

## Jerzy Mizgalski

### The Influence of Jewish Religious Law on the Everyday Life of the Nineteenth Century Jewish Community in Częstochowa

#### - Selected Issues -

##### 1. Sources of Jewish Religious Law

The books of the Old Testament constitute the basic pillar of Jewish religious tradition. As well as their historical and literary content, they contain a legal code of provisions and commandments – moral, health-related and others - which, over the centuries, have regulated the community's everyday life. As Alan Unterman states, Jewish tradition *not only teaches certain fundamental truths about God, the revelation and man, but also expresses them through ceremonies, rituals and laws which determine behaviour in various life situations*<sup>1</sup>. From childhood through to old age, there is a religious duty to learn and to study the holy books whose contents support certain behaviour and contain the development of lines of thought. The Torah, with its written laws and provisions describing the fundamentals of the faith, demands *the need for commenting upon and adapting the Torah to new socio-economic and political conditions, as well as to the practicalities of life*<sup>2</sup>.

The second pillar which supports the preservation of traditions is the Talmud. The word "Talmud" is derived from the Hebrew "lamad" which means to learn, to teach or to explain the meaning. Admittedly, the Talmud affects only the Orthodox Jews. As Eugen Werber states, *it contains the cultural pearls of the Jewish people, values which, despite divisions and religious restrictions, are common to a much broader section of people and, in any case, deserve to be recognised by the world*<sup>3</sup>. That huge collection of oral traditions is included in both the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. The first arose in the Talmudic academies of Caesarea, Sepphoris and Tiberius. The final edition was accomplished by Rabbi Yochanan at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries. Written in Western-Aramaic and in Mishnah Hebrew, including a large number of Greek and Latin

<sup>1</sup> A. Unterman, *Żydzi wiara i życie*, Warsaw 2002, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> E. Werber, *Talmud dziedzictwo historii i kultury*, [in:] *Literatura na Świecie*, No.4 (189), Warsaw, April 1987, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.

words, in later centuries it was translated into languages used by Jews in the Diaspora - Ladino or Arabic.<sup>4</sup> The Babylonian Talmud arose a hundred years later and was compiled by Rabbi Ashi and Rabbi Ravina II in the Western-Aramaic and Mishnah Hebrew languages<sup>5</sup>. *The Jerusalem Talmud is fragmentary and does not contain the entire Mishnah. It contains the first four tractates (Zeraim, Moed, Nashim, Nezikin) and even then not in their entirety. There is also Gemarah to the Nidda tractate (to its first three chapters) in Toharot. In total, the Jerusalem Talmud comments on thirty nine of the sixty three tractates*<sup>6</sup>. The Babylonian Talmud exerted a significant influence on the lives of many generations of Jews which, according to Alan Unterman, *has been over the 1,500 years, shaping views, ways of thinking, life and the theology of Judaism. For Orthodox Jews, it is the book of Judaism, the authority of which is not permitted to be questioned under threat of being suspected a heretic*<sup>7</sup>.

Both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds were never completed. Throughout the entire history of dispersion and diaspora, consecutive generations of Jews have written commentaries upon commentaries, *with thousands of questions to questions and, often, with no one providing an answer*<sup>8</sup>. Responses, namely “questions and answers” provided with rabbinical authority, were supposed to settle any doubts so that life’s issues could be acted upon in accordance with *Halacha*. By comparison to other nations of the world, it is an interesting fact that despite disputes taking on a pointed character, Jewish religious scholars *respected opinions of others, even when, during fierce disputes resulted in offence. They endeavoured to remember everything. They learned, by heart, what their predecessors had stated and then passed it on from generation to generation – in this manner, creating an oral tradition of social law*<sup>9</sup>. Anna Kamińska pointed out that *the tractising of the Talmud, as a homogeneous work, much less as leading to some cohesive system, would be a misunderstanding and a mistake*<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The first printed edition of the Jerusalem Talmud was produced in Venice in 1523-1524. The next edition was published in 1609, in Kraków, which became the basis for the 19th century publishing of the Jerusalem Talmud in Krotoszyn and Żytomierz.

