his wife has had no news from her husband. Jews intervened with the police, but the latter simply did not want to undertake an investigation. They even did not arrest the peasant. Deeply moved by this misfortune, I negotiated with Dr. Zawadzki to permit a group of 15 firemen to assist me in looking for this vanished Jew. Thanks to Dr. Zawadzki's intervention, the authorities permitted us to mover about freely in the border area for a period of 24 hours. On the next day, I came with a division of 15 firemen, to the peasant in the border village of Jeziernia, on whom a suspicion had fallen that he wanted to murder and rob the Jew that he was supposed to illegally take over the border. Upon seeing us, the peasant fled and vanished. We searched the house and the granary and we notices flecks of blood on the door. We immediately found an axe with bloodstains on the handle. It was then that we put even more energy into our search and foraging around in the fields and woods, until towards evening, we encountered a soft mound of earth that appeared to be freshly dug. We quickly dug out the first layer of earth, and saw a hand sticking out. I immediately ordered that the digging be stopped, and to call the police. In their presence, we dug out the body, but without the decapitated head, which we could not find. The wife confirmed that this was her husband. With bitter tears, and fear, the Jews of the city stood by and looked along the length of the Lemberg Road, as we, the group of firemen, escorted the wagon with the covered deceased, which we turned over to the *Hevra Kadisha.*

The Common Folk Get A Place

By Y. Moskop

As it has already been said many times, those activists who are engaged in producing this book, tried with all of their energy, to assure that this book will reflect the life of the Jewish community in all of its aspects. In these articles, each of the writers put in their heart and soul to put memories and situations on paper, people and circles, in which he would portray everyone in their own way, and from all of these writings, it was expected that a holistic portrait would emerge of the Jewish past in our city.

Having all of the articles in our possession, it becomes evident that one sector of the Jewish populace, and as it happens, a significantly large sector, has almost been overlooked. It pokes through, here and there, like an afterthought, but it does not seem to exist as a living, influential factor. For example, you do see the ecstasy of a yard full of Hasidim, dances from the impetus of a bit of strong drink, you see the burgeoning Jewish youth in their party headquarters, you can even touch, with your hands, momentum of Jewish commerce and labor as if it were rolling down the hill, but the 'backbone of simple people' the man of the masses, the worker, his groan at work, his sharp satirical *bon mots*, and witticisms in the home, in the street, and in the *Bet HaMedrash*, and also his stormy reaction, in special circumstances in the city, happens not to have found anyone to describe this in writing.

In order that the picture be more faithful to the reality, I hold it as my responsibility to underscore a number of incidents in the city, which can cast an illumination on the spirited and substantive position of lo, these very people of the masses, at those times when they deemed such a stand to be necessary.

A Protest Demonstration

This took place during the time of the Austrian Occupation, most certainly in 1916. The availability of food for the populace was meager. Engaging in commerce was prohibited, and not everyone was capable of engaging in illegal trade. Bread was distributed on the basis of [sic: ration] cards, other foodstuffs were difficult to come by and this – for exorbitant prices. Protests began to manifest themselves against the wealthy Jews, and also against to occupation authorities. Frequent assemblies were called in the plain *Bet HaMedrash*. The gatherings were run by the ordinary people, with Levi Leder at their head. In the city, he was known as '*Levi Kock*' (please forgive the crude expression), a shoemaker by trade. The Hasidic element attempted to keep its distance, but the common people forcibly dragged them along.

One time, on a Sabbath morning, the prayer was halted, and the Jews from all of the *shtiblakh* and *Batei Medrashim* gathered themselves together in the plain *Bet HaMedrash*, and in the courtyard of the prayer house, from which a very sizeable crowd then took off in a protest demonstration to the military Commissar of the city. Because of my tender age, I did not grasp what it was they specifically were demanding. However, before my eyes, those one-time ranks of Jews stand, in their velvet caps, and silk coats, mixed in with shoemakers, porters, and just plain paupers, as they marched along the Kiri Highway. And when the huge mass drew near to the place of the Commissar's office, it was met by an armed contingent of military police, led by their senior officer, who incidentally was Jewish, and would come to worship in the *Bet HaMedrash*, who gave the order, 'Fire!' Shots rang out, and people fled in all directions. The municipal Commissar, later on, received a delegation to hear out their demands.

For a short span of time, there was an extraordinary situation. The forces of the military police were increased, and strengthened, and it was forbidden to assemble in groups in the streets.

The Dispute of the Shokhtim and Election of the Spiritual Leader

This took place, if I am not mistaken, in the time, in the year 1931, when the city was shook up by the accusation that the ritual slaughterers had robbed the community.

Since, in Tomaszow, a legally empowered democratically-elected Jewish leadership had begun to function, or as it was called, the 'Jewish Community,' the administration of ritual slaughter fell under its purview. It was this very process of ritual slaughter that was the principal source from which it derived its budget. A specific part of the money was allocated for the construction of a new *mikva* and bathhouse, for which the city had a dire need. The three ritual slaughterers were appointed to in the 'community,' which paid them a monthly stipend, and in those years, whenever someone had something to be slaughtered, a fowl or cattle, were compelled to purchase a ticket in the Community, and it was on the basis of these tickets that the ritual slaughterers did their work. The procedure was, that the slaughterers would take the ticket, tore it, and afterwards, would bring back the torn tickets to the Community. According to the agreement between the Community and the ritual slaughterers, that they had signed a promissory note, under penalty of excommunication, to only perform ritual slaughter on the basis of Community tickets, otherwise, the meat from such an [unauthorized] slaughter would be considered ritually unfit [i.e. *trayf*] for consumption.

A day arrived, when the Community became aware that the ritual slaughterers had a secret agreement with the merchants who traded in geese, who have a large number of geese slaughtered, for both local use and for use out of the city, to slaughter on their behalf for half the price. Naturally, the ritual slaughterers did not tear the tickets after the slaughter, but discreetly returned them to the goose merchants, who then re-used the tickets over and over again, several times.

The Community immediately put the work of the ritual slaughterers to a halt, pending a ritual trial *[Din Torah]*. Here a new bomb exploded: The Rabbis took the ritual slaughterers under their personal protection. At this juncture, the people became even more worked up against the slaughterers and against the two Rabbis. The controversy spread all over, and continuously drew in ever newer factions, and individuals. The Belz and Kielce *Hasidim* were on the side of the ritual slaughterers and the Rabbis, because one of the ritual slaughterers was one of them, as well as the adherents to the Cieszanow *Rebbe* who had taken their side. On the other side were the wide mass of common people called 'the folks,' and some parts of other *Hasidic* factions.

In the interim, the Community imported ritual slaughterers from unfamiliar places, but the Rabbis forbade them to perform. It was at that time that the worshipers of the Synagogue and the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, took on R' Yehoshua'leh's son, Rabbi Meir Abraham Frischerman, as their spiritual leader. The Community, once again, imported ritual slaughterers, and the two Rabbis, once again, forbade them to perform. However, this time, the [sic: new] spiritual leader sanctioned their [new] ritual slaughter. Announcements of meetings began to appear on the doors of the various houses of study and worship, with quotes of a variety of rabbinical rulings, indicating whether the meat produced by these [new] slaughterers was either kosher or *trayf*, depending on which side was calling the meeting. Every evening, there were gatherings in the Great Bet HaMedrash, at which speakers from the simple people stepped forward with fiery speeches against the two Rabbis. I still remember, with what heat, 'Black' Moshe (Weissleder) screamed from the speaker's

lectern: Do not curse the leader of your people, so does *Rashi* say, when he conducts the business of the people, etc.

Once, representatives of both sides traveled to the *Rebbe* of Belz. The 'common folks,' or the Community, sent: the spiritual leader, the Pious Tevel, and Elazar Ader. I do not remember who represented the other side. The *Rebbe* of Belz did not pronounce any judgement, but he advised the newly arrived ritual slaughterers to vacate, and not to permit themselves to be drawn into a dispute in a strange city. In the end, a ritual court [Bet Din] was convened with members from outside the city, at the head of which was Rabbi Menachem Zemba of Warsaw. The ritual court heard much testimony, from the butchers as well, who also had much to complain against the slaughterers.

The judgement was to suspend the ritual slaughterers for six months, and that they must pay a fine of a certain amount to the community. Additionally, the Community is to hire two additional new slaughterers, so that the total of them will be five slaughterers.

It was in this type of an atmosphere that the election of a spiritual leader had to take place. In this instance, the sides were divided up in the same way as they were for the controversy over the ritual slaughterers. To begin with there were three candidates: 1) Rabbi Rubin, 2) Rabbi Frischerman and 3) Rabbi Tkhuzh from Mizrahi. The last withdrew his candidacy, in order to diminish the chances of the Cieszanow *Rebbe* who was always the foresworn opponent of the Mizrahi. It is superfluous to say with what an enthusiasm and ardor, the Jews of our threw themselves into this election contest. It drew in, literally, every Jew in the city. A neutral Jew could not be found if your life depended on it.

The result came out in favor of Rabbi Frischerman, who won with a very clear and substantial majority.

I remember the night of the election, after the results became known, everyone streamed to the courtyard of Rabbi Yehoshua'leh's as an enthusiastic crowd. One of the speakers in the packed Hasidic Bet HaMedrash, said approximately the following: Our victory does not consist of the fact that R' Yehoshua'leh's son has become our spiritual leader. Rather, our victory needs to be recognized as a break in the municipal tradition according to which the people of wisdom were only the Rabbis, the elite, and the high class people. With this very victory, the simple people, the tailors, the shoemakers, and run-of-the-mill Jews, exhibited their energetic grasp and willingness to compete for their worth and right as people of wisdom at parity with the others, in this city.

❁❁❁

[Jus 13]
JEWISH SOCIAL SELF-HELP
COUNSEL TO THE DISTRICT CHIEF of the LUBLIN DISTRICT

■

[In Polish]

Page 827: *Original Document in German*[162]

Lublin, 27 February 1942
Regarding the day, March 2, 1942
L 5078
Zalatwiono.....

Z. 245/42
Jewish Social Self-Help
Praesidium
in Cracow

Re: The Resettlement of 700 Jews from Tomaszow Lubelski to Cieszanow.

I am referring to the telephone calls in this matter. I spoke today with the official from the Department of Settlements and Welfare. I was told that this Department has no knowledge of a resettlement action. The official, Herr Reuter, was of the opinion, that there is no actual resettlement in force as this would be without authorization of the Department of Resettlement and the government. It is therefore a misunderstanding. Herr Reuter will try to contact Zamość by phone, however he is of the opinion that a long-distance connection with Zamość before nightfall is not possible. Tomorrow, I will again speak to this official. At the same time I am writing an express letter to Tomaszow and Zamość.

Your Truly

Office for Jewish Self-Help
Counsel to the District Chief of Lublin

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162 I am indebted to my wife's cousin, Oskar Kleinberg of Toronto, for the translation of the original German document.

E. G. Z.
JEWISH SOCIAL SELF-HELP

Delegation in Tomaszow-Lubelski

Pages 828, 830: *Original Handwritten Letter (in Polish), translated into Yiddish*

Book Number 4/42
Entered 2 March 1942
Run Number 5119

E. G. Z. Praesidium
Cracow

In connection with the transmitted report, we are informing you of the following:

On 24 February of this year, the territorial commissar in Tomaszow Lubelski ordered the forcible expulsion of 800 Jews in the period of one day, on the 25th of the current month. The forcible expulsion took place in a completely orderly fashion. The subject Jews are now located in Cieszanow, which is located about 40 km. from Tomaszow. These people were seated on sleds, which because of a lack of space, had no room for their possessions. Since we had to cover the cost of 100 sleds, and we need precisely the same number to send out the effects that were left behind, consisting of the minimum portable effects, for this alone, we will require an added 20,000 (twenty thousand) zlotys. Those who were forcibly expelled, find themselves in catastrophic conditions, because most of the houses are not habitable. And up till now, the *shtetl* has not, for the most part, had any Jews, which worsens the situation. It is therefore necessary to organize community kitchens, provide the people with materials for heating, and [other] products. However, we are helpless, having absolutely no financial resources. Under these circumstances, the hapless are doomed to die. We are therefore approaching you to, as speedily as possible, take on the task of providing help in order to resolve the burning question. We beg for mercy, in consideration for your complete, and immediate support. We wish to make completely clear that every day that is lost is equivalent to a death sentence.

In anticipation of prompt help, we respectfully affix our signatures,

E. G. Z.
JEWISH SOCIAL SELF-HELP
Delegation in Tomaszow-Lubelski

A. Bergenbaum
Sh. Kruk
Melman

Page 832: *Germans take Jews out in the midst of prayer, to be photographed.*

יזכור



✡

May the Lord remember the souls of the people of our town, men, women, and children, who were killed in Sanctification of the Name; those who were murdered, killed, slaughtered, incinerated, drowned, stoned, buried alive, hung, and asphyxiated, in the gas chambers and crematoria, in labor and concentration camps, those who gave up their souls because of the sufferings of poverty, hunger and starvation, and as a result of tribulation and predation by the murderous Germans and their accomplices ימ"ש in the years 5700-5745 [1940-1945].

May their rest be in the Garden of Eden, and may the Master of Mercy shield them under the refuge of His wing for all time, and may He bind their souls up in the bond of life. The Lord is their legacy, and may they rest in peace, and rise in the coming of the End of Days, Speedily, in our day, Amen.

Necrology

Translator's Note:

The order in which these names appear has been made to conform to English alphabetization, and therefore does not follow the same order as they appear in the original Yiddish text. To assist the interested reader, each entry has been given a serial number that corresponds to its place in the original Necrology in Yiddish, found on pp. 835-861.

This Necrology contains many instances of names that appear to be duplicates. However, without the intimate knowledge of this community, it would be presumptuous for an uninformed third party to suggest that such duplications constitute errors. Accordingly, special care has been taken to assure that all of the entries in the original document were carried over into the translated version. Additionally, special care was taken to preserve 'nicknames' or 'names of endearment,' that were used to help better identify individuals in that community. While such nomenclature may not serve future generations quite in the same way, it is undoubtedly a sacred obligation to assure that they are brought forward for posterity, as they were used during their lifetimes.

A

Ader	Abraham	ben Elazar & Family	8
		Lvov	
Ader	Balt'cheh		11
Ader	Baruch	ben Yisrael	12
Ader	Elazar	ben Joseph Mordechai	2
Ader	Fishl	ben Yehuda	4
Ader	Joseph	ben Moshe	7
Ader	Moshe	ben Elazar & Wife Chana	5
Ader	Yehuda	ben Elazar	3
Ader	Yekhezkiel	ben Elazar & Family	10
Ader	Yitzhak Mordechai	ben Elazar & Family	9
		Warsaw	
Ader	Naphtali	ben Moshe & Family	6
Adler	Frumet	bat Sholom	1
Akst	Baruch	ben Shlomo	48
Akst	Dobra		44
Akst	Moshe	ben Shlomo & Family	45
Akst	Nathan David	ben Shlomo	49
Akst	Shlomo	ben Nathan	43
Akst	Yehoshua	ben Shlomo & Family	46
Akst	Yekhezkiel	ben Shlomo	47
Arbesfeld	Abraham	ben Yuda	95
Arbesfeld	Chana	bat Yuda	94
Arbesfeld	Freida	bat Yaakov	91
Arbesfeld	Gittl	bat Yaakov	89
Arbesfeld	Gittl	bat Yuda	97
Arbesfeld	Malya	bat Menachem Mendl	93
Arbesfeld	Moshe	ben Yaakov	90
Arbesfeld	Sarah	bat Fyvel	88
Arbesfeld	Shimon	ben Yuda	96
Arbesfeld	Yaakov	ben Yitzhak	87
Arbesfeld	Yehuda	ben Yitzhak	92
Ardinatsky	Henya	bat Zvi	99
Ardinatsky	Henya	bat Yaakov & Family	101
Ardinatsky	Sarah	bat Chaim	100
Ardinatsky	Sarah	bat Chaim	102
Ardinatsky	Tzirl Leah	bat Chaim	98
Auslander	Kayla	bat Yekhezkiel	13

B

Babad	Leah	bat Shmuel	106
Balsenbaum	Pesha Gittl	bat Shimon	148
Baretsky	Israel	ben Moshe & Family	133
Barg	David		287
Barg	Isaac		286
Barrass	Pinchas	& Family	293
Baum	Eliyahu	ben Mordechai Joseph	137
Baum	Malka		136
Baum	Moshe	ben Aryeh	134
Baum	Pesha	bat Ze'ev	135
Baum	Tzivia		138
Baumwall	Nehemiah		289
Bayer	Chaim Shmuel	ben Rabbi Joseph Baruch	200
Bayer	Emanuel	ben Rabbi Joseph Baruch	201
Bayer	Hena	bat Rabbi Ary' Leibusz	198
Bayer	Kalonymous Kalman	ben Rabbi Joseph Baruch	199
Bayer	Rabbi Joseph Baruch	ben Rabbi Yeshayahu	197
Bayer	Yitzhak Tuvia	ben Rabbi Joseph Baruch	202
Beitcher	Bal'tcheh		153
Beitcher	Golda		152
Bekher	Miriam	bat Peretz	193
Bekher	Rosa	bat Israel	194