<sup>5</sup> As E. Werber states, *Already by mid-century, within Jewish communities in Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Rumania or Hungary, it was possible to come across quite a number of people who knew the Babylonian Talmud by heart, from beginning to end.* E. Werber, *Talmud dziedzictwo ...*, p. 73.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> A. Unterman, *Żydzi wiara ...* p. 150.

<sup>8</sup> E. Werber, *Talmud dziedzictwo...*p.69.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 69.

<sup>10</sup> A. Kamińska, *Postłowie do wyboru z mądrości Talmudu*, [in:] „*Literatura na Świecie: Talmud*”, No. 4 (189), Warsaw, April 1987, p. 137.

In all Jewish communities, learning the Talmud takes place right after learning the Bible. Study of the Mishnah and Gemarah begins in religious schools from early childhood. It continues in all *Yeshivot* (religious schools), with the condensed contents numbering more than 2,600 pages of the Babylonian Talmud which are studied in detail *so that, over a period of one year, a diligent student would have studied, in depth, forty to fifty pages*<sup>11</sup>. In adult years, study of the Talmud becomes more serious, with unending discussions<sup>12</sup>.

Through the centuries, a lasting, essential element in the retaining of tradition and of Jewish identity has been the religion and its dictates. By fulfilling the commandments, Jews perceived it as strengthening the internal bonds of their own community and as resisting “other” influences endangering the centuries-old achievements of their own culture. The concern for fulfilling their Halachic obligations was a strong motivation for the study of the holy books and for reflection upon one’s daily life, which should be led according to the commandment – *Whoever forgets even one word of what they have learned then, according to the holy books, puts his life at risk*<sup>13</sup>.

The structure of knowledge and tradition, as contained within the Talmud, was formed over centuries and external influences were guarded against. These artificial barriers against “others”, created by Jewish society, reinforced the processes of strengthening the bonds within their own community, so that everyday life could be conducted in accordance with their own principles. Jews who lived within their own communities, in the Diaspora, were surrounded by a different ethnic majority which often exploited them and/or persecuted them over entire centuries. So, these Jews were forced to accommodate themselves to the conditions imposed upon them. In this situation, the Talmud constituted a signpost for them, allowing them to find their own place within a complicated reality and a way to leave situations where it was often difficult to maintain traditions and the principles of a religious life. On the other hand, amidst the non-Jewish section of society, the Halachically-dictated

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<sup>11</sup> Z. Greenwald, *Bramy halachy: religijne prawo żydowskie. Kicur Szulchan Aruch dla współczesności*, Kraków 2005, p. 24

<sup>12</sup> Rabbi Hillel formulated seven methodical rules to research and learn the scriptures: 1) *from the simpler, to the difficult to the more difficult*, 2) *from smaller to larger*, 3) *going from similar to similar (a method of comparison)* 4) *going from one phrase of the writings to two*, 5) *going from broader principles to individual*, 6) *going from individual principles to the broader*, 7) *explanations according to context*. A. Kamińska, *Posłowie do wyboru...* p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Sentencje ojców: Pirkej Awot*, translated from Hebrew M. Friedman [in:], „*Literatura na świecie: Talmud*”, Warsaw April 1987, monthly No.4 (189), p.12.

norms of Jewish life evoked a surprise which, in many instances, led to conflicts or simply a hostile attitude to something which was *different*.

Even within the poorest of Jewish homes, the holy books, in particular the Torah, were items which were cared for and kept in a place of honour. There were to be arranged, according to accepted customs and most often, in bookcases or storage boxes which would protect them from dust and damage. Respect for holy books was a Halachic imperative:

*They must not be dropped on the ground, [...] just as other objects of worship, the holy books should be treated with appropriate reverence. [...]*

- 1) *One should not sit on a chair or armchair on which are laying holy books.*
- 2) *No holy books may be thrown away, including those which are damaged or torn, nor any pieces of papers on which are written thoughts from the Torah. They must be placed inside a “geniza”, namely, in a special burial place. Many synagogues have special boxes or places allocated for the collection of these types of books or papers, prior to them being interred into the ground.*
- 3) *Holy books should never be put down with the title page underneath. If someone notices a book lying in this manner, they should turn it over so that it lies in the proper manner.*
- 4) *The Chumash (the five books of the Torah in book form, not as a scroll) may lie on top of the Nevi'im (Prophets) or the Ketuvim (Writings) volumes, whereas the Nevi'im and Ketuvim may lie on top of the remaining books. Neither Nevi'im nor Ketuvim may be laid upon the Chumash. No other holy books may lie on top of those books mentioned here.*
- 5) *Pieces of paper containing notes which are not of a religious nature should not be placed inside a holy book unless they facilitate the study of that book.*
- 6) *An individual, who has studied a holy book, should not leave it behind open when he leaves his place of study, even if he plans to return there after a short time.<sup>14</sup>*