Bendit Meir ben Yehoshua 196
Bendit Yehoshua ben Mordechai Meir 195
Bergenbaum Abba ben Eliezer 214
Bergenbaum Frimet Wife of Abba 215
Bergenbaum Elazar ben Jekuthiel 290
Bergenbaum Ethel bat Moshe 209
Bergenbaum Ethel bat Abish 211
Bergenbaum Mirl bat Moshe 210
Bergenbaum Mordechai ben Abba 216
Bergenbaum Rosa'leh bat Abba 217
Bergenbaum Schneur ben Yaakov 212
Bergenbaum Ser'keh bat Israel Mordechai 213
Bergenbaum Shevakh ben Jekuthiel 218
Bergenbaum Yitzhak ben Jekuthiel 291
Berger Baruch ben Noah 206
Berger Ethel bat Moshe 204
Berger Shimshon ben Noah 205
Berger Yehoshua & Family 203
Bergman Fishl ben Zvi 208
Bergman Toba bat Zvi 207
Bergstein Abraham ben Raphael Zolkiew 226
Bergstein Aharon Mordechai ben Ary' Leibusz 219
Bergstein Chana bat Aharon Mordechai 222
Bergstein Chana bat Raphael 227
Bergstein Gittl bat Raphael 228
Bergstein Matt'l bat Menachem Mendl 220
Bergstein Menachem Mendl bat Aharon Mordechai 224
Bergstein Pearl bat Aharon Mordechai 223
Bergstein Raphael & Wife Esther 225
Bergstein Toba bat Aharon Mordechai 221
Bernwalt Joesph Zvi ben Shmuel & Family 229
Bernwalt Leah bat Shmuel 231
Bernwalt Rachel bat Shmuel 230
Bert Abraham ben Chaim Fyvel 278
Bert Feiga Leah bat Berish & 2 sons 285
Bert Gittl bat Abraham 280
Bert Hirsch 284
Bert Kahat 282
Bert Liebeh bat Chaim Fyvel 279
Bert Mirl bat Chaim 283
Bert Rachel bat Abraham 281
Biederman Abrahm Yekhezkiel ben Israel Moshe Russia - 21 Tevet 5702 [1942] 149
Bigler Brein'tcheh bat Dov 151
Bigler Dov 150
Binder Chaim Menashe ben Israel Moshe 162
Binder Chaya Esther 161
Binder Dob'eh bat Dov 158
Binder Dov 154
Binder Hannan 159
Binder Henya bat Dov 156
Binder Israel 160
Binder Leah 155
Binder Yehudit bat Dov 157
Blank Abraham 177
Blank Bal'tcheh 176
Blank David 175
Blank Mordechai 174
Blank Shayndl 173
Blaustein Aydl & Family 178
Blei Elchanan ben Yitzhak & 3 sons 186
Bleicher Chana 190
Bleicher Dvosha 191
Bleicher Gittl 188
Bleicher Joseph 187
Bleicher Laneh 192
Bleicher Moshe 189
Blonder Baylah bat Israel Putter 163
Blonder Chana bat Yehoshua 167
Blonder Elimelech ben Shlomo 171
Blonder Fyvel ben Yehoshua 165
Blonder Gitt'l bat Shlomo 172
Blonder Mir'l bat Yehoshua 168
Blonder Mordechai ben Shlomo 170
Blonder Moshe ben Yehoshua 166
Blonder Shlomo ben Yeshayahu 169
Blonder Yehoshua ben Yaakov Zvi 164
Blozer Benjamin 288
Blumstein Abraham Eli' ben Moshe 179
Blumstein Bina bat Abraham Eli' 183
Blumstein Elka bat Eliezer 184
Blumstein Hinde Sima bat Abraham Eli' 182
Blumstein Miriam 180
Blumstein Zvi ben Abraham Eli' 181
Blutman Aydl bat Yitzhak 185
Bodenstein Moshe ben Chaim 107
Borg Abraham Daniel ben Reuben 115
Borg Freida 109
Borg Meshullam Henoch ben Joel 119
Borg Mordechai ben Abraham 118
Borg Moshe ben David 108
Borg Pesha bat David 114
Borg Reuben ben Abraham 117
Borg Sarah bat Moshe 111
Borg Shayndl bat Moshe 113
Borg Taib'eh Ethel 116
Borg Yaakov ben Moshe 110
Borg Zvi ben Moshe 112
Bornstein Baylah bat Yitzhak 125
Bornstein Chana bat Yitzhak 126
Bornstein Chaya'leh 128
Bornstein Elazar ben Yitzhak 120
Bornstein Fyvel 130

Bornstein Israel 131
Bornstein Itta bat Dov 121
Bornstein Meir 132
Bornstein Min'keh bat David 123
Bornstein Noah & Family 129
Bornstein Reizl bat Yitzhak 127
Bornstein Shmuel ben Yitzhak 124
Bornstein Yitzhak ben Elazar 122
Brand Anshel 295
Brand Ary' Leibusz ben Shakhna & Family 240
Brand Chaya bat Zalman 237
Brand Esther 233
Brand Gad ben Zalman 235
Brand Gershon ben Zalman & Family 239
Brand Henya bat Zalman 236
Brand Leah bat Zalman 238
Brand Leibusz 294
Brand Mordechai & Family 292
Brand Yaakov Yitzhak ben Shakhna & Family 241
Brand Yitzhak ben Zalman 234
Brand Zalman ben Moshe Mendl 232
Brandell Dov ben Sholom 248
Brandell Leah bat Dov 250
Brandell Moshe ben Dov 251
Brandell Sheva bat Dov 252
Brandell Shprinza 249
Brandwein Chaya Miriam bat Zalman Hillel 246
Brandwein Hadassah bat Zalman Hillel 245
Brandwein Malyeh Mindl bat Zalman Hillel 243
Brandwein Mordechai ben Zalman Hillel 247
Brandwein Pearl Leah bat Zalman Hillel 244
Brandwein Zalman Hillel ben Zvi 242
Branner Abraham 261
Branner Gittl 256
Branner Joseph 266
Branner Leah'tcheh 258
Branner Mordechai 257
Branner Pesha 262
Branner Rachel 259
Branner Sender 265
Branner Shmuel Benjamin 260
Branner Tila 263
Branner Zalman 264
Breitner Shlomo ben Joseph 267
Briks Gittl bat Abraham Hochman 277
Briks Yaakov ben Chaim 276
Brinker Chaim Yitzhak ben Gershon Henoch 270
Brinker Gershon Henoch ben Shmuel & Family 268
Brinker Gittl bat Yuda 275
Brinker Leah 274
Brinker Morechai Joseph ben Gershon Henoch 271
Brinker Yekhezkiel Yehuda ben Gershon Henoch 272
Brinker Yuda 273
Brinker Zissl 269
Bronstein Chaya Freida bat Shlomo 254
Bronstein Gittl bat Eliezer 255
Bronstein Toba 253
Burstein Breineh bat Ephraim 145
Burstein Chana Manya bat Zvi 141
Burstein Chana Reizl bat Ephraim 147
Burstein Dov Zvi ben Ephraim 139
Burstein Ephraim 143
Burstein Frimet 140
Burstein Mindl bat Ephraim 146
Burstein Rivka 142
Burstein Tzirl Leah bat Ephraim 144

C

Citrin Aharon 1384
Citrin Israel Leib ben Abraham & Family 1385
Cohen Dov ben Yehuda 862
Cohen Meir ben Dov 863
Cohen Yaakov ben Dov 864
Cooper Hodel 1474
Cooper Pinchas 1475
Cooper Zvi 1473
Crystal Naomi bat Yitzhak 1550
Crystal Reizl bat Yaakov 1549
Crystal Sarah bat Yitzhak 1551

D

Deutschgewand Mordechai 502
Diamond Menucha bat Joel Shafran & Sons 504
Diamond Yehuda 503
Dombuszcz Abraham ben Mikhl 469
Dombuszcz Baylah His Wife 470
Dombuszcz Eliezer Mordechai ben Abraham 471
Dombuszcz Pearl His Wife 472
Dombuszcz Moshe Chaim ben Abraham 484
Dombuszcz Dvora His Wife 485
Dombuszcz Ary' Leibusz ben Itcheh Meir 483
Dombuszcz Chaim ben Eliezer Mordechai 476
Dombuszcz Chana Her Children Pearl, Aharon 477
Dombuszcz Esther Malka 479
Dombuszcz Israel ben Eliezer Mordechai 474
Dombuszcz Leibusz ben Moshe Chaim 486
Dombuszcz Malka 487
Dombuszcz Mikhl ben Eliezer Mordechai 473
Dombuszcz Miriam 480
Dombuszcz Rivka bat Eliezer Mordechai 475
Dombuszcz Sarah 481
Dombuszcz Sima 478
Dombuszcz Yaakov 482

Dornfeld Eliezer & His Wife 506
Dornfeld Leib'l ben Eliezer 507
Dornfeld Nehemiah 505
Drimmler Bat-Sheva bat Ary' 495
Drimmler Dov ben Eli' 497
Drimmler Eliyahu ben Joseph 494
Drimmler Feiga bat Dov 501
Drimmler Fradl bat Aryeh 500
Drimmler Pearl bat Eli' 498
Drimmler Rivka Leah bat Eli' 499
Drimmler Shmelk ben Eli' & Family 496
Drott Yaakov Moshe ben Chaim Yitzhak 489
Drott His Wife & Two Sons Belzec 490
Drott Joseph Eli' ben Chaim Yitzhak 491
Drott His Wife & Two Sons Belzec 492
Drott Aydl Russia 488
Drott Noah ben Chaim Yitzhak Tashkent 493

E

Edelstein Chana 1162
Edelstein Henrich 1160
Edelstein Malka of the Ornstein Family 1161
Edelstein Moshe 62
Edelstein Pesha bat Meir 63
Ehrlich Bat-Sheva bat Meir 20
Ehrlich Baylah bat Daniel 22
Ehrlich Chaim ben Moshe 105
Ehrlich Chana Leah bat Abraham Hochman 1157
Ehrlich Chaya bat Israel HaKohen 1155
Ehrlich Chaya Itta 17
Ehrlich Fishl ben Meir 21
Ehrlich Hena bat Kalman 1158
Ehrlich Kalman ben Yaakov Yeshayahu 1154
Ehrlich Meir ben Chaim Belzec 14
Ehrlich Mir'eleh 1159
Ehrlich Moshe ben Meir 103
Ehrlich Pessl bat Meir 19
Ehrlich Rachel bat Meir Belzec 16
Ehrlich Rosa bat Moshe 104
Ehrlich Rosa, Chaim & Joseph 18
Ehrlich Sarh Golda bat Pinchas 15
Ehrlich Zvi ben Kalman 1156
Eidelsberg Avigdor 50
Eidelsberg Moshe & Family 52
Eidelsberg Rivka 51
Eilbaum Chaya bat Mordechai 68
Eilbaum Yitzhak ben Shimon 69
Eilen Abraham ben Yudl 81
Eilen Baylah Rivka bat Eli' 78
Eilen Chana bat Yudl & Family 77
Eilen Chaya 83
Eilen Esther 85
Eilen Fishl ben Yudl 80
Eilen Mendl & Family 84
Eilen Mordechai ben Yekhezkiel 73
Eilen Moshe ben Yekhezkiel 76
Eilen Reizl bat Yekhezkiel 75
Eilen Reuben & Family 86
Eilen Yehoshua 82
Eilen Yehoshua Leib ben Yekhezkiel 72
Eilen Yudl ben Levi 79
Eilen Zvi ben Yekhezkiel 74
Eisen Abraham ben Joseph Eli' Lemberg 36
Eisen Aharon David 41
Eisen Aharon David ben Tuvia 66
Eisen Chaim Jonah ben Joseph Eli' Lemberg 38
Eisen Chaya Jozefow - 28Tammuz 5703 32
Eisen Eliyahu ben Mordechai Brzezani 39
Eisen Fyvusz ben Aharon 64
Eisen Israel ben Joseph Eli' Lemberg 37
Eisen Israel Leib Russia 71
Eisen Joseph Eli' ben Mordechai Lemberg 33
Eisen Moshe ben Joseph Eli' Lemberg 35
Eisen Sarah 65
Eisen Sheva 42
Eisen Sheva bat Moshe Chaim 67
Eisen Simcha Bunim ben Mordechai Joseph 70
Eisen Yitzhak Nachman ben Mordechai 40
Eisen Zeftel 34

F

Falb Abraham Itcheh Age 5 1171
Falb Bal'tcheh bat Eliezer 1165
Falb Chaim Ozer Age 7 1170
Falb Chaya'len Age 9 1169
Falb Gittl bat Eliezer 1166
Falb Lipa ben Tevel 1168
Falb Miriam bat Moshe 1164
Falb Rivka bat Eliezer 1167
Falb Simcha Ben David & Family 1163
Falk Lipa 1172
Fang Chaim 1181
Fang Chana 1179
Fang Ethel 1176
Fang Joseph 1173
Fang Peretz 1175
Fang Rachel 1174
Fang Rivka bat Chaim 1183
Fang Shifra 1182
Fang Shmuel ben Joseph 1180
Fang Shmuel ben Chaim 1184
Fang Yitzhak 1178
Fang Zelig 1177
Farber Aharon ben Shlomo 1187

Farber Ben Zion ben Ze'ev 1186
Farber Fishl ben Moshe 1185
Farher Eliyahu Moshe ben Reuven 1202
Feigenbaum Hinde 1233
Feigenbaum Malya 1235
Feigenbaum Miriam 1234
Feigenbaum Moshe ben Neta 1231
Feigenbaum Pesha 1236
Feigenbaum Rivka 1232
Feil Bluma bat Eli' Dov 1240
Feil Eliyahu Dov ben Mordechai Ze'ev 1237
Feil Leah bat Nahum 1242
Feil Liebeh 1241
Feil Mindl bat Abraham 1238
Feil Tchip'eh bat Eli' Dov 1239
Feld Miriam bat Moshe 1266
Feldsen Feiga bat Nehemiah Belzec, July 1944 1267
Fersht David ben Joseph 1271
Fersht Dina bat David 1274
Fersht Dvora bat David 1273
Fersht Rivka bat Shmuel 1272
Fershtman Abraham Chaim ben Israel Dov HaKohen 1350
Fershtman Chaya Freida bat Israel Dov HaKohen 1351
Fershtman Ephraim Shimon ben Raphael HaKohen 1297
Fershtman Esther bat Israel Dov HaKohen 1352
Fershtman Israel Dov ben Rabbi Moshe HaKohen 1281
Fershtman Malka bat Ephraim Shimon 1299
Fershtman Moshe ben Raphael HaKohen 1280
Fershtman Rivka bat Eliezer 1349
Fershtman Sheva bat Fyvel Putter 1298
Finkelstein Yeshaya 1246
Firsht Chana 1248
Firsht Malya 1251
Firsht Moshe ben Joseph 1254
Firsht Pearl 1252
Firsht Reizl 1249
Firsht Rivka 1253
Firsht Shlomo 1250
Firsht Shmuel 1247
Fish Fishl ben Joseph 1262
Fish Golda bat Chaim Putter 1263
Fish Sarah bat Fishl 1264
Fish Yitzhak ben Fishl 1265
Fishlzohn Abraham ben Yekhezkiel 1258
Fishlzohn Ber'l ben Yekhezkiel 1260
Fishlzohn Chaim Bunim ben Yehoshua 1257
Fishlzohn Esther 1259
Fishlzohn Golda Malya & Her Family 1261
Fishlzohn Necha 1256
Fishlzohn Yehoshua ben Shimon 1255
Freeman Moshe ben Fishl 1328
Frenkel Aharon Yitzhak ben Yekhezkiel 1339
Frenkel Chay'keh bat Yekhezkiel 1340
Frenkel Menucha bat Yekhezkiel 1341
Frenkel Shifra 1338
Frenkel Yekhezkiel 1337
Freund Frimet bat Shlomo Feiffer and 8 Sons Kulikow 1315
Freund Hirsch Mlashchuvka 1313
Freund Yaakov ben Shlomo 1314
Freund Zissl bat Leib'l 1316
Friedlander Shabtai ben Yerakhmiel Momaszow, 18 Adar II 5700 1300
Friedlander Malka bat Shimon Aryeh Laneil, His Wife 1301
Friedlander Sinai ben Shabtai Russia, 2 Heshvan 5702 1302
Friedlander Chava His wife, and a girl Russia, 2 Heshvan 5703 1303
Friedlander Baylah Lubicz 1305
Friedlander Freida bat Sinai Lubicz 1306
Friedlander Leibusz ben Elazar 1308
Friedlander Sinai ben Yerakhmiel Lubicz 1304
Friedlander Yaakov ben Elazar & Family 1307
Friedlander Yekhezkiel ben Elazar 1309
Friedman Lieber ben Pinchas 1310
Friedman Reizl'eh bat Sarah 1311
Friedman Yehuda ben Lieber 1312
Frischerman Aharon Shmuel ben Rabbi Zvi Elazar 1320
Frischerman Alter Joseph Ary' ben Rabbi Moshe 1325
Frischerman Bracha bat Rabbi Moshe 1326
Frischerman Chava Esther bat Rabbi Moshe 1324
Frischerman Leah 1319
Frischerman Rabbanit Chaya bat Rabbi Aharon Yekhiel 1322
Frischerman Rabbanit Nechama Mindl bat Rabbi Baruch 1323
Frischerman Rabbanit Zippora bat Rabbi Shmuel 1317
Frischerman Rabbi Sholom ben Rabbi Joseph Aryeh 1321
Frischerman Rabbi Yehoshua Shmuel ben Rabbi Joseph Aryeh & Family 1327
Frischerman Rabbi Zvi Elazar

ben Rabbi Joseph Aryeh 1318
Frost Abraham Yitzhak ben Dov 1284
Frost Baylah bat Yeshayahu 1282
Frost Pearl bat Dov 1286
Frost Pesha bat Dov 1287
Frost Sarah Reizl bat Dov 1285
Frost Yeshayahu ben Dov 1283
Fruchthandler Elkanah 1288
Fruchthandler Mindl bat Moshe 1291
Fruchthandler Moshe ben Elkanah 1290
Fruchthandler Shifra 1289
Fruchthandler Yaakov ben Moshe 1292
Frumer Chana Mindl bat Mordechai 1295
Frumer Dvora bat Yitzhak Mordechai 1294
Frumer Feiga 1296
Frumer Yitzhak Aharon ben Mordechai 1293
Fuchs Hanina 1243
Fuchs Henya 1244
Fuchs Naphtali 1245

G

Gabel Pesha 296
Ganzer Hinde bat Zvi 358
Ganzer Mordechai ben Zvi 359
Ganzer Pesha bat Israel 357
Ganzer Zvi ben Yitzhak Aharon 356
Gartler Basha bat Berel & Several Sons 361
Gartler Breineh bat Gershon 368
Gartler David ben Reuven 360
Gartler David Joseph ben Yaakov 373
Gartler Gershon ben Moshe 370
Gartler Joseph ben Yitzhak 365
Gartler Mindl bat David Joseph 372
Gartler Miriam bat Nahum 371
Gartler Moshe ben Elazar 367
Gartler Rivka bat Moshe 375
Gartler Sarah bat Yitzhak 366
Gartler Sima bat Moshe 374
Gartler Yaakov ben Yitzhak 364
Gartler Yaakov ben Moshe 369
Gartler Yitzhak ben Reuven 362
Gartler Zeftl bat Yaakov 363
Geist Aydl bat Peretz 381
Geist Brein'tcheh bat Fyvel 380
Geist Chana bat Peretz 382
Geist Itta bat Peretz 384
Geist Leibusz ben Moshe Eliezer 378
Geist Moshe ben Peretz 385
Geist Peretz ben Moshe Eliezer 379
Geist Ser'keh bat Peretz 383
Gelber Joseph & Family 404
Gelber Leah 403
Gelber Reizl bat Chaim Ary' 405
Gelber Sarah 402
Gelbert Chana bat Shmuel Panzer & Family 386
Gelernter Chaim ben Shimshon & Family Russia 411
Gelernter Chaya Baylah 407
Gelernter Ethel & 3 Sons 409
Gelernter Fyvel ben Shimshon 408
Gelernter Malka 412
Gelernter Mordechai ben Yehoshua 406
Gelernter Yehoshua ben Shimshon & Family Ludomir 410
Gerson Yehuda 461
Gewissenheit Ze'ev 401
Ginsberg Chana bat Yekhezkiel Lehrer 399
Ginsberg Esther bat Leib 395
Ginsberg Fishl 398
Ginsberg Leib 393
Ginsberg Miri bat Kalman Ehrlich 394
Ginsberg Shlomo Ze'ev ben Fishl 400
Gitter Yitzhak 377
Glass Nahum Dov 396
Glickstein Feiga bat Chaim Mordechai 397
Goldbaum Yaakov Yitzhak ben Israel Moshe 376
Goldberg Eliezer 307
Goldberg Leibusz ben Mordechai 303
Goldberg Meir ben Leibusz 309
Goldberg Miriam bat Yaakov Zvi 304
Goldberg Miriam bat Leibusz 310
Goldberg Moshe ben Leibusz 308
Goldberg Naphtali ben Leibusz 311
Goldberg Yitzhak 306
Goldberg Yuri bat Yekhezkiel 305
Goldman Benjamin ben Mendl & Family 317
Goldman Esther & Family 313
Goldman Joseph ben Yehuda 319
Goldman Leah bat Mordechai Joseph 312
Goldman Lipa ben Yehuda 318
Goldman Matt'l 322
Goldman Moshe ben Nahum & Family 315
Goldman Moshe 467
Goldman Rachel Leah bat Mordechai 316
Goldman Sarah bat Rabbi Shidkovsky 468
Goldman Sarah Malka bat Joseph Zvi 314
Goldman Yehuda ben Mendl 321
Goldman Zundl Markhan 320
Goldminzer Chaim ben Rabbi R' Joseph 323
Goldstein Abba ben Elazar 339
Goldstein Baylah bat Shevach 332
Goldstein Bunim 346
Goldstein Chaim 349
Goldstein Chana bat Elazar 344
Goldstein Chana bat Bunim 348
Goldstein Chaya 330

Goldstein Chaya bat Baruch 352
Goldstein Chaya Toba 335
Goldstein David ben Baruch 353
Goldstein Elazar 336
Goldstein Elisha 354
Goldstein Ethel 350
Goldstein Feiga bat Zvi 329
Goldstein Fishl ben Elazar 340
Goldstein Israel Zvi ben David 324
Goldstein Joel ben Elazar 338
Goldstein Joel ben Chaim 351
Goldstein Leah bat Elazar 345
Goldstein Liebeh 337
Goldstein Rachel 325
Goldstein Rachel (Rachil) 327
Goldstein Sarah bat Elazar 343
Goldstein Sarah Leah 331
Goldstein Shimon ben Yeshayahu 326
Goldstein Shmuel Zavel ben Elazar 341
Goldstein Toba 347
Goldstein Tshipa bat Elazar 342
Goldstein Tsirl 355
Goldstein Yaakov ben David 328
Goldstein Yeshayahu ben David 333
Goldstein Yitzhak 334
Gonorow Bluma bat Yeshayahu 388
Gonorow Freida bat Yeshayahu 390
Gonorow Rachel (Rechil) bat Mordechai 387
Gonorow Sarah bat Yeshayahu 389
Gonorow Yeshayau David 391
Gottesman Ethel 301
Gottesman Mordechai 300
Gottesman Moshe 302
Gozhichansky Chan'tcheh 299
Gozhichansky Joseph ben Fishl 297
Gozhichansky Mindl 298
Graman Chana & Family 420
Graman Joseph 419
Graman Sarah Rachel 421
Greenbaum Aharon 431
Greenbaum Aydl bat Yaakov 441
Greenbaum Elchanan Yitzhak ben Yaakov 438
Greenbaum Elisheva Rachel bat Yaakov 439
Greenbaum Israel 463
Greenbaum Malya bat Yaakov 466
Greenbaum Moshe ben Mordechai Joseph 433
Greenbaum Pesach Dov ben Yaakov 440
Greenbaum Rachel Leah & A child 434
Greenbaum Reizl Esther 436
Greenbaum Temeh bat Yaakov 465
Greenbaum Toba bat Leibusz 432
Greenbaum Yaakov ben Mordechai Joseph 435
Greenbaum Yaakov 464
Greenbaum Yehudit bat Yaakov 437
Greenberg Abraham 446
Greenberg Chaim 451
Greenberg Dina 443
Greenberg Elka bat Yitzhak Isaac 447
Greenberg Leah 445
Greenberg Leibusz 454
Greenberg Malya bat Moshe Zvi 458
Greenberg Mendl ben Noah 444
Greenberg Mendl 449
Greenberg Mer'l 448
Greenberg Mir'l 453
Greenberg Mordechai & Family 462
Greenberg Moshe Zvi ben Leibusz 456
Greenberg Noah ben Meir 442
Greenberg Rachel (Rechil) 455
Greenberg Rivka 457
Greenberg Shmuel 450
Greenberg Toba 452
Greenwald Mal'tcheh 460
Greenwald Nathan ben Mordechai 459
Groff Chaya Gittl 417
Groff David Leib 416
Groff Leah 418
Groff Nahum ben Moshe 414
Groff Yehoshua ben Yitzhak Shlomo & Family 415
Groff Yitzhak Shlomo ben Moshe 413
Gross Baruch 422
Gross Chana bat Yudl Eilen 429
Gross Golda bat Abba 430
Groyser Berish ben Joseph 426
Groyser Chaya Geleh bat Pinchas 424
Groyser Hena Ser'l bat Joseph 428
Groyser Joseph ben Chaim 423
Groyser Moshe Meir ben Joseph 427
Groyser Yeshayahu ben Joseph 425
Guthartz Yaakov Mordechai 392

H I J

Haber Abish 517
Haber Abraham 518
Haber Chaya Sarah & Family 513
Haber David ben Abish 514
Haber Henya & Her Family 515
Haber Malka 516
Haber Miriam & Family 511
Haber Resha bat Meir 509
Haber Sarah 508
Haber Simcha ben Abish 512
Haber Yaakov ben Abish 510

Halberstam David Leibusz ben Rabbi Chaim Baruch 589
Halberstam Hadassah bat Rabbi Joseph Ary' & Family 590
Haltman Abraham 523
Haltman Machlah bat Reuven Barg 524
Haltman Malya 527
Haltman Rachel bat Abraham 525
Haltman Reizl bat Abraham 526
Hammer Hirsch 591
Hammer Isaac ben Hirsch 592
Hammer Shmuel 528
Handelsman Asher ben Joel 537
Handelsman Chana bat Ozer 539
Handelsman Ethel bat Asher 538
Handelsman Yitzhak ben Joel 540
Handwerker Leah bat Eliezer 567
Handwerker Shlomo ben Aharon 566
Haut Chaim 546
Haut Pesha 545
Heller Aryeh 586
Heller Chana 587
Heller Neta & Family 588
Herbstman Abraham ben Noah 582
Herbstman Chaya Dina bat Yehoshua 576
Herbstman Esther bat Yaakov Stahl 581
Herbstman Henya bat Shmuel 577
Herbstman Juta bat Shmuel 578
Herbstman Leah bat Yehoshua 575
Herbstman Nathan ben Shmuel 579
Herbstman Noah ben Abraham 580
Herbstman Sarah bat Yaakov Stahl 583
Hertzman Chaya Gella bat Abraham Meir 585
Hertzman Shimon ben Abraham Meir 584
Hilf Rey'leh bat Moshe 565
Hirschenson Ephraim ben Yitzhak 572
Hirschenson Grineh bat David 570
Hirschenson Reizl bat Yitzhak 571
Hirschenson Yitzhak ben Fishl 568
Hirschenson Zelda bat David 569
Hirschfeld Ephraim 573
Hirschfeld Tema 574
Hoch Yehoshua 519
Hochman Abraham Shimon ben Israel 520
Hochman Hirsch ben Pinchas 521
Hochzeit Leah bat Yekhezkiel 522
Holtz Chaya Reizl bat Fyvel 533
Holtz Dina bat Aryeh 530
Holtz Fyvel ben Jonah 529
Holtz Leibusz ben Fyvel 531
Holtz Mattes ben Eli' Aharon 534
Holtz Vevi'tcheh ben Shmuel 535
Holtz Yaakov ben Fyvel 532
Holtzman Yitzhak 536
Honigsfeld Ben-Zion ben Israel 543
Honigsfeld Esther bat Abraham Yehoshua Heschel 544
Honigsfeld Israel ben Lipa 597
Honigsfeld Lipa ben Israel 541
Honigsfeld Mordechai ben Lipa 596
Honigsfeld Rachel bat David 542
Honigsfeld Rivka bat Lipa 595
Horowitz Baruch ben Zvi 594
Horowitz Zvi 593
Hurwitz Baruch Ritual Slaughterer 547
Hurwitz Bina 557
Hurwitz Chana bat Sender 560
Hurwitz Esther bat Sender 562
Hurwitz Hinde 549
Hurwitz Lejzor ben Sender 561
Hurwitz Malya bat Mordechai Joseph 548
Hurwitz Miriam Tema 551
Hurwitz Mordechai Joseph 553
Hurwitz Sarah 552
Hurwitz Sender ben Moshe 556
Hurwitz Shlomo 554
Hurwitz Shmuel ben Sender 559
Hurwitz Sholom 555
Hurwitz Yaakov ben Sender 558
Hurwitz Yitzhak Meir 550
Hurwitz-Sternfeld Dvora bat Rabbi Yerakhmiel Mordechai 563
Hurwitz-Sternfeld Yeshayahu Pinchas ben Rabbi Baruch 564

K

Kaffenbaum Leibusz ben Yekhezkiel 1455
Kaffenbaum Yekhezkiel 1560
Kaffenbaum Zissl bat Yekhezkiel 1454
Kagan Bezalel ben Melech 1397
Kagan Feiga Gittl bat Yitzhak 1396
Kagan Hen'cheh bat Mordechai Joseph 1398
Kagan Rachel bat Moshe 1395
Kagan Sarah bat Bezalel 1399
Kagan Yitzhak ben Melech 1394
Kalbsfeld Meir Hirsch & Family 1435
Kalbsfeld Miriam Leah 1434
Kalchman Hinde Jozefów, 28 Tammuz 5704 1447
Kalchman Yeshayahu Jozefów, 28 Tammuz 5703 1446
Kalechman Resha Min'cheh Jozefów 1436
Kalter Hinde bat Ary' Heller & 3 Sons 1448
Kamm Ber'l 1440
Kamm Bezalel ben Maness 1439
Kamm Chana 1444
Kamm Chaya 1445

Kamm Dina 1438
Kamm Joseph ben Ber'l 1443
Kamm Maness 1437
Kamm Miriam of the Shidlowitz Family 1441
Kamm Zundl ben Ber'l 1442
Kandel Aharon ben Shaul 1452
Kandel Eliezer 1450
Kandel Liebeh Gittl bat Pinchas 1451
Kandel Mendl ben Shaul 1453
Kandel Shaul ben Eliezer 1449
Karp Aharon ben Nahum 1464
Karp Chaya bat Israel 1467
Karp Dvora bat Shaul Aryeh 1462
Karp Ephraim ben Nahum 1463
Karp Jocheved bat Israel 1466
Karp Moshe ben Nahum 1465
Karp Nahum ben Ephraim 1461
Karp Yaakov ben Shmuel David 1468
Katz Shlomo 877
Katz Chaya His Wife 878
Katz Abraham ben Issachar 869
Katz Baylah bat Issachar 868
Katz Bluma 880
Katz Chana 874
Katz Dina 879
Katz Dov 871
Katz Feiga 881
Katz Issachar ben Mendl 865
Katz Issachar ben Chaim 870
Katz Joseph Wolf 876
Katz Pesha bat Shimon 866
Katz Sarah 872
Katz Sima bat Issachar 867
Katz Zalman 875
Katz Zundl 873
Katzhandler Eliezer 1456
Katzhandler Feigs Suma bat Eliezer 1459
Katzhandler Gershon ben Eliezer 1458
Katzhandler Sarah Liebeh bat Yitzhak 1457
Kaufman Aharon ben Joel 1404
Kaufman Chaya bat Joel 1402
Kaufman Fishl ben Joel 1405
Kaufman Joel ben Aharon 1400
Kaufman Liebeh Golda 1401
Kaufman Nechama bat Joel 1403
Kaufman Shmuel & Family 1408
Kaufman Toba bat Eliezer Falb 1407
Kaufman Wolf ben Lipa 1406
Kawenczuk Joseph ben Shabtai 1427
Kawenczuk Bina bat Meir, His Wife 1428
Kawenczuk Breineh bat Zvi 1423
Kawenczuk Chana bat Zvi 1424
Kawenczuk Chava bat Moshe 1422
Kawenczuk Hena Rat'zeh bat Joseph 1431
Kawenczuk Leib'l ben Zvi 1425
Kawenczuk Meir ben Joseph 1432
Kawenczuk Moshe ben Alexander Zusha 1433
Kawenczuk Nahum ben Shabtai 1426
Kawenczuk Pinchas Yehoshua ben Joseph 1430
Kawenczuk Rivka bat Joseph 1429
Kawenczuk Zvi ben Shabtai 1421
Keitel Bunim ben Yehoshua 1483
Keitel Chaim 1486
Keitel Sarah 1485
Keitel Yaakov ben Getzel 1484
Keitel Yehoshua ben Zvi 1480
Keitel Yehoshua ben Yaakov 1487
Keitel Zippora 1481
Keitel Zvi ben Yehoshua 1482
Kessel Chaim 1512
Kessel Dov ben Ze'ev 1511
Kessel Fyvel ben Shmuel 1510
Kessel Fyvel 1519
Kessel Gittl bat Chaim & Her Family 1518
Kessel Malka bat Yitzhak Haber 1513
Kessel Malka bat Mordechai & Her Family 1515
Kessel Meir 1521
Kessel Mendl 1520
Kessel Rachel & Her Family 1517
Kessel Yaakov ben Chaim 1514
Kessel Yitzhak ben Chaim 1516
Kessler Baruch 1522
Kessler Chaim ben Baruch 1528
Kessler Git'cheh 1523
Kessler Grina bat Abraham 1531
Kessler Leah bat Baruch 1529
Kessler Moshe ben Baruch 1526
Kessler Reizl 1524
Kessler Rivka 1525
Kessler Sala 1532
Kessler Toba 1533
Kessler Yehoshua ben Baruch 1527
Kessler Yehoshua ben Ber'l Melech 1530
Kiezel Aharon 1476
Kiezel Elazar ben Aharon & Family 1478
Kiezel Moshe Chaim ben Aharon & Family 1479
Kiezel Rachel 1477
Kirschholtz Ber'l ben Moshe Warsaw 1492
Kirschholtz Dvora Leah Warsaw 1490
Kirschholtz Freida bat Moshe Warsaw 1491
Kirschholtz Malka 1488
Kirschholtz Moshe Warsaw 1489
Klarman Benjamin ben Meir 1499
Klarman Chaya bat Meir 1495