The specific regulations with respect to holy books attest to the special role they played in the everyday life of a religious Jew. Jews described themselves as *the people of the Book (Am ha-Sefer)* meaning “*The People of the Bible*”, *the most important of holy books*. That description can be interpreted as *a people close to books, basing their lives according to*

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<sup>14</sup> Orach Chaim 154 and Mishna Berura 31, cit. za: Z. Greenwald, *Bramy Halachy...*, pp. 53-54 .

*books, a people of readers*<sup>15</sup>. One of the most important duties for a religious Jew is to study the Torah, as it is stated that:

*Through study, a person gains knowledge about his Creator and also learns that manner by which he can fulfil His commandments. For this reason, Torah study continues throughout the life of a Jew, as God told Joshua, “You should study by day and by night”. [...] The reward for Torah study is huge. Our sages say that “Studying Torah equates to following all the other (mitzvot) collectively”<sup>16</sup>.*

In Jewish diaspora circles, *no one in the community could be illiterate, because wisdom was consolidated within books. If someone was illiterate, he was contemptuously referred to as “am ha-aretz” (a person of the land), someone who is ignorant, uneducated or a lout*<sup>17</sup>. Of course, this is a case of being familiar with Hebrew, the language in which the holy books were written. The problem for many Jews was a knowledge of the language of the society in which they lived or the official (state) language of the country in which they had settled. A lack of knowledge of the “local” language, namely that used by the majority of the society, or the “state language”, gave rise to certain difficulties in communication and participation in cultural activities, other than Jewish ones. This fact further deepened the difference between members of the Jewish faith and those of other religions and, to a significant degree, led to the building of the foundations of Jewish cultural ghettos.

It should, however, be stressed that Jewish monotheism played a huge role in the development of information technology and was a huge reason for the introduction of a culture of an alphabet. The success of the Hebrew alphabet in promoting the idea of monotheism contributed to the demise of the hieroglyphics of the Pharaohs. Moses not only extracted his people from captivity and led them to the Promised Land, but, on the way, he gave his people the Ten Commandments which he received from God on Mount Sinai. In other words, he passed on, to his people, the meaning of “monotheism”. Monotheism, encompassed within an alphabet, achieved a victory, while what had been expressed in hieroglyphics suffered a defeat.

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<sup>15</sup> A. Kamińska, *Posłowie do wyboru ...*, p. 137.

<sup>16</sup> Mishna Pea 1:1, a note [to:] Brama Halachy... p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> A. Kamińska, *Posłowie do wyboru ...*, p. 137.

Rabin Socha Pecaric<sup>18</sup> states that *Judaism is called a religion of laws because, through following the six hundred and thirteen mitzvot and not readily digressing away God, it confirms His being*. The everyday life of believers in the Jewish religion was determined by the need to fulfil numerous obligations as prescribed by the regulations of religious law<sup>19</sup>. *Halacha* contained the provisions of both religious and civil law. The word *Halacha* derives from the Hebrew *to go, to walk or to travel*.

The history of explicitly following the commandments dates back to the early Middle Ages. In the 11th century, Isaac Alfasi-Rif (1013-1103)<sup>20</sup> founded the famous the talmudic academy in Lucena and published his work entitled *Sefer Hahalachot (The Book of Laws)*. This book became the first basic code of Jewish law. It contained those excerpts from the Talmud which referred to Halacha and omitted Aggadic (non-legal) topics.

In Germany, another famous, learned Talmud scholar was Rabbi Gerszom ben Yehuda (960-1028) who, in Hebrew, wrote *Commentaries to the Talmud*. This clear and accessible presentation of the contents enabled students to study the holy books independently. Established by him, the Talmudic college in Mainz contributed to the advancement of Judaism during the Middle Ages.