Klarman Israel ben Meir 1496
Klarman Meir 1493
Klarman Shmuel ben Meir 1497
Klarman Tchip'eh bat Chaim Frishman 1494
Klarman Yeshayahu Eliezer ben Meir 1498
Kleiner Chaim David ben Yaakov 1504
Kleiner Shmuel Fyvel ben Yaakov 1503
Kleiner Sima bat Yekhezkiel 1505
Kleinmintz Benzion ben Yaakov 1502
Kleinmintz Chava bat Shabtai 1501
Kleinmintz Yaakov ben Moshe 1500
Knoblich Mir'l bat Israel Sholom 1507
Knoblich Moshe ben Joseph 1506
Knopf Shlomo & Family 1508
Koch Aydl bat Yitzhak 1416
Koch Chana bat Shabtai Kawenczuk 1414
Koch Chaya bat Yitzhak 1417
Koch Dvora bat Yitzhak 1418
Koch Henoch ben Shlomo 1409
Koch Hinde Esther bat Mordechai Joseph 1410
Koch Itta bat Henoch 1411
Koch Joseph ben Yitzhak 1419
Koch Leibusz ben Henoch 1413
Koch Rivka bat Yitzhak 1415
Koch Shlomo ben Yitzhak 1420
Koch Tsir'l bat Henoch 1412
Koeniger Zelig 1509
Korn Eli' Moshe ben Nachman 1460
Korngold David ben Pinchas Russia 1534
Korngold Rachel bat Eliezer Putter Russia 1535
Kornworcel Tzirl bat Gedalyahu 1469
Krautstengel Baruch ben David 1559
Krautstengel David ben Yitzhak 1558
Krellman Chana 1553
Krellman Hirsch & Family 1557
Krellman Itcheh ben Moshe 1555
Krellman Moshe 1552
Krellman Pesach ben Moshe 1556
Krellman Yehoshua ben Moshe 1554
Kremmerman Pinchas & His Wife 1561
Krieger Chaya 1548
Krieger Getzel ben Yehuda Ary' 1546
Krieger Henya 1545
Krieger Hinde 1547
Krieger Jonah ben Joseph Eliezer 1540
Krieger Joseph Eliezer ben Yaakov 1538
Krieger Leah bat Jonah 1539
Krieger Moshe ben Joseph Eliezer 1541
Krieger Pesha Pearl bat Joseph Eliezer 1543
Krieger Yehuda Aryeh ben Yaakov 1544
Krieger Yitzhak ben Joseph Eliezer 1542
Krongold Pinchas 1562
Kruk Reizl bat Abraham & Their Sons 1537
Kruk Yitzhak ben Sholom 1536
Kupiec Rechil bat Moshe 1471
Kupiec Sarah Rachel 1472
Kupiec Shlomo Todres 1470

L

Ladden Basha 890
Ladden Chaim Shmuel ben Moshe 891
Ladden Chana 885
Ladden Malya 893
Ladden Manya 886
Ladden Masha & Her Family 895
Ladden Moshe 889
Ladden Reizl bat Eliezer & Her Family 887
Ladden Rivka 888
Ladden Sarah 884
Ladden Shlomo ben Moshe 892
Ladden Shlomo 896
Ladden Tema bat Dov 882
Ladden Yaakov 894
Ladden Yitzhak ben Aryeh 883
Lakher Aharon ben Moshe David 902
Lakher Joseph ben Israel 904
Lakher Rivka bat Chaim Zvi 903
Laks Aharon ben Chaim 940
Laks Ber'l ben Chaim 939
Laks Bina bat Eliezer Bornstein 937
Laks Chaim ben Shmuel 938
Lamm Chana & 3 Sons 908
Lamm Shayndl bat Baruch 906
Lamm Yaakov Krasnobrod 907
Lamm Yos'keh 905
Lancer Ethel 924
Lancer Freida bat Israel Yitzhak 921
Lancer Getzel 925
Lancer Gittl 923
Lancer Issachar ben Israel Yitzhak 920
Lancer Jocheved bat Chaim Yitzhak 919
Lancer Joseph ben Moshe & Family 928
Lancer Joseph ben Zusha 1027
Lancer Koppel ben Moshe 931
Lancer Miriam bat Joseph 1029
Lancer Moshe 926
Lancer Pearl bat Israel Yitzhak 922
Lancer Pesha 932
Lancer Pesha bat Moshe & Her Family 934
Lancer Ratz'eh Freida bat Moshe 933
Lancer Reizl bat Chaim & Her Family 930
Lancer Ri'kl 927
Lancer Rosa bat Joseph 1028
Lancer Yekhiel ben Moshe 929

Laneil Abba ben Shimon Aryeh Radichov 918
Laneil Abraham ben Mendl 917
Laneil Dvora bat Mendl 916
Laneil Hena bat Menachem 910
Laneil Joseph Ben Meir Rawa Ruska 911
Laneil Meir ben Shimon Aryeh 909
Laneil Mendl ben Shimon Aryeh 913
Laneil Pesha bat Mendl 915
Laneil Sarah Dvora bat Shabtai Friedlander Rawa Ruska 912
Laneil Ser'keh bat Abraham 914
Lastman Itta 935
Lastman Sarah 936
Lazar Chaim ben Aryeh & Family 900
Lazar Gad ben Aryeh & Family 898
Lazar Miriam bat Aryeh 899
Lazar Reizl bat Ary' & Her Family 901
Lazar Rivka bat Ary' 897
Lederkremmer Eliezer ben Sholom 984
Lederkremmer Esther 987
Lederkremmer Getzel 988
Lederkremmer Gittl'eh bat Getzel 989
Lederkremmer Menucha bat Yaakov 985
Lederkremmer Menucha bat Eliezer 1026
Lederkremmer Mirl bat Getzel 991
Lederkremmer Paltiel ben Eliezer 1025
Lederkremmer Yaakov ben Eliezer 986
Lederkremmer Yaakov ben Getzel 990
Lederman Daniel ben Joseph 997
Lederman Elka bat Joseph 996
Lederman Joseph 994
Lederman Menucha bat Yekhezkiel Lehrer 995
Lehrer Abraham ben Shlomo Ze'ev & 1 Girl 1003
Lehrer Abraham Hirsch 1024
Lehrer Chaya 1001
Lehrer Freida bat Levi 1007
Lehrer Gershon ben Shlomo Ze'ev 1002
Lehrer Itta bat Fishl 999
Lehrer Jocheved bat Yekhezkiel & Her Family 1008
Lehrer Leib'l ben Yekhezkiel 1006
Lehrer Sarah bat Netanel Greenwald & 2 Daughters 1005
Lehrer Shlomo Ze'ev ben Yekhezkiel 1000
Lehrer Yekhezkiel ben Shlomo Ze'ev 998
Lehrer Yeshayahu ben Yekhezkiel 1004
Lehrerman Baylah Chana 981
Lehrerman Eliyahu 979
Lehrerman Meir 980
Lehrman Yakhes Belzec July 1942 992
Leiter Feiga 960
Leiter Jonah 956
Leiter Lejzor 959
Leiter Shmuel 958
Leiter Shosha 957
Lerner Azriel ben Mordechai 1016
Lerner Bat-Sheva 1021
Lerner Doba & Her Family 1020
Lerner Fefka 1023
Lerner Israel Shmuel ben Pinchas 1010
Lerner Mindl 1012
Lerner Mindl 1014
Lerner Mordechai Tarnawatka 1013
Lerner Pinchas ben Mordechai 1015
Lerner Rivka 1022
Lerner Sarah Rivka bat Pinchas 1011
Lerner Shakhna 1009
Lerner Shayndl & 4 Sons 1018
Lerner Shmuel ben Fyvel & Family 993
Lerner Shmuel 1019
Lerner Yaakov 1017
Levenfus Aryeh ben Berish & Family 983
Levenfus Itcheh ben Berish & Family 982
Lichtenfeld Yehoshua 966
Lichtenfeld Esther His Wife 967
Lichtenfeld Abraham ben Yehoshua 968
Lichtenfeld Itcheh ben Shlomo 962
Lichtenfeld Mikhl ben Yehoshua 970
Lichtenfeld Sarah & Her Family 963
Lichtenfeld Shlomo 964
Lichtenfeld Sinai ben Shlomo 965
Lichtenfeld Zvi Hirsch ben Yehoshua 969
Lichtenstein Mikhl 971
Lichtenstein Rivka & Her Family 972
Lieber Abraham ben Yaakov Moshe 954
Lieber Sarah bat Yaakov Moshe 955
Lieber Shprinza 953
Listenberg Dvora bat Yaakov 977
Listenberg Mindl 976
Listenberg Moshe ben Yaakov 978
Listenberg Yaakov ben Israel Dov 975
Lung Sholom ben Dov & Family 974
Lung Zundl ben Dov & Family 973
Lustig Abish Mikhl ben Joseph 941
Lustig Abraham Azriel Lemel ben Avigdor & Family 951
Lustig Avigdor 945
Lustig Dov ben Avigdor & Family 948
Lustig Esther Rachel bat David 946
Lustig Gittl bat Joseph 943
Lustig Gittl bat Avigdor & Her Family 949
Lustig Jonah ben Joseph 942
Lustig Shayndl bat Chaim Shmuel 944
Lustig Simcha ben Avigdor & Family 950
Lustig Ze'ev ben Lipa & Family 947

Luszczanowsky Ze'ev Dov ben Abraham Yaakov 952
Lutner Chaim Shmuel 961

M

Malarzh Joseph David 1105
Malarzh Shimon 1106
Malarzh Yeshayahu 1030
Malleman Baylah bat Israel 1057
Maltz Ethel 1031
Mehl Aharon Berish ben Zvi 1076
Mehl Chaim Shmuel 1072
Mehl Freida & 5 Sons 1077
Mehl Toba bat Zundl 1075
Mehl Zundl ben Zvi 1073
Mehl Zvi ben Yaakov 1074
Meldung Dvora 1082
Meldung Feiga bat Shmuel 1081
Meldung Golda 1080
Meldung Joseph ben Yaakov 1078
Meldung Shmuel 1079
Merenstein David ben Joseph 1103
Merenstein Itta bat Joseph 1104
Merenstein Joseph ben Eli' 1100
Merenstein Malya bat Joseph 1101
Merenstein Pearl bat Joseph 1102
Mermelstein Ary' Leibl ben Yerakhmiel HaKohen Rawa Ruska 1098
Mermelstein Chaya bat Yerakhmiel HaKohen 1095
Mermelstein Chaya bat Yerakhmiel HaKohen 1099
Mermelstein Jocheved bat Bat Zion 1097
Mermelstein Joseph ben Eli' 1096
Messer Basha bat Shmuel Asher 1093
Messer Chaim 1083
Messer Chana 1092
Messer Feiga 1088
Messer Hena bat Chaim 1086
Messer Hirsch Leib ben Mendl 1087
Messer Meir ben Chaim 1085
Messer Miriam bat Moshe 1084
Messer Nesha 1089
Messer Rachel bat Shmuel Asher 1094
Messer Shayndl 1090
Messer Shmuel Asher 1091
Milch Baylah bat Mendl 1063
Milch Dvora bat Hirsch 1061
Milch Eli' Ber ben Shmuel Meir 1059
Milch Mendl ben Shmuel Meir 1060
Milch Miriam bat Mendl 1062
Millstein Menucha bat Yaakov Shafran & 7 Children 1058
Mincer Dvora Jozefów 28 Tammuz 5703 1067
Mincer Frum'cheh 1069
Mincer Krein'cheh Jozefów 28 Tammuz 5704 1068
Mincer Yitzhak ben Moshe Aharon 1066
Mincer 1070
Miracznik Dvora 1071
Miracznik Hinde 1050
Miracznik Shayndl 1051
Mittelman Chaya Sarah bat Meir 1065
Mittelman Simcha ben Pinchas 1064
Morgenstern Ber'l ben Mordechai 1034
Morgenstern Chana bat Mordechai 1036
Morgenstern Gittl bat Eliezer Bornstein 1032
Morgenstern Joseph ben Mordechai 1035
Morgenstern Margalit bat Shmuel 1038
Morgenstern Mordechai ben Aryeh 1033
Morgenstern Sarah bat Shmuel 1039
Morgenstern Shmuel ben Maness 1037
Munter Baylah 1045
Munter Chaya bat Fishl 1052
Munter Dov ben Shmuel Eli' 1054
Munter Feiga bat Fishl 1048
Munter Fishl ben Yaakov 1044
Munter Hirsch ben Fishl 1053
Munter Itta 1041
Munter Lipa ben Yaakov 1042
Munter Lipa ben Fishl 1046
Munter Rachel bat Yaakov 1043
Munter Rachel bat Fishl 1049
Munter Shmuel ben Fishl 1047
Munter Yaakov ben Lipa 1040
Munter Yerukham ben Dov 1055
Munter Zundl ben Shmuel Eli' 1056

N

Nadel Baruch ben Noah 1112
Nadel Bluma bat Chaim 1107
Nadel Hytl bat Chaim 1108
Nadel Reizl 1109
Nadel Reizl bat Noah 1111
Nadel Sima bat Yekhezkiel Russia 1113
Nadel Zalman David 1110
Nadler Hirsch ben Netanel 1117
Nadler Netanel ben Yaakov 1114
Nadler Pesach ben Netanel 1115
Nadler Wolf ben Netanel 1118
Nadler Yaakov ben Netanel 1116
Natt Rivka 1120
Natt Tevel 1119
Neuhaus Esther bat Rabbi Nachman 1121
Neuhaus Kayzh'eh bat Rabbi Moshe 1123
Neuhaus Leibusz ben Rabbi Nachman 1122

O

Ofen	David	ben Meir Ze'ev & Family	*Skalat*	53
Ofen	Feiga	bat David	*Skalat*	58
Ofen	Golda	bat David	*Skalat*	59
Ofen	Liebeh	bat David	*Skalat*	61
Ofen	Meir Wolf	ben David	*Skalat*	56
Ofen	Rivka	bat David	*Skalat*	55
Ofen	Sarah	bat David	*Skalat*	60
Ofen	Szprinca		*Skalat*	54
Ofen	Yaakov	ben David	*Skalat*	57

P Q

Panzer	Mikhl	ben Shlomo & Family	1192
Panzer	Shimon	ben Yekhiel Mikhl	1193
Pastawalsky		Ella Rachil bat Yehoshua Neu	1195
Pastawalsky		Yitzhak	1194
Pearl	Aharon	ben David HaKohen	1276
Pearl	Israel Meir	ben David HaKohen	1278
Pearl	Leah Reizl	bat Joel Shafran	1275
Pearl	Menachem Dov	ben David HaKohen	1277
Pearl	Reizl	& Her Sons	1279
Pfefferman		Abraham ben Nathan Neta	1270
Pfefferman		Aharon ben Nathan Neta	1268
Pfefferman		Feiga bat Baruch	1269
Pfeiffer	Israel		1343
Pitluck	Abraham	ben Eli' Menachem	1354
Pitluck	Chana	bat Iseel Yitzhak	1362
Pitluck	Chana	bat Eli' Menachem	1363
Pitluck	Chaya Sarah	bat Moshe Yaakov	1361
Pitluck	David Jonah	ben Abraham	1356
Pitluck	Eli' Menachem	ben Ze'ev	1353
Pitluck	Israel Yitzhak	ben Eli' Menachem	1360
Pitluck	Moshe Joseph	ben Abraham	1358
Pitluck	Rosa	bat Abraham	1359
Pitluck	Shmuel Fyvusz	ben Abraham	1357
Pitluck	Shosha	bat David Jonah	1355
Pomerantz	Feiga (Foyda)	bat Jekuthiel Tremblinki	1188
Pomerantz		Pinchas Tremblinki	1191
Pomerantz		Sarah Tremblinki	1190
Pomerantz		Zelig Tremblinki	1189
Prager	Aharon	ben Shlomo	1330
Prager	Aryeh	ben Yaakov	1335
Prager	Dov	ben Ze'ev	1334
Prager	Fishl	ben Moshe	1329
Prager	Rosa	bat Yaakov	1336
Prager	Yaakov	ben Jonah	1331
Prager	Yeshaya	ben Yaakov	1333
Prager	Ze'ev	ben Jonah	1332
Putter	Berish	ben Nachman	1226
Putter	Mir'tcheh	His Wife	1227
Putter	Aydl		1221
Putter	Bluma		1220
Putter	Chaim		1217
Putter	Chava'leh		1219
Putter	Chaya	Lemberg	1204
Putter	Doba	bat Fyvel	1216
Putter	Ethel		1342
Putter	Helya	& 2 Children Lemberg	1206
Putter	Issachar	ben Yaakov	1346
Putter	Joseph	ben Shmuel Lemberg	1207
Putter	Joseph	Ben Sinai Lemberg	1214
Putter	Joseph	ben Nachman	1225
Putter	Khalya	bat Netanel Ratzimer	1224
Putter	Leah Rivka	Wife of Elazar from Komarow Russia	1222
Putter	Malya	bat Berish	1230
Putter	Malya Mindl	bat Sinai Lemberg	1215
Putter	Moshe	ben Yaakov	1347
Putter	Nachman	ben Berish	1228
Putter	Pesach	ben Yaakov	1348
Putter	Rachel		1211
Putter	Reizl		1209
Putter	Ri'kl	bat Ary' Heller & 5 Sons	1344
Putter	Rivka	bat Berish	1229
Putter	Sarah	Lemberg	1213
Putter	Shimon	ben Fyvel	1210
Putter	Shmuel	ben Joseph Lemberg	1203
Putter	Sinai	ben Fyvel	1208
Putter	Sinai	ben Joseph Lemberg	1212
Putter	Yaakov	ben Pesach & Family	1345
Putter	Yehoshua	ben Shmuel Lemberg	1205
Putter	Yekhezkiel	ben Zechariah & His Wife	1223
Putter	Zippora		1218

R

Ratzmir	Baylah Rosa	bat Mordechai	1596
Ratzmir	Mordechai		1594
Ratzmir	Sarah	bat Netanel	1595
Reichenberg		Moshe & Family	1634
Reifer	Israel	ben Chaim	1625
Reifer	Joseph	ben Chaim	1626
Reifman		Abraham ben Mordechai	1623
Reifman		Rosa	1624
Reinstein		Abraham ben Chaim Pinchas	1622
Reinstein		Moshe ben Chaim Pinchas	1621
Reis	Bezalel	ben Shimon	1601
Reis	David	ben Simcha	1604
Reis	Fyvel	Tarnopol	1605
Reis	Genya	bat Leib Lichter	1603
Reis	Manya	Rawa Ruska	1608
Reis	Yaakov	& 2 Sons Rawa Ruska	1607

Reis Yudl ben Shimon 1602
Reis Zlata Tarnopol 1606
Reisfeld Abraham Yaakov 1614
Reisfeld Chana 1615
Reisfeld Esther 1610
Reisfeld Ethel bat Yekhezkiel 1611
Reisfeld Hodel 1620
Reisfeld Joseph ben Yekhezkiel 1612
Reisfeld Moshe ben Yekhezkiel 1613
Reisfeld Rachel 1617
Reisfeld Rivka 1616
Reisfeld Rivka bat Rachel 1618
Reisfeld Shayndl bat Rachel 1619
Reisfeld Yekhezkiel ben Moshe 1609
Reisner Freida bat Abraham Warter & Her Family 1598
Reisner Gittl & Her Sister 1599
Reisner Shimon 1597
Rekhner Isaac ben Joseph & Family Berdichev 1633
Richter David 1627
Richter Esther bat Nachman 1628
Richter Nachman ben David & Family 1629
Rind Abraham Berish 1632
Rind Tema 1631
Rind Yitzhak 1630
Roch Joseph 1578
Roch Moshe 1577
Roch Rechil 1576
Roch Shmuel 1575
Rosen Benjamin & His Wife 1584
Rosen Leib'l & His Wife 1585
Rosenberg Mir'l 1591
Rosenberg Moshe ben Zelig 1593
Rosenberg Pesha bat Zelig 1592
Rosenberg Zelig ben Eliezer 1590
Rosner David ben Moshe Yaakov 1586
Rosner Joseph Elimelech ben Mordechai 1587
Rosner Pinchas ben Mordechai 1588
Rosner Yitzhak ben Joseph Elimelech 1589
Rott Aryeh ben Joseph 1570
Rott Chaim Leib ben Joseph 1565
Rott Ethel Rosa bat Simcha 1571
Rott Joseph ben Pinchas 1569
Rott Miriam bat Joseph 1564
Rott Pess'l bat Abraham Hirsch 1566
Rott Rivka bat Meshullam 1568
Rott Sholom 1567
Rott Zvi Yehoshua Moshe ben Joseph 1563
Rottenberg Gershon & Family 1572
Rottenberg Masha bat Gershon 1574
Rottenberg Shabtai ben Gershon 1573
Rubin Rabbi Ary' Leibusz ben Rabbi Yitzhak Tuvia 1581
Rubin Rabbi Meir ben Rabbi Ary' Leibusz 1582
Rubin Shayndl bat Jonah 1583
Rubinstein Chaim Elazar 1600
Ruv Baruch ben Ephraim 1579
Ruv Yaakov ben Ephraim 1580

S

Schaffel Moshe ben David 1635
Schafran Abraham ben Yaakov Joel & Family Krasznik 1637
Schafran Feiga & Her daughter Rachel, & Her Family 1639
Schafran Mikhl Yehuda ben Yaakov Joel 1638
Schafran Yaakov Joel ben Abraham 1636
Schechter Gittl bat Yaakov Meldung 1762
Scheid Benjamin ben Eliyahu 1724
Scheid Eliyahu 1720
Scheid Itta Malya 1721
Scheid Moshe Aharon ben Eliyahu 1722
Scheid Shmuel ben Eliyahu 1723
Scheier Shmuel & Family 1725
Schlagbaum Baylah bat Shmuel 1728
Schlagbaum Bluma bat Shmuel 1729
Schlagbaum Gittl bat Shmuel 1730
Schlagbaum Gittl bat Chaim 1733
Schlagbaum Pearl bat Shmuel 1731
Schlagbaum Pinchas ben Shmuel 1732
Schlagbaum Shmuel ben Abraham Yehoshua Heschel 1727
Schlier Breineh 1744
Schlier Chaim Yokhanan ben Shmuel 1749
Schlier Gittl 1746
Schlier Joseph 1742
Schlier Mendl 1745
Schlier Miriam 1743
Schlier Shmuel 1748
Schnei Charna 1750
Schnei Chaya Sarah 1752
Schnei Rachel bat Mordechai Yitzhak 1751
Schneider Yaakov ben Moshe Eliyahu 1753
Schnur Itta bat David 1734
Schnur Miriam Esther bat Shlomo 1741
Schnur Rivka bat Yehoshua 1736
Schnur Rosa bat Zvi 1738
Schnur Shimon ben Eliezer Zalman 1740
Schnur Shmuel Natan ben Yehoshua 1735
Schnur Tchip'eh bat Yehoshua 1737
Schnur Yehoshua ben Eliezer Zalman 1739
Schuldiner Chana 1665
Schuldiner Chava bat Nahum 1662
Schuldiner Chaya 1667
Schuldiner Ephraim ben Moshe Leib 1664

Schuldiner Leah bat Moshe Leib 1663
Schuldiner Leah'keh 1668
Schuldiner Malya bat Yaakov 1661
Schuldiner Nahum ben Moshe Leib 1660
Schuldiner Shayndl 1666
Schwartz Abraham Meir ben Mordechai 1643
Schwartz Chana bat Joseph 1647
Schwartz Hena Reizl bat Yaakov 1649
Schwartz Hen'cheh bat Joseph 1646
Schwartz Mindl bat Yaakov 1651
Schwartz Moshe Chaim ben Yaakov 1650
Schwartz Pesha bat Yaakov 1648
Schwartz Yaakov ben Leib'l 1645
Schwartz Zalman ben Mordechai 1644
Schwindler David ben Sholom Aharon 1653
Schwindler Frimet bat Netanel, His Wife 1654
Schwindler Chaya bat Eliezer 1652
Schwindler Joseph ben Abraham 1659
Schwindler Mordechai ben David 1655
Schwindler Moshe Yaakov ben David 1658
Schwindler Shoshana bat David 1656
Schwindler Yitzhak ben David 1657
Seltzer Feiga 787
Shapiro Abraham ben Joseph 1801
Shapiro Baylah bat Joseph Putter 1798
Shapiro Eliezer 1797
Shapiro Ephraim ben Joseph 1802
Shapiro Hen'cheh 1800
Shapiro Joseph ben Eliezer 1799
Shapiro Sinai ben Joseph 1803
Sherer Leah'cheh & 3 Sons 1776
Sherer Pearl Wife of Moshe 1777
Sherer Toba 1774
Sherer Wolf ben Moshe 1778
Sherer Yaakov 1773
Sherer Yosha ben Yaakov 1775
Sherman Shmuel 1769
Sherman Feiga His Wife 1770
Sherman Abraham Eli' ben Shmuel Lvov 1772
Sherman Henoch ben Shmuel Russia 1771
Shyvin Hanya bat Joseph 1719
Shyvin Joseph & Family 1718
Silberberg Abraham ben David 764
Silberberg Berish ben Abraham & Family 766
Silberberg David ben Abraham 763
Silberberg Sarah Mirl bat Meir Schwartz 765
Silberman Abraham ben Rabbi Joseph 747
Silberman Feiga bat Sholom 744
Silberman Malya Mindl bat Eliezer Shapiro 743
Silberman Sarah bat Sholom 745
Silberman Sholom ben Rabbi Joseph 742
Silberman Yaakov ben Sholom 746
Silberstein Chana bat Jonah 750
Silberstein Feiga bat Aryeh 756
Silberstein Feiga Rosa bat Jonah 749
Silberstein Hinde bat Abraham Daniel 762
Silberstein Jocheved bat Jonah 754
Silberstein Jonah ben Alter 748
Silberstein Joseph ben Abraham Daniel 755
Silberstein Leah bat Jonah 752
Silberstein Leib'l ben Joseph 757
Silberstein Mendl ben Joseph 759
Silberstein Shayndl bat Joseph 758
Silberstein Shmuel ben Abraham Daniel 761
Silberstein Yeshayahu ben Jonah 753
Silberstein Yitzhak ben Joseph 760
Silberstein Yudl ben Jonah 751
Singer Chaim Jonah ben Sholom 769
Singer Chaim Shmuel ben Moshe Mordechai 775
Singer Chana bat Pinchas 780
Singer Israel 782
Singer Leah bat Yekhezkiel Yehuda 776
Singer Malka bat Sholom 770
Singer Mindl bat Mordechai 779
Singer Mirl bat Yitzhak Joseph 774
Singer Moshe Mordechai ben Yekhezkiel Yehuda 773
Singer Peretz ben Sholom 771
Singer Pinchas Elazar ben Jonah 778
Singer Rachel Necha bat Shlomo 783
Singer Rechil & 3 Sons 786
Singer Sarah bat Pinchas 781
Singer Sarah Baylah bat Sholom 772
Singer Ser'keh bat Sholom 768
Singer Ser'keh bat Joseph Freund 784
Singer Sholom ben Ephraim 767
Singer Sholom ben Abraham Rachan 777
Singer Yaakov 785
Sobel Benjamin ben Fishl 1134
Sobel Elazar ben Shimon 1133
Sobel Shimon ben Elazar 1132
Sofer Hena bat Yaakov Zvi 1136
Sofer Sarah bat Chaim 1138
Sofer Sarah Gittl & Her Family 1137
Sofer Tzirl Leah bat Chaim 1135
Springer Yoshe Marakhan 1807
Stahl Alter Yaakov Sholom ben Ze'ev 1669
Stahl Naphtali ben Alter 1670
Stahl Yaakov ben Joseph 1671
Stahl Yehoshua Zvi ben Ze'ev 1672
Steiglitz Ber'l ben Chaim 1677
Steiglitz Chaim ben Shmuel 1674
Steiglitz Joseph ben Chaim 1676
Steiglitz Leah bat Eliezer Bornstein 1673
Steiglitz Sonya bat Chaim 1675

Steinworcel Abraham 1678
Steinworcel Eliezer ben Abraham 1682
Steinworcel Ethel bat Sholom Reis 1681
Steinworcel Sarah 1679
Steinworcel Yitzhak ben Abraham 1680
Stempel Chana bat Joseph 1142
Stempel Chana bat Leibusz 1152
Stempel Chava bat Leibusz 1149
Stempel Dvora bat Leibusz 1147
Stempel Golda bat Leibusz 1148
Stempel Joseph ben Ary' Leib 1139
Stempel Leah Rivka bat Leibusz 1153
Stempel Leib'l ben Joseph 1144
Stempel Mottl ben Joseph 1145
Stempel Nahum ben Leibusz 1146
Stempel Pesha bat Joseph 1141
Stempel Rachel Malya bat Leibusz 1150
Stempel Sarah Hinde bat Leibusz 1151
Stempel Tzivia bat Mordechai 1140
Stempel Yitzhak ben Joseph 1143
Stender Hena Shmuel 1683
Stender Mikhl ben Mordechai 1684
Stender Mordechai ben Mikhl 1685
Stender Shmuel ben Mikhl 1686
Stender Sinai & Family Lubicz 1688
Stender Yitzhak ben Mordechai & Family 1687
Stern Margalit 1714
Stern Mindl 1715
Stern Noah ben Shaul 1713
Stern Shaul 1716
Stern Yehudit 1712
Stern Yitzhak 1711
Stern Zippora 1717
Strasberg Bracha bat Chaim Aryeh 1690
Strasberg Chaim Aryeh ben Eli' 1689
Strasberg Frimet 1696
Strasberg Issachar Dov ben Chaim Ary' 1694
Strasberg Malka bat Hertz Feldsen 1698
Strasberg Moshe ben Yitzhak David 1695
Strasberg Moshe 1697
Strasberg Shmuel ben Chaim Aryeh 1693
Strasberg Tzila bat Moshe 1699
Strasberg Yaakov Koppel ben Chaim Aryeh 1692
Strasberg Zvi Elazar ben Chaim Aryeh 1691
Streicher Yaakov 1709
Streicher Yehudit 1710
Strom Shmuel Nachman ben Ze'ev 1747
Struzler Zelig 1705
Struzler Shayndl His Wife 1706
Struzler Abraham Aharon ben Zvi 1704
Struzler Eliyahu ben Zvi 1700
Struzler Jonah ben Zelig 1707
Struzler Nesha bat Zvi 1702
Struzler Rivka bat Zvi 1701
Struzler Sonya bat Zvi 1703
Struzler Zvi ben Zelig 1708
Sykevich Aydl bat Leib Isser 1131
Sykevich Feiga bat Leib Isser 1129
Sykevich Gad'l ben Leib Isser 1128
Sykevich Joseph ben Mendl & Family 1125
Sykevich Leib Isser ben Shlomo Mordechai 1127
Sykevich Mendl ben Shlomo Mordechai 1124
Sykevich Yehoshua ben Mendl & Family 1126
Sykevich Yenta bat Leib Isser 1130
Szedrowsky Elka bat Yehoshua Neu 1760
Szedrowsky Juta bat Israel 1761
Szenner Bracha bat Rabbi Joseph & 3 Sons 1765
Szenner Chaim Yaakov & Family 1763
Szenner Esther 1756
Szenner Frimet bat Joseph 1758
Szenner Joseph & Family 1755
Szenner Joseph & Family 1767
Szenner Sholom ben Chaim Yaakov & Family 1766
Szenner Simcha ben Chaim Yaakov 1764
Szenner Yaakov ben Aryeh 1757
Szenner Zalman ben Joseph 1759
Sznycer Aryeh ben Israel Yizhak 1754
Szparer Baruch ben Mordechai Joseph 1779
Szparer Baruch ben Mordechai Joseph & Family 1791
Szparer Basha bat Yitzhak Stern 1782
Szparer Itcheh 1786
Szparer Leah bat Yekhezkiel 1780
Szparer Leib'l ben Israel 1781
Szparer Liebeh bat Natan Greenwald 1788
Szparer Mordechai ben Israel & Family 1785
Szparer Mordechai Joseph 1789
Szparer Natan ben Yitzhak 1787
Szparer Pinchas 1790
Szparer Rivka bat Anshel & Her Family 1784
Szparer Vel'yeh ben Israel 1783
Szper Gittl bat Moshe 1805
Szper Malya bat Mordechai 1804
Szper Yitzhak ben Moshe 1806
Szpizajzen Sholom 1768
Szpritzer Laneh 1809
Szpritzer Rachel Gittl bat Shmuel Leib 1810
Szpritzer Shmuel Leib ben Moshe Mordechai 1808
Szpull Dvora 1793
Szpull Hinde 1794
Szpull Leah 1796
Szpull Mordechai 1795
Szpull Yitzhak 1792
Szur Abraham ben Nissan 1640
Szur Leah'cheh His Wife 1641
Szur Yuda & Others 1642
Szyfer Rachel bat Joseph 1726

T

Tarrem	Benjamin	ben Zvi	808
Tarrem	Ethel	bat Zvi	809
Tarrem	Fyvel	ben Zvi	805
Tarrem	Joseph	ben Zvi	807
Tarrem	Leah	bat Zvi	806
Tarrem	Sarah	bat Shmuel	803
Tarrem	Yaakov	ben Zvi	804
Tarrem	Zvi	ben Sholom	802
Teicher	Eliezer Gershon ben Rabbi Joseph Moshe Naphtali		818
Teicher	Jocheved	bat Eliezer Gershon	821
Teicher	Rabbi Yaakov Zvi ben Rabbi Joseph Moshe Naphtali		822
Teicher	Rachel	bat Rabbi Joseph Ary'	819
Teicher	Rivka Mindl	bat Eliezer Gershon	823
Teicher	Shmuel Aryeh	ben Eliezer Gershon	820
Tepler	Benjamin	& Family	830
Tepler	Joel	ben Gedalyahu	829
Tepler	Joseph		828
Trager	Fishl		837
Trager	Joseph		839
Trager	Min'cheh	bat Getzel	833
Trager	Noah		834
Trager	Rivka		835
Trager	Sarah		836
Trager	Shayndl		840
Trager	Shimon		841
Trager	Zvi		838
Tragerman	Ber'keh		842
Tragerman	Bracha	bat Moshe & 2 Sons	843
Trieber	Herman		832
Trieber	Tila		831
Tsann	Eliyahu Koppel	ben Yitzhak	1366
Tsann	Feiga	bat David	1367
Tsann	Kayla	bat Moshe	1371
Tsann	Mordechai	ben Eli' Koppel	1369
Tsann	Moshe	ben Abraham	1364
Tsann	Nahum	ben Eli' Koppel	1368
Tsann	Tzila	bat Moshe	1370
Tsann	Yitzhak	ben Abraham	1365
Tsebber	Bracha		1392
Tsebber	Golda	bat Tevel	1388
Tsebber	Liebeh		1393
Tsebber	Malka	bat Neta	1387
Tsebber	Pesh'l	bat Tevel	1389
Tsebber	Shayndl Reizl	bat Pinchas	1391
Tsebber	Tevel	ben Pinchas	1390
Tshisinsky	Abba		845
Tshisinsky	Chana Tchipa	bat Yekhezkiel	844
Tshisinsky	Menachem		847
Tshisinsky	Rivka		846
Tukhschneider	Malka	bat Zvi	814
Tukhschneider	Mindl	bat Zvi	816
Tukhschneider	Mordechai		810
Tukhschneider	Nahum	ben Zvi	815
Tukhschneider	Necha	bat Zvi	817
Tukhschneider	Tchipa	bat Chaim & Her Family	811
Tukhschneider	Zelda	bat Chaim Kessel	813
Tukhschneider	Zvi		812
Turtletaub	Abish	ben Joseph	801
Turtletaub	Feiga	bat Abish Hubar	797
Turtletaub	Gittl	bat Joseph	799
Turtletaub	Mirl	bat Joseph	798
Turtletaub	Shayndl	bat Joseph	800
Tyerstein	David	Russia	824
Tyerstein	Freida Yehudit	bat Shabtai Friedlander	825
Tyerstein	Shlomo Elazar	ben David	826
Tyerstein	Zlata	bat David	827