Also in the Middle Ages, a vital contribution to that advancement was made by Moses ben Maimon (1135-1204)<sup>21</sup>, commonly known as Maimonides and also referred to by the acronym *Rambam*. In 1168, he published *A Commentary to the Mishnah* in which, in a transparent and simplified way, he explains the tradition of the Oral Law. In this work, Maimonides proved that the Mishnah contains moral teachings as well as a deeper, philosophical understanding of God. He stated that Judaism was a philosophy manifested by God. Emanating from this assumption, he emphasised that *Judaism* should not only regulate man's views, but also man's way of thinking, as well as his moral and religious progress.

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<sup>18</sup> S. Pecaric, „Wstęp”, [in:] Z. Greenwald, *Bramy Halachy...*, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> Rabin Socha Pecaric also states that *The Torah contains 613 mitzvot(commandments), 248proscriptions and 365 prescriptions. [...] some aspects of the mitzvot and also their development into detailed regulations, can be found in the development of the Talmud, namely the Oral Law (Torah Be-Al-Peh) which, together with the Written Torah (Torah Shebichtav) constitutes the complete Torah (Torah Shlema), the entirety of which was given to Moses, and through him,, to the people standing at the foot of Mount Sinai*. S. Pecaric, “Forward”, [in:] Z. Greenwald, *Bramy Halachy...*, p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> He at first lived in Fez in Morocco. In 1088, he moved to Spain. He change of residence resulted due to the persecution of Jews in Morocco by fanatical Almoravids and Almohads, who ruled those lands. Under penalty of death, Jews were forced to convert to Islam.

<sup>21</sup> He was born in Cordoba in Spain. He later lived in Fez, Morocco, and finally settled in Fustat, Egypt, where he worked as a doctor in the court of the sultan.

*Judaism*, according to him, not only regulates the everyday life of a Jew, but also standardises higher thought and provides certain ideas as irrefutable truths. In 1180<sup>22</sup>, he finished his next major work *A Review of the Torah* (hebr. Mishneh Torah), often referred to in later years as *The Mighty Hand* (hebr. Yad Ha-Hazakah). This derives from the fourteen sections of the *Mishnah Torah*, the Hebrew letters *yod* and *daled* representing the number 14. In it, he included all the Talmudic laws, describing methods of making offerings, the messianic doctrine of Judaism and also the manner in which fields should be cultivated. Maimonides' works influenced the entire Jewish world. The works of Isaac Alfasi-Rif and Maimonides arose in the Sephardi Jewish environment.

As a result of persecution by fanatical Christians in Germany, from the 13th century there was a constant flow of Jews eastwards, mainly to Poland, and also to southern Europe - to Italy and Spain. These newcomers were referred to as *Ashkenazi* (from the Hebrew Ashkenazim). Within local Jewish circles, they were quickly able to impose their own Yiddish language and religious culture.

The role of leader of the Jewish community in Germany was taken on by Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel, also known as Rosher or Rosh (1250-1327). He was a student of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg. The persecution also affected him and so, in 1303, he fled from Germany to Spain. He settled in Toledo where, despite the difficult living conditions, he continued his teaching, which gained him considerable respect amongst the Jews. He wrote a commentary to the Mishnah and Talmud entitled *Baal Haturim*, as well as a halachic compendium entitled *Arba Turim* (The Four Orders). The title of this second work referred to its four sections.

His works influenced later rabbinical literature, especially that of Joseph Karo. Following the pogroms in Spain, Joseph Karo (1488-1575) emigrated to Turkey where he was a rabbi in Adrianopolis and Nikopolis. In 1492, he settled in the Upper Galilee where, in Safed, he established a yeshivah. He dedicated himself to studying the text of the Mishnah. Between 1522 and 1542, he worked on *Beit Yosef – a Commentary on Arba Turim*. Between 1542 and 1554, he again occupied himself with commentaries on that work and added additional commentaries. He drew up a code of law entitled the *Shulchan Aruch (The Set Table)*. Through this code, he endeavoured to settle the internal disputes within Judaism and, at the same time, to settle the chaos which, at times, prevailed over the numerous

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<sup>22</sup> [http://www.izrael.badacz.org/kultura/judaizm\\_dalsze.html](http://www.izrael.badacz.org/kultura/judaizm_dalsze.html).

commentaries and explanations to and of the Talmud. He undertook to try to link the interpretive concepts of the Halacha by Rabbis Rif, Rambam and Rosh. When interpretations found themselves to be controversial, he adopted that of the majority which, as a result, included many Ashkenazi concepts. Even during his lifetime, this work became the standard and basic position of the Halacha.