U

Unfuss	Benjamin	& Family	30
Unfuss	Chaim Yitzhak		23
Unfuss	Chaya Sarah		24
Unfuss	Hanina		31
Unfuss	Leah	bat Ze'ev	25
Unfuss	Manoss	ben Moshe	29
Unfuss	Menashe	ben Moshe	27
Unfuss	Moshe	ben Chaim Yitzhak	26
Unfuss	Ze'ev	ben Moshe	28

V

Vogel	Hena	bat Pinchas	1199
Vogel	Jekuthiel	ben Pinchas Russia - 1944	1201
Vogel	Mindl	bat Berish	1197
Vogel	Pinia	ben Abraham	1196
Vogel	Sarah	bat Pinchas	1200
Vogel	Shmuel	ben Pinchas	1198

W X

Wagner	Yitzhak	ben Abraham	598
Wagner	Malka	His Wife	599
Wagner	Fyvel	ben Yitzhak	600
Wagner	Sarah	bat Yehuda	624
Waldberg	Itta	& Her Family	620
Waldberg	Leah	& Her Family	684
Waldberg	Lipa	ben Leibusz	619
Waldberg	Yaakov	& Family	621
Waldberg	Yekhiel	ben Leibusz	683
Walter	Abish	ben Naphtali Russia	601
Warman	Malya Mindl	bat Shmuel Putter & 5 Sons	623
Warman	Shlomo		622

Warter Abraham 617
Warter Chana'tcheh 618
Wasser Abraham 610
Wasser Chana bat Abraham 612
Wasser Necha bat Abraham 613
Wasser Sarah Shayndl bat Simcha 614
Wasser Tzivia bat Abraham 611
Wasserman Eliezer ben Yekhiel 615
Wasserman Reuben ben Yekhiel 616
Weinberg Chana bat Benjamin 627
Weinberg Chaya bat Benjamin 628
Weinberg Dvora bat Rabbi Yekhiel Mordechai 625
Weinberg Rachel bat Benjamin 629
Weinberg Shayndl 626
Weinstock Sarah 632
Weintraub Itta Lip'tcheh bat Pinchas 631
Weintraub Ze'ev Eliezer & Family 630
Weissblum Elazar, The Rabbi Lodz 644
Weissblum Leah Shayndl
bat Rabbi Joseph Ary' & Family Lodz 645
Weissleder Shimon & 4 Sons 643
Weissleder Miriam His Wife 642
Weissleder Asher Anshel ben Aryeh 641
Weissleder Esther 634
Weissleder Feiga 638
Weissleder Gut'sheh 635
Weissleder Leib'l ben Moshe Yekhezkiel 640
Weissleder Michael 637
Weissleder Miriam 639
Weissleder Nesha 636
Weissleder Raphael ben Aryeh
633
Weitz Abraham ben Israel 650
Weitz Eliyahu ben Israel Joseph 646
Weitz Ethel bat Eliyahu 649
Weitz Rachel bat Eliyahu 648
Weitz Shlomo ben Eliyahu 647
Weitzman Chava 652
Weitzman David 651
Weitzman Esther bat David 653
Weitzman Rachel 654
Weltscher Abraham Chaim ben Shmuel 677
Weltscher Basha bat Raphael 667
Weltscher Charna Reizl bat Moshe Isaac 672
Weltscher Doba bat Ary' 666
Weltscher Leah bat Mendl 670
Weltscher Menashe ben Abraham 668
Weltscher Miriam bat Mendl 669
Weltscher Moshe ben Mendl 671
Weltscher Moshe Eliezer ben Shmuel 676
Weltscher Pearl bat Shmuel 674
Weltscher Shayndl bat Moshe Eliezer 673
Weltscher Sheva Baylah bat Shmuel 675
Weltscher Sholom ben Eliezer Fishl 665
Weltscher Zlata bat Shmuel 678
Weltz Basha 682
Weltz Baylah bat Sholom 681
Weltz Bluma bat Leibusz 680
Weltz Sholom 679
Wertheit Sar'l 687
Wertheit Zusha 686
Wertman Chaim ben Mordechai Joseph Zamosc 688
Wertman Leibusz 690
Wertman Yaakov ben Mordechai Joseph Tarnogrod 689
Winder Daniel 691
Winder Gittl 664
Winder Hinde bat Mendl 658
Winder Hinde 695
Winder Itta bat Yaakov Zvi 660
Winder Malka 692
Winder Shayndl & Her Family 693
Winder Sheva 662
Winder Shmuel Ary' 655
Winder Tila bat Yehoshua 656
Winder Yaakov ben Mendl 657
Winder Yaakov Hirsch 663
Winder Yaakov Zvi ben Shlomo 659
Winder Yehuda ben Zvi 661
Winder Yehudit bat Yaakov & Family 694
Winshelbaum Aydl bat Aharon Aryeh 685
Wolf Berish ben Shlomo 604
Wolf Chaya bat Eliezer Falb 603
Wolf David ben Shlomo 606
Wolf Esther bat Shlomo 607
Wolf Golda bat Shlomo 608
Wolf Golda bat Joseph 609
Wolf Leibusz ben Shlomo 605
Wolf Shlomo ben Berish 602

Y

Yahrzeig Abish ben Michael 848
Yahrzeig Mendl ben Abish 851
Yahrzeig Rivka bat Michael 849
Yahrzeig Tchipa bat Abish 852
Yahrzeig Urish ben Abish 850
Youngman Aharon Baruch Russia 853
Youngman Sarah Baylah His Wife 854
Youngman Adel bat Baruch 860
Youngman Berish ben Baruch 858
Youngman Pesach 856
Youngman Pess'l bat Baruch 861
Youngman Rachel bat Baruch 859
Youngman Yehudit bat Baruch 857
Youngman Yitzhak ben Boruch 855

Z

Zack Chana bat Meir 698
Zack Desha Bat Meir 699
Zack Leibusz ben Meir 700
Zack Meir ben Shlomo 697
Zallmer Gittl'eh bat Shlomo, age 10
Russia 8 Adar 5741 701
Zaydl Aharon David ben Fyvel 733
Zaydl Basha Gittl bat Yitzhak 728
Zaydl Ben Zion ben Yitzhak 727
Zaydl Breineh bat Moshe Eliezer 734
Zaydl David Russia, 5 Kislev 5702 720
Zaydl Dov ben Yerakhmiel 722
Zaydl Fyvel ben Yaakov Zvi 729
Zaydl Gershon ben Abraham 738
Zaydl Gittl bat Ze'ev 735
Zaydl Israel beb Abraham 737
Zaydl Joseph ben Dov 724
Zaydl Rachel bat Abraham 736
Zaydl Rosa Kreindl Russia, 25 Heshvan 5702 721
Zaydl Rosa Kreindl 726
Zaydl Ser'keh bat Fyvel 732
Zaydl Yaakov ben Dov 723
Zaydl Yente bat Fyvel 731
Zaydl Yitzhak ben Fyvel 730
Zaydl Yitzhak Shmuel ben Dov 725
Zeigel Gershon & Family 792
Zhikhlinsky Chaya Pearl bat Rabbi Moshe Netanel 796
Zhikhlinsky Miriam Malka bat Rabbi Ary' Leibusz 794
Zhikhlinsky Rabbi Moshe Netanel
ben Rabbi Chanoch Saadia 793
Zhikhlinsky Sarah Nechama
bat Rabbi Moshe Netanel 795
Ziegelbaum Abraham ben Benjamin 706
Ziegelbaum Chaya bat Shmuel Ary' 708
Ziegelbaum Chaya Sarah 789
Ziegelbaum David ben Moshe Yitzhak 713
Ziegelbaum Ethel bat Moshe Yitzhak 714
Ziegelbaum Fishl ben Joseph 710
Ziegelbaum Isaac 715
Ziegelbaum Itta bat Henoch 702
Ziegelbaum Joseph ben Moshe 709
Ziegelbaum Leibusz 718
Ziegelbaum Malya 790
Ziegelbaum Mendl 719
Ziegelbaum Moshe ben Joseph 711
Ziegelbaum Moshe Meir ben Benjamin 705
Ziegelbaum Moshe Yitzhak ben Shmuel 712
Ziegelbaum Pesha & Her Family 716
Ziegelbaum Rachel bat Zvi 704
Ziegelbaum Sarah Leah bat Benjamin 707
Ziegelbaum Sima bat Moshe Yitzhak 717
Ziegelbaum Toba 791
Ziegelbaum Yaakov 788
Ziegelbaum Zlata 703
Ziegler Ethel bat Moshe 1383
Ziegler Joseph 1382
Zikhler Chaim Shmuel & Family Russia 741
Zikhler Feiga 740
Zikhler Ze'ev 739
Zimmerman Mordechai Elazar ben Schraga 1386
Zoberman Yekhezkiel Yehuda ben Moshe 696
Zucker Abba ben Yaakov 1378
Zucker Abraham ben Yaakov 1377
Zucker Joseph ben Yerukham 1374
Zucker Kayla 1375
Zucker Mir'l bat Yaakov 1380
Zucker Mordechai ben Yaakov 1376
Zucker Nahum 1372
Zucker Sarah bat Ephraim 1373
Zucker Shayndl bat Yaakov 1379
Zuckerstein Sarah bat Yaakov 1381

We beseech thee to look down from the heavenly heights on the pools of spilled blood of the righteous, the essence of their blood, and see it on thy curtain and remove the stain, Our Lord, King who sits on the Throne of Compassion



Memorials

In Memory of

The Sacred Congregation of Tomaszow-Lubelski That Was Annihilated in the days of The Holocaust, the Years

5739-5745 **1939-1945**

By the German Murderers **ימ"ש**

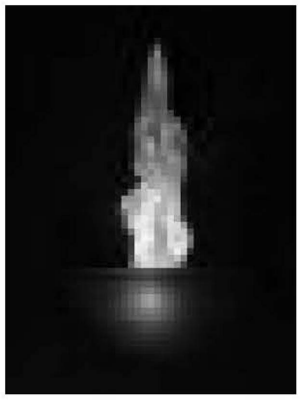
Casualties of the Terror in Israel

Ephraim Tepler ben R' Sholom
Jonah Stahl ben R' Alter

Casualties of the War of Independence

Moshe Laks ben R' Menachem
Moshe Bergman
Mordechai Korman
Eliezer Balsenbaum ben Aryeh v' Zlata

In Memory of the Souls of the Martyrs



Yehoshua Fishelsohn ben Shimon

His Wife, Nekha
Their Son, Chaim



Who was the Chairman of the *Judenrat* when the Gestapo demanded of him that he turn over a specified number of Jews for labor. His reply was "I will not turn over even a single Jew until you return those Jews to us that you have received thus far." For this, the evil Gestapo killed him and his family, and in this way he martyred himself among the many.

Dov ben Joseph Ephraim Burstein

He worked in a labor factory of the Nazis, and at the last minute, when the Gestapo took him out to be killed, he avenged his own blood, and killed two of the Gestapo, and afterwards killed himself, dying a hero's death.

May God Avenge His Blood, and May His Memory Be For A Blessing

The Distinguished Lady Aydl Drott ע"ה

Passed away 4 Tevet 5703 in Russia

She was in Russia with her two daughters, not knowing the fate of her three sons. Upon learning of the gruesome murders, she envied her husband, the well-known musician **R' Chaim Yitzhak ע"ה** that had died previously.

Yaakov Moshe Drott ה"י

With his wife, and their two children, were killed in Belzec.
ה"י

Joseph Eli' Drott ע"ה

Died in Tomaszow after two weeks of the Hitler predations. His wife, and only child, were killed in Belzec ה"י

Noah Drott ע"ה

Was in Russia. In 1941, he went away to Tashkent, seeking an easement in his situation. He died there alone, in a Typhus epidemic.

Gitl'leh Zammler ע"ה

This is the 10 year-old beloved daughter of Shlomo and Esther. Not receiving any medical assistance, she went out like a candle, after intense suffering, on 8 Adar 5701.

תנצב"ה



The daughters of Chaim Yitzhak survive, in perpetual sorrow:

Esther, and her Husband, Shlomo Zammler
with their children and grandchildren
Bayla and her Husband and Daughter
In Toronto, CANADA

My Three Murdered Daughters

Chana Leah Ehrlich
Gitt'l Bricks and her Husband Yaakov Bricks
Feiga Hochman

Page 869: *A Memorial Stone for the daughter of Abraham 'leh Hochman*

Who hid themselves in a yard of Hrabia Zamoyska Deszkowice near the city of Szczebrzeszyn. The Nazis subsequently became aware of them, and shot them all.

After the war, Rachel'eh Bricks, my son-in-law's sister, became aware of this, and made a special trip to the village of Deszkowice and was informed by an elderly peasant as to what has taken place, and where they were buried.

They were all disinterred, and documents were found in their pockets. She was able to work out an arrangement to get permission to have all these martyrs buried in the cemetery of the city of Szczebrzeszyn.

Abraham Hochman

To the Eternal Memory of My Beloved Father

R' Eliyahu Menachem Pitluck ע"ה

Tortured by the Germans in Tomaszow. His holy soul left him on 5 Nissan 5702.

My Beloved Mother **Leah bat R' Shmuel HaKohen**
Died 8 MarHeshvan 5691 in Tomaszow

My beloved sister Chana with her husband, Joseph Lancer and their daughters Rosa and Miriam. They were hidden in a bunker in Sokol. in 1944 a gentile took note of them, and turned them over to the Gestapo who shot them all.

My brother Abraham, with three sons, David Jonah, Shmuel Fyvusz and Moshe Joseph, killed in Zaworow, and his wife, Masha and daughter Rosa – in Tomaszow.

My brother Israel, his wife Sarah with two daughters Chana and Leah.

My sister Chaya Itta with her husband, Moshe Ehrlich with their three children, Rosa'leh, Chaim (the name of the third is not known to me) – in Sokol.

In Painful Sorrow for the Spilling of their Innocent Blood

Aharon Pitluck & Family
In New York

My Grandmother **Baylah Chana**, wife of **R' Chaim Lederman**

Who was driven to Belzec and expired there in Birkho's Mil.

My Brother, **Meir**

Mobilized into the Red Army and lost at the front.

My Brother, **Eliyahu**

He lived on a Ukrainian parcel. Two weeks before the liberation, the master of his house turned him over and he was shot on the street in Lemberg by the Gestapo.



Ratzeh Pilluck & Family
Moshe Lederman & His Family

In Sacred Memory
Of My Dear Parents

My Father, R' Yaakov Eliakim Getzel*
ben R' Pinchas Elazar HaLevi Lehrer ע"ה

Who bore the name of his
Uncle, Rabbi Eliakim Getzel, the Chief Rabbi
in Tomaszow.
Died in New York, 13 Av 5717
August 10, 1957.

My Mother
Chaya Nekha
bat R' Elkanah Zaydl

My mother, Chaya Lehrer, drawn from the memory of Ray Post

Died in Tomaszow
7 Adar 5677

My Father's Sister
Chaya Tema Singer bat R' Pinchas Elazar HaKohen
Died in Tomaszow 15 Adar 5677

** His picture appears on Page 173 of the original text.*

In Memory of the Souls of My Dear Parents, Brothers and Sisters

My Father **R' Aharon Mordechai** ben **R' Aryeh Leibusz Bergstein** ז"ל

My Mother, Mrs. **Matl'l** bat **R' Menachem Mendl** ז"ל of the **Goldman** Family.

My Sister, **Teva** bat **R' Aharon Mordechai** ז"ל

My Sister, **Chana** bat **R' Aharon Mordechai** ז"ל

My Sister, **Pearl** bat **R' Aharon Mordechai** ז"ל

My Brother, **Menachem Mendl** ben **R' Aharon Mordechai** ז"ל

Who were killed and murdered by the murderers who were servants of Hitler ימ"ש
In the City of Tomaszow-Lubelski.

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

May Their Memory Be For a Blessing!



Their Son and Brother
Moshe Bergstein & His Family

To the Eternal Memory



The Soul of Our Father
(Photograph on Page 874)

The *Harid*, wondrous in his Torah scholarship and fear of heaven, who was a *Gabbai* of the *Hevra Kadisha*, and also the Treasurer of the *Talmud Torah*, from an illustrious family descent whose honorable name is his glory

R' Shabtai ben R' Yerakhmiel ע"ה Friedlander

(His father was the son of the daughter of the *Gaon* known as the Rabbi Ary' Leibusz *Harif*, the Rabbi of Plotsk ז"ל, the author of many books, and an honorable resting place in Warsaw).
He died after severe predation and torture

At the hands of the Nazis ימ"ש in Tomaszow
On the Day of 18 Adar II 5700

His chaste wife, a *Hasidic* woman who sat in fasting and engaged in charity
Mrs. Malka bar R' Shimon Ary' Lanell

Killed in Sanctification of The Name in Belzec by the Germans ימ"ש

תנצב"ה

Their Daughter Rechil and Her Sons
Toronto, CANADA

Their Son Joseph & His Family
New York, [USA]

Their Son Moshe & His Family
Netanya, ISRAEL

Frieda Yehudit Tyerstein
Bat R' Shabtai Friedlander
(Picture on Page 875)

She was a gifted and industrious woman, decent and God-fearing. She had a deep acquaintance with modern Yiddish literature. After her marriage, she manages a soda and tea place in the new *Halles*. In the war, her husband flees to Rawa [Ruska] from whence he is sent to the Siberian forests. He dies alone in Samarkand. She remains in Tomaszow with two children, Shlomo Elazar and Zlata'leh. She is alleged to have been evacuated to Cieszanow, and afterwards to Belzec and the gas chambers. No trace remains of the children.

Sarah Dvora
Bat R' Shabtai Friedlander
(Picture on Page 875)

Fled from the Germans to Rawa [Ruska], and there, married Joseph Laneil. Both were killed there by the German cannibals.

> From me: Your sister, **Rechil** and her children, your brother **Joseph** and his family, and your brother **Moshe** and his family, carry your death throes in our hearts together with feeling of vengeance towards the murderers.

ל.נ

Mal'ya Mindl bat R' Shabtai Friedlander

(Picture on Page 876)

Traveled to Warsaw while very young, where she assists her uncle Moshe ז"ל in his butter business. She contracts Tuberculosis from having caught a cold. She closes her young, clever eyes forever on *Shabbat HaGadol* 8 Nissan 5776 in the Tomaszow hospital at 21 years of age.



Sinai ben R' Shabtai Friedlander

Along with many other victims, in the summer of 1940, he is driven to the cold Russian north, to do hard labor, where his fingers are frozen off, and his entire body is weakened.

His holy spirit leaves his body on 2 MarHeshvan 5702 at the age of 38 in the shtetl of Lenger in the Tshimenk *Oblast*, Kazakhstan.

Your sister Rechil and Her Children
Your Brother Joseph & Family
Your Brother Moshe & Family

Will never forget your abruptly terminated young lives.

To the Eternal Memory of the Holy and Pure Souls Like the Brightness of the Firmament

The Soul of My Father, Teacher and Mentor
Beloved among Men, Community Activist, Loyal to His Missions
Rabbi & Hasid Shmuel ben R' Joseph HaLevi Meldung ע"ה

Who fled from the war to Rawa Ruska, and from there, went over to live in Ozerna near Tarnopol, and died there on 18 MarHeshvan 5701

My Mother, Teacher and Respected Lady, Beloved and Gentle
Mrs. Golda Pearl bat R' Shammai Mordechai הי"ד

Incinerated at Belzec in *Sanctification of the Name* הי"ד

My Sister, Mrs. **Ray'li** bat R' Shmuel HaLevi
Who died in her youth at the age of 33 years, in the year 5693 in Krasnobrod

Her Respected Husband, **R' Yehoshua** ben R' Pinchas HaLevi Glatter הי"ד
Who was one of the most prominent balebatim of Krasnobrod,
Gentle and of charitable disposition, who participated in carrying the burden of the community and in philanthropy.

Their Unmarried Daughters, **Leah,** and **Miriam Gitt'l** הי"ד

His second wife, my sister, **Feiga Nesha** bat R' Shmuel HaLevi הי"ד

My brother-in-law, R' Yehoshua Glatter and his family settled down together with my father and his family in the city of Ozerna. When the Germans captured the city, and appointed a *Judenrat*, they wanted to appoint his as the head, and he refused to participate in the work with the Germans. He therefore refused to accept the appointment with the excuse that he is a new resident who is not familiar with the residents of the town, and all the members of the Judenrat learned from his example and vacated the offices that had been imposed on them. The Germans shot them immediately and they fell to their death as martyrs. May their memories be for a blessing.

My Brother **Abraham Abba** ben R' Shmuel HaLevi Meldung הי"ד

For the entire duration of the war, he was hiding out in a bunker that was near the city of Zlacow together with seventy other people. Four weeks before the liberation he went out to by medicines in urgency for one of his Jewish comrades who was laying

in the bunker suffering from typhus. On his return, he was shot in the back by a Polish gentile, and while he was still writhing in his blood, he stripped him of his clothing and took his watch off his hand. ה"ד

Land – land, do not cover up their innocent blood, until such time that vengeance will return upon those who preyed on them, and that Judah and Israel will live in safety on both sides of the Jordan

Their Son and Brother, from Whom their Memory will not Stir from His Heart, Forever

Shammai & His Wife

A Permanent Memorial

My Father, Beloved among Men, Respected and Admired, a Remarkable Torah Scholar, Community Activist

R' Benjamin Weinberg, ע"ה

ben R' Moshe Leib ע"ה **of Zamość**

One of the Community Leaders of Tomaszow-Lubelski, died with a Good Name
1 Day Rosh Hodesh Adar 5792

My Dear Mother, Chaste and Well-Known, of Charitable Heart, & Philanthropic

Mrs. Sarah bat Abraham ע"ה

Died with a Good Name 19 Adar.

My Sister, Mrs. **Chana Baylah** bat R' Benjamin הי"ד
Her Husband, **Mr. Azriel HaKohen Pearl** הי"ד from Zamość
And their Sons, **Shmuel, Siegfried** הי"ד
Killed in Majdanek in *Sanctification of the Name*

My Sister **Chaya** bat R' Benjamin, הי"ד
Her Husband **Moshe Falk** הי"ד from Lemberg

My Sister **Rechil** bat R' Benjamin ע"ה
Died as a young woman in Russia during the days of the war
Her Husband, **Baruch** ben R' Reuven Schnur of Zamość
Who Died in Israel in 5724

My Sister **Leah** bat R' Benjamin ע"ה
Yahrzeit 21 Tevet

My Young Brother **Mordechai Meir** ben R' Benjamin ע"ה
22 Tevet 5682

My Uncle R' **Moshe Menachem** ben R' Eliakim Getzel Brand ע"ה

My Aunt Mrs. **Git'cheh** bat R' Moshe Leib ע"ה
Their sons, **Rabbi & Hasid Shlomo Zalman,** and his issue הי"ד
R' Yitzhak and their issue הי"ד

R' Eliakim Getzel, His Wife and their issue הי"ד

From One Who Writes in Blood and Tears

Rivka Finkevich

As An Eternal Memorial

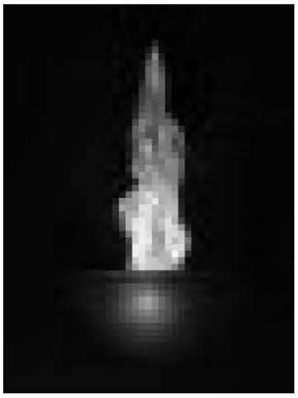
Our Father and My Dear Husband

Who Walked in the Path of Righteousness, Did Good Deeds
A Righteous Man Among Men

R' Moshe ben R' David ע"ה Finkevich

Died With a Good Name 8 Iyyar 5720

Your Memory will Never Depart from Us



His Wife Rivka
His Daughter Sarah Leah and Yaakov Moshe Weinstock
And their Sons

The Regarded Rabbinical Practitioner, Noble and Charitable of Heart Among His People

R' Eliezer Gershon ben R' Shmuel Zvi Bergenbaum ע"ה

(Picture on Page 880)

One of the most prominent balebatim in the city. He always participated in all worthwhile activities, and was the first to do so with a full hand. Born in Zamość in 1866, died in Tomaszow on 19 Nissan 5698.



Shmuel Shiffinger and His Son Adam
New York, NY

Shmuel Hitter & Family
New York, NY

Joseph Hitter & Family
Los Angeles, CA

Pinchas Bekher & Family
New Haven , CT

His Respected and Notable Wife, Noble, Renown and of Generous Heart

Mrs. Ser'keh הי"ד bat R' Israel Mordechai Garfinkel

(Picture on Page 881)

She died tragically in *Sanctification of the Name* on 15 MarHeshvan 5702. Murderous gentile hooligans beat her to death with staves, and buried her in a field not far from the Zamość Road. A Gentile from the city related this to her son Yaakov ע"ה, who, in 1946 on returning from Russia, risked his life and visited Tomaszow. For a good price, the gentile helped to find the location where she was buried. With great effort, he was able to transfer her remains to the cemetery and gave her a Jewish burial.

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה. ה"י"ד

Preserving Your Memory is the Pride of Our Family

Rivka Friedman-Shiflinger & Family
NewYork, NY

Leibusz Gerzon & Family
NewHaven, CT

Israel Bergenbaum & Family
NewYork, NY

Shmuel Bergenbaum & Family
NewYork, NY

As An Eternal Memorial

(Picture Page 882)

The Soul of

R' Shmuel Fyvel ben R' Yaakov Kleiner נ"ע

From the Village of Szlatyn beside Jarczów in the Tomaszow-Lubelski Vicinity

He was a respected man, God-fearing, and Charitable.

Died 13 Tevet 5703 [1942]

In Deep Sorrow, Surviving

His Wife Blima
His Children, Chaya, Moshe Dov, Gitt'l & Yaakov
And their Families

To the Eternal Memory of Our Loyal and Unforgettable Mother
the Prominent Lady

Mrs. Ethel Bergenbaum ה"ד

bat R' Abraham Abish Boxenbaum ע"ה
Born in Tomaszow 1900
(Picture on Page 883)

The Wife of Our Prominent Father

R' Yaakov ben R' Eliezer Gershon Bergenbaum ע"ה

And Our Dear Little Brother

Schneur Zalman ה"ד ben R' Yaakov ע"ה

Born in 1936



Who tragically died in the German death factories in the year 1942., ת"ש. Your graves are cut out in our hearts. The wound can never be healed. Your image will remain before our eyes forever.

The Children:

Tzila & Shmuel Hitter
With Daughter Tema

Israel & Sarah Berger
With the Children, Ethel, Yaakov Fishl

Shmuel Berger

The In-Laws

Mir'l Gigbel
Buenos Aires

Zlata Citrin
Toronto, CANADA

Shmuel Harubi
Israel

Yehoshua Boxenbaum
Israel

Chana Glaber
Israel

Yaakov Harubi
New York, NY

Abraham Abba
Ben R' Eliezer Gershon Bergenbaum
Born 1894; Killed 17 Heshvan 1942

His Wife **Frimet**
And their Children **Motl'l** and **Reizl'eh** ז"ל

(Composite Picture on Page 884)



All were shot by the German Commandant in Tomaszow.
Their Yahrzeit is 17 MarHeshvan 5702.

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Shmuel Shiflinger
And Children

Rivka Friedman
And Family

Shmuel Hitter
And Family

Leibusz Gerzon
And Family

Joseph Hitter
And Family

Israel Bergenbaum
And Family

Pinchas Bekher
And Family

Shmuel Bergenbaum
And Family

The Prominent Lady Frimet Hitter
Bat R' Eliezer Gershon Bergenbaum ז"ל
Majdanek

(Page 885, Picture with Unidentified Man)



Wife of **Israel** ben R' Shimshon Meir Hitter ז"ל
Lublin

Their Daughter **Gitl** and her Husband **Joseph Zeitl**, and their son **Yitzhak**
Majdanek

Their Daughter **Leah** her Husband, and Daughter **Tema**

Their Daughter **Yehudit**, her Husband and Daughter **Baylah**

ה"ש"ד

Shmuel Hitter & Family
Joseph Hitter & Family

My Father & Teacher, the Noble Rabbi from the Trisk *Hasidim*

R' Mordechai ben R' Zvi Gelernter ה"י

Grandson of the Holy Rabbi R' Herschel'i Gelernter זצ"ל of Tomaszow
One of the students of the great Gaon, The Seer [*Khozeh*] of Lublin זצ"ל

My Mother & Teacher Dvora Rechil bat R' Ze'ev Jonah ה"י

Killed, in *Sanctification of the Name*, on I Shavuot 5702 in Belzec

My Chaste Sister, Mrs. **Rosa** bat R' Mordechai ע"ה
Died 20 Heshvan 5694 after giving birth to twins.

My Dear Sister **Chaya** bat R' Mordechai ה"י

Her Husband, **R' Ze'ev Velvel Gartler** ה"י ben R' Zvi

And The Three of Their Children
All murdered by the Nazis in Belzec

My Dear Brother **Moshe Ell'** Ben R' Mordechai Gelernter ה"י

His Wife, **Pess'l** and Their Children ה"י

Killed by the Germans in Rovno



Ze'ev Jonah & Pearl Gelernter
And Their Family

In Place of a Monument, to Our Parents, Sisters, & Their Families

Our Dear Father, Beloved Among Men, Generous and Charitable

R' Israel ben R' Yitzhak HaLevi ע"ה Lehrman

A Belz *Hasid,* respected merchant, in harmony with his environment, and participated with great generosity in all good initiatives. Died, in the fulness of life, 4 Heshvan 5698

Our Mother

Yakhid [Jocheved] bat R' Aharon ע"ה

Who was a prominent lady, diligent, and a 'Woman of Valor' in the fullest sense of the word, helping our father in the store, and attempting to do charitable and good deeds.

(Portrait on Page 887)

Our Sister, **Esther** bat R' Israel HaLevi ה"ד

Her First Husband **Yehosh'ikeh Fuchs** ע"ה from Rawa Ruska
Died in his Youth

Their Son, the Lad, **David** ה"ד

Her Second Husband, **Joseph Steinberg** of Narol ה"ד
With their Two Children

All Killed in Belzec

Shlomo Lehrman & Family
Munich, Germany

Pesha Glanzer & Her Family
Israel

Jonah Lehrman & Family
New York, NY

Shmuel Lehrman
Vineland, NJ

In Memory of the Souls of My Dear Parents



The Noble Rabbi of the Husyatin *Hasidim*

R' Naphtali Hertz ben R' Aharon Feldsehn ע"ה

Died 28 Shevat 5691

His Wife, the Dear and Prominent Women of the Home, May She Be Blessed

Mrs. Feiga bat R' Nehemiah ע"ה

Killed, in Sanctification of the Name in Belzec

My Sister, Malka bat R' Naphtali Hertz ה"ד

Her Husband Moshe Strasberg ה"ד

Their Child, Tzila ה"ד



Their Son and Brother

Jonah Feldsen and Esther & His Family

To The Sacred Memory



Of Our Beloved Father and Grandfather

Rabbi, Hasid & Noble R' Zvi (Hirsch)
Ben R' Moshe Yaakov Arbesfeld ז"ע

Who was one of the prominent people of the city, a Gabbai of the Hevra Kadisha, and a prominent Hasid in the Kielce House of Worship. He died on the First Day of Rosh Hodesh Adar I 5703 in the city of Biysk, Altaiski Krai, Russia.

▣

Our Beloved Mother and Grandmother

Mrs. Toba bat R'Levi Israel Arbesfeld ע"ה

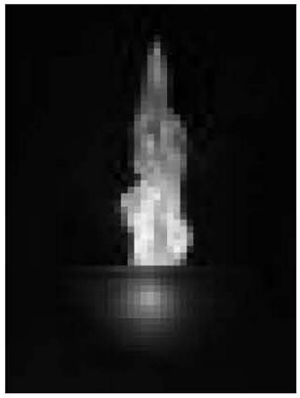
Died 28 Iyyar in Tomaszow-Lubelski

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Your Son
Eli' Arbesfeld

And His Children
Dvora Weinsleder. Rivka'leh Goldstein
And Pinchas Arbesfeld
With their Families

To The Sacred Memory



Of Our Young Mother, of Full Heart, Who Passed Away

Mrs. Chana Bat R' Pinchas Arbesfeld ע"ה

Who passed away in the prime of life
2 Rosh Hodesh MarHeshvan 5693 in Tomaszow-Lubelski

Your pure and shining image will forever hover before our eyes.

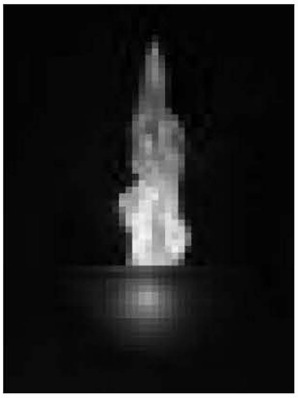
Dvora Weissleder
New York, NY

Riv'eleh Goldstein
Tel-Aviv, ISRAEL

Pinchas Arbesfeld
ISRAEL

And Their Families

To The Sacred Memory



Of Our Dear Husband and Father

Rabbi & Hasid R' Abraham ben R' Israel Arbesfeld ע"ה

Who died in the prime of life at the age of 48 years, having been exiled along with his entire family to Siberia, Altaiski Krai, Chervinsky Region. His Yahrzeit is 22 Iyyar 5702.