Rabbi Moses ben-Israel Isserles (1520-1572), also known by his acronym “Remu”, joined into the discussion on the *Shulchan Aruch*. He lived in Kraków and headed the Kraków yeshivah which was famous and highly regarded throughout Europe. He was famed for his supplementary commentaries to the work of Rabbi Joseph Karo entitled *Darchei Moshe (The Roads of Moses)*. In it, he emphasised the significance of local customs in the development of Jewish law. He discussed the practices and rabbinical positions of Ashkenazi communities. Following his understanding of Joseph Karo’s *Shulchan Aruch*, he stated that there was a need to add Ashkenazi customs to that work. He drew up a commentary to the *Shulchan Aruch* entitled *Ha’Mapa (The Tablecloth)*. This commentary standardised Ashkenazi customs and practices and contributed to the process of moulding the identity of Ashkenazi Jews. Throughout central and eastern Europe, the *Shulchan Aruch* was printed together with *Ha’Mapa* (the “Set Table” with “The Tablecloth”)<sup>23</sup>.

Wherever Jews settled within Polish territory, they consolidated their Ashkenazi influence. The Yiddish language dominated and became the everyday language of communication within local Jewish circles. In the Congress Kingdom of Poland, and also within Częstochowa, a peculiarly popular language was born together with a Jewish-accented Polish. It consisted of Polish or Russian words being pronounced with the accent and suffixes of the local population, often with the inclusion of Yiddish language expressions. In multicultural 19th century, the mutual permeation of cultures could be noticed within Częstochowa. This included the inclusion of words into the colloquial language like, for example, *shabatnik*, being an oven in which bread or cake was baked. There were also other expressions which the Christian populace adopted from the Jews, and vice versa.

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<sup>23</sup> The *Shulchan Aruch* is comprised of four sections: 1. *Orach Chayim (The Roads of Life)* – covers the laws of daily prayer, Shabbat and holidays; 2) *Yoreh De’ah (Learning)* – covers the laws of Kashrut, ritual slaughter, mourning and family purity, 3) *Even Ha’ezer* – covers the laws of marriage, divorce and related issues; 4) *Choshen mishpat* – covers the laws of finance, civil and administrative law.



Living amongst Christians, religious Jews established a separate lifestyle from the rest of the populace, which strongly emphasised the cultural difference between Christians and Jews. As Antony Polonsky states, *Throughout the 19th century, the majority of Jews of the former Republic maintained their traditional piety*<sup>24</sup>. To them, the Halacha constituted the fundamental interpretation of activity. Changes in civil conditions caused by the processes of industrialisation and, connected with that, other social factors, exerted an influence on the attitudes and transformations of Jewish religious movements.

Hassidism which, as a mystical movement, was something new and often considered as revolutionary as regards traditional Judaism, implemented a revival in Jewish creativity and an explosive diversity and transformation of theological variety. It lost its more radical characteristics due to its *mitnagdim* (opponents). As Antony Polonsky emphasises, *the mitnagdim themselves also changed dramatically throughout the 19th century. And, even though they put Halacha and Talmud study first, they also emphasised the significance of ethical principles and meditation*<sup>25</sup>. The effect of appeasing the disputes between the Hassidim and the Mitnagdim led to a modernisation of orthodox religious culture in which religious law (Halacha) still played a significant role.

## 2. The Daily Duties of a Religious Jew

The Jewish community of Częstochowa was not homogeneous, just as in other large cities of the Congress Kingdom of Poland. It was characterised by a strong diversity - socially and in its attitude towards religion. However, the varieties of Jewish religious life were all connected through attitudes to traditions and to Halacha. For a religious Jew, the day began, right after awakening, with the reciting of the morning prayer *Mode ani*, and ended with the evening prayer *Shema*. Every day, he was also required to fulfill numerous commandments (mitzvot). As Anna Kamińska states, *A Jew prays constantly, with a blessing for every occasion [...] Man must express gratitude to