Leah Arbesfeld

Moshe & Grina Arbesfeld & Children

Chana & Naphtali Koch & Children

Mir'l & Yeshay' Greenfeld & Children

In Memory of Our Fathers & Sisters ע"ה



Rabbi, *Hasid*, Noble & Prominent Aristocrat

R' Yekhiel Mikhl ben R' Tuvi' Reis

Died in New York 25 Shevat 5716

His Chaste, Prominent Wife

Mrs. Feiga Shayndl bat R' Aharon Lipa ע"ה

Who died on 9 Tevet in the year 5705 in Djamboul (Kazakhstan)

Their Daughter **Dvora Yuta** bat R' Yekhiel Mikhl ז"ל

And Her Husband R' **Aharon** ben R' David Garik from Kovel' ז"ל

And the Little Girl, **Hinde** ז"ל

Who were killed, and died a martyr's death, in the Kovel' Synagogue, Wolhyn
Together with Thousands of Jews ז"ל

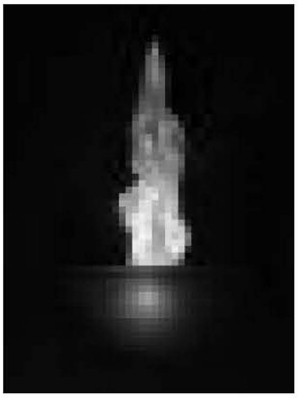
Mordechai Zvi Reis
And Family

Asher Dov Reis
And Family

Tuvia & Schrage Fyvel Heilpern
and Their Families

Chana Bina and Rabbi Isser Zaltzberg
And Their Family

To the Eternal Memory



Of My Dear Parents and Family

Who were so barbarically killed by the German murderers in Tomaszow-Lubelski

⊡

My Father
Yehoshua Lichtenfeld

My Mother
Esther Lichtenfeld

Their Sons
Abraham Lichtenfeld
Zvi Hirsch Lichtenfeld
Michael Lichtenfeld

Their young, innocent spilled blood will not rest
until vengeance is visited upon their predators

Malya & Leib'l Fleischer
And Children

To Be Forever Remembered

R' Abraham ben R' Moshe Chaim Nickelsburg

A very well-respected member of the *balebatim* of the city. He was a very regarded member of the *Hevra Kadisha*, a person who could lead services with great taste in the Kielce *shtibl*. He was honest and straightforward in his dealings with others. He fled, with his family to Lemberg, where he became mortally ill. He died after intense suffering, leaving his wife and children in an unfamiliar world beset with wandering. The latter were later sent to Siberia to perform hard labor.

In Deep Sorrow, Those Who Remain Are:

His Wife
His Son and Daughters
With Their Families

Charna Schnei

Bat R' David Barg ע"ה

Wife of R' Mordechai Yitzhak HaLevi

With Her 5 Year-old Little Daughter Rachel

Killed by the German Murderers in Belzec
17 Heshvan 1943

Azriel Schnei & His Family

Yitzhak ben Ephraim Yekhezkiel HaKohen Spitz ע"ה

(Picture of Headstone in Linz Page 895)

Passed Away 8 Iyyar 5708 1948

In Linz, Austria



His Wife Leah

His Children
Ethel, Hena, Leib? & Nathan
And Their Families

To Be Forever Remembered

The Prominent Lady

Hen'tcheh bat R' Yaakov ז"ל

Wife of R' Moshe Blonder ע"ה

Passed Away 28 Nissan 5723



To Be Forever Remembered

Our Prominent and Unforgettable Man and Father
Straight Among Men and Respected in His Community, The Wondrous Rabbi

R' Shimshon Moshe ben R' David Joseph Levenfus ע"ה

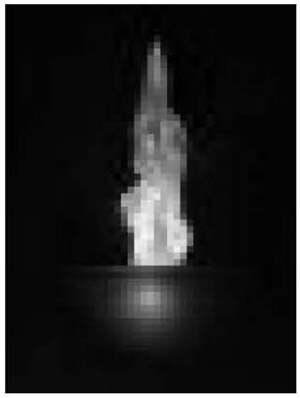
(Picture of Headstone on Page 896)

Long-time *Gabbai* of the *Chelm shtibl*, a participant in the *Gemilut Hasadim* Loan Society, and in general took part in all matters that were a good cause.

During the war, he and his entire family went off to Rawa [Ruska] and from there, they were sent to the Siberian Taigas. In the nomadic wandering, on the way to America, he died at 59 years of age, in the city of Bremen, Germany. Your earthly remains are far from us, but your spirit is close to us. We will never forget you.

His Wife, Pesha
His son, David Joseph Levenfus & Family
His Son Zvi Hirsch Koppel Levenfus & Family
His Daughter Miriam Kroll & Her Family
His Daughter Rachel Reichman & Her Family

In Memory of Our Beloved Fathers



Rabbi, Hasid, & Noble, Respected Aristocrat

R' Moshe ben R' Abraham Szparer ע"ה

A scion of the Tarnogrod Goldbaum family on his mother's side, who were related to the Holy Gaon , author of Divrei Yekhezkiel of Sieniawa זצללה"ה. Passed away after returning from Russia on 9 Adar 5707 in the city of Bramberg.

His Prominent, Aristocratic Wife, Respected & Praised

Mrs. Chana bat R' Ze'ev HaLevi ע"ה

Died in Brooklyn 26 Nissan 5721

Pearl Blima & Ze'ev Gelernter
And Their Family

Esther Juta & Jonah Baruch Feldsen
And Their Family

Hanina & Mir'l Szparer
And Their Family in Toronto

In Memory of My Beloved Parents

ITZCHAK and DWORA

and Sisters

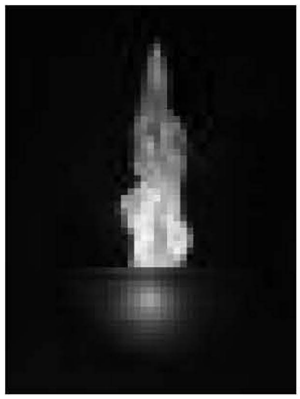
KAROLINA and FRYDZIA

MINCER

Who were cruelly murdered by the bestial Germans

Their Devoted Son and Brother

Jacob Mincer and Family



(Text also given in Yiddish)

To the Shining and Holy Memory

Of My Unforgettable Beloved Parents

Ber'eleh ben R' Shmuel Eli' Munter ה"י

He was a *Gabbai* in the Second [Prayer] House in *Hevra Tehillim*, and loved to give a handsome donation. He donated a great deal for the heating and lighting of the Second House. For all of his years, he underwrote the *Seuda Shlishit* there. At the beginning of the war, we all went to Rawa Ruska. He remained there, until the Germans י"ש took him on the first transport to be gassed in Belzec.

My Mother

Genendel Munter bat R' Ber'ish Blumer

Passed Away 25 Elul 5696

My Brother **Yerucham Munter** ה"י

(Picture on Page 899)

Born in 1913. My parents gave him a religious upbringing. He studied at Mizrahi and privately with R' Benjamin Tepler ע"ה. He developed emotionally on his own. Intelligent, he was a leader of the Tomaszow *Halutz* Youth, worked at the Bank Ludowy as a bookkeeper. He helped to build up the library of the manual workers, and directed it without pay. He never missed going to the *Bet HaMedrash* every morning to pray. He was dedicated to God and to the community. He remained in Rawa [Ruska] in the hands of the Germans. He helped many people get Aryan papers, and by doing so, saved their lives. Many of them, today, are in New York. He was brought down in *Sanctification of the Name.*

Lipa Munter & Family

To Be Forever Remembered

The Placing of a Headstone on the Graves of

R' Shmuel ben R' Yekhiel Mikhl ע"ה (Bodenstein)

Passed Away 23 Tishri 5688

Rachel Rivka bat R' Yitzhak Isaac

2 Adar I 5711 in Lod

R' Yekhiel Mikhl ben R' Shmuel ע"ה (Bodenstein)

Passed Away 14 Tishri 5694

In Memory of Our Prominent Parents

R' Eliezer ben R' Yitzhak Leiter ע"ה

Passed Away 18 Tammuz 5702

His Wife Feiga bat R' Shlomo Ferber ע"ה

Passed Away 14 Tevet 5702

At the outbreak of the war, they fled to Rawa Ruska. From there, they were sent by the Russian authorities to the Siberian Taigas, where they suffered hunger and deprivation. After the liberation, they came to Central Asia where they exhausted themselves and endured tribulations and disease. Their lives gave out on a collective farm near Samarkand.

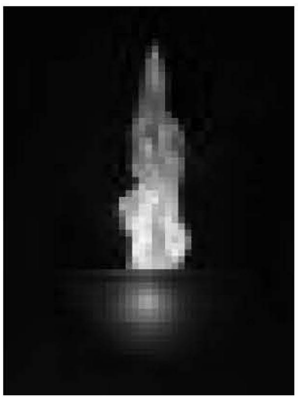
Our Love for You Will Hang Forever in Our Hearts

Tuvia & Eliezer Last
With the Children

Mindl & Meir Maggid
And Daughter

Juta & David Maritz
With the Children

This Gravestone Will Be Forever
For Eternal Memory



Beloved and Pleasant In Life, Not Parted By Their Death

Yekhezkiel ben R' Shlomo Ze'ev ז"ל

Juta bat R' Ephraim Fishl ז"ל

Of the Lehrer Family
From the City of Tomaszow-Lubelski in Poland

That were Killed in *Sanctification of The Name* by the Nazis ימ"ש
In the City of Hrubieszow, Poland

On 22 MarHeshvan 5703

November 2, 1942

The Survivors, In Deep Sorrow

Their Daughter Gitt'l Weinberg & Her Family
Israel

Their Son, Eli' Lehrer & Family
New York, NY



To Be Forever Remembered

The Souls of

Ozer ben R' Joel Stuhl ע"י . נ

He fell off a freight truck and was killed.
27 Sivan Is His Yahrzeit

His Wife, Liebeh & Children

To the Memory Of

Abraham ben R' David Zaydl ע"ה

Passed Away 4 Tevet 5720 in Portland, Oregon
The United States of America

His Sister Golda Laks & Her Family

For Eternal Remembrance

The Soul of Moshe ben R' Joseph Rind

Passed Away 13 July 1960

His Wife, Chava and His Two Sons
New York, NY

For Eternal Remembrance

Shmuel ben R' Hirsch Hammer
His Wife Miriam
Of the Brandwein Family

Their Daughter Sheva with Her Husband Moshe Ehrlich
With their 4 Children aged 2-8 Years of Age

All Killed by the Germans ימ"ש in 1942

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

In Eternal Sorrow Are
The Sons and Daughters of the Hammer Family

For Eternal Remembrance

Yaakov ben R' Mordechai Sholom Ziegelbaum

His Wife, Chaya Sarah bat R' Mordechai Leffler
Killed in Tomaszow in 1939

Their Daughter Malya
With Her Husband Nahum Schuldiner ben R' Moshe Leib
With their Children Moshe Leib & Chava
Killed in the Ukraine in 1943

Malka Zeftl bat R' Abraham Altman
Died from Hunger in Russia, in 1943

Jozefów

Their Memory Will Always Hang in Our Hearts
From the Sons of the Ziegelbaum Family
And the Daughters of Malka Zeftl Altman

To the Eternal Memory of the Souls Of

Reuven Mordechai ben R' Yaakov Koppel Eisen
Killed in Jozefów of Bilgoraj 28 Tammuz 1943

His Wife Chaya bat R' Joseph Meldung
Passed Away in Lvov 14 Kislev 5702 1941

Their Son Joseph Eliyahu
Killed in Lvov

His Wife, Zeftl bat R' Moshe Eilbaum
Killed in Lvov

Their Sons: Moshe, Abraham, Israel, Chaim Jonah
All Killed in Lvov

Abraham ben R' Reuven Mordechai Eisen
Killed in Brzno

His Wife, Feffeh bat R' Raphael Strasberg
And Their Daughter Sarah
Killed in Lubicz

Hinde bat R' Reuven Mordechai Eisen
And Her Husband Yeshayahu Kalechman
And Their Daughter Min'cheh
Killed in Jozefów of Bilgoraj

Yitzhak ben R' Reuven Mordechai Eisen
Killed in Galicia

Aharon ben R' Abraham Eisen
Killed in Jozefów28 Tammuz 5703

Fyvusz ben R' Aharon Eisen & Family
Killed in Tomaszow

Yehuda ben R' Aharon Eisen & Family
Killed in Hrubieszow

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

For Eternal Remembrance

The Soul of Our Father

R' Abraham Abish ben R' Naphtali Walter ע"ה

He was a Simple, Honest Man, Inclined to Good Deeds, Was Learned and God-Fearing, and was among the Hasidim of the Righteous Rabbi R' Yehoshua'leh זצ"ל.

During the days of the last war, he fled with his family to Russia, and he passed away there, in the village of Mikhailovka in the Tchkalov District on 13 Shevat 5702 at the age of 52 years.



Our Chaste Mother

Mrs. Dobra Tsir'l bat R' Chaim Reuven ע"ה

Passed Away on 3 Kislev 5724 in New York



In Sorrow, Their are Survived by Their Children:

Itta & Her Husband Shmuel Shtrick & Their Family
The United States

Naphtali Walter & His Wife and Family
The United States

Miriam & Her Husband Chaim Friedman & Their Family
The United States

Rivka & Her Husband Mordor & Their Family
In Israel

Rabbi & Hasid, R' Sholom ben R' Menachem Tepler ז"ע

A Gur Hasid, simple, a man of faith, straightforward, who fled from controversy, engaged in commerce, and directed his sons in the ways of the Torah and the Fear of God. When the war broke out, he and his family fled to Rawa [Ruska] and from there, were sent to Siberia. On the way back, he grew weak from the plethora of tribulation and exertion, and he passed away in Germany.



His Chaste & Prominent Wife
Mrs. Rachel Leah
Daughter of the Rabbi & Hasid, R' Reuven Gartler (Chay'tcheh's)

She constantly participated in carrying the yoke of making a living, and stood in the store, and with her entire being, she raised her children in Torah and the Fear of God. She passed away 5 Tishri in Altai in Russia.



Their Son, Ephraim beb R' Sholom ז"ל

Killed in Haifa 15 Adar II 5708 By the Arabs

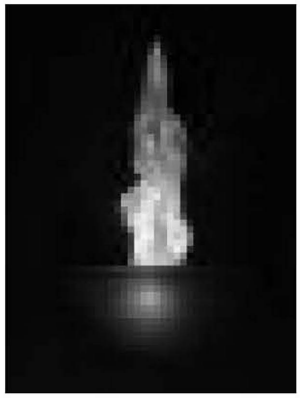


Those Who Will Remember You Forever

Among them His Brother and Sister

Joel Tepler & Family, Brooklyn, NY
Yaakov Moshe Tepler & Family, Bnai Brak, ISRAEL
Chay' Helfman & Her Family, Brooklyn, NY

As A Permanent Memorial



Our Father & Teacher, R' Alexander ben R' Abraham Truk

(Sender Avrem'keleh's)

Who absorbed Torah from the time of his youth in the Hasidic *Bet HaMedrash* of the Rabbi R' Yehoshua'leh, and his son, the Rabbi, R' Joseph Leibusz זצ"ל. He pored over, and was diligent in Torah study, for all his days. He was an adherent of the Sanz Hasidim. He fell dead as a casualty in Rawa Ruska in the year 1942 or 1943.

Our Chaste Mother, Her House Was Always Open to Receive Guests

Mrs. Rivka Rachel

Bat The Renown Scholar R' Noah Ritual Slaughterer and Meat Inspector Koenigsberg
Of Korlolewka-Lizensk

The Author of the Book '*Mei Noah*' About Torah Study by Sanz Hasidim

She Fell Together With Our Oldest Sister

Sarah Leah

In the Streets of the City of Tarnogrod, הי"ד

Baruch, Malka, Miriam, Kress'l & Abraham
And Their Families

A Memorial
In Memory of the Souls of



Yehuda ben R' Menachem Goldman

Passed Away 14 Heshvan 5706 `1945
In Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, Russia

His Sons, Lipa & Joseph

Killed by the Nazi Murderers ימ"ש
Neither the Place, Time or Means are Known

Lipa ben R' Tevel Falk

Killed by the Nazi Murderers ימ"ש

Gitt'l Wife of R' Tevel Falk

Passed Away on the Last Day of Passover 5708 in Berlin

As A Permanent Memorial

My Master, Father, Elder **R' Yaakov Joel** ben R' Abraham Shafran ז"ל
(Yahrzeit 6 Tishri)

and His Wife **Chava** bat R' Shlomo Ze'ev Lehrer ע"ה
Who Died in Tomaszow on 27 Tishri 5738

And Their Eldest Son, **Abraham** and His Wife, **Dvora**
And their issue **Peska** and **David** and their Grandson ז"ל
And Their Son **Mikhl Yehuda** and His Wife **Feiga**
And Their Daughter **Rachel** and Her Husband and their issue ז"ל
Who were exterminated without leaving a trace

And Their Daughter **Leah Reizl** Wife of R' **David** HaKohen Pearl ז"ל
And Their Son **Israel Meir** and His Wife **Reizl** and their issue
And Also Her Sons **Aharon & Menachem David**
Who Were Plucked in the Bloom of Their Youth

And Her Daughter **Menucha Leah**
Who Died at an Early Age in Israel

And Their Daughter **Menucha** bat R' Yaakov Joel and Her Husband **Yehuda**
Milstein from Izbica
And Their Seven Sons & Daughter
Who were Exterminated Without A Trace



In Memory of the Soul of

Our Father, Master and Teacher R' **Abraham Yekhezkiel** ben R' Israel Moshe Biederman, who passed away as he was wandering, in the village of Khil Bulak in the Kadamzhai District of Ash Kirghizstan in Russia, on the Sabbath Eve of [Parsha] *Shmot* 21 Tevet 5702.

Our Beloved Mother **Chay' Sarah** bat Yaakov Joel ע"ה
Who passed away on the fifth day of *Shmot* 19 Tevet 5715 in New York

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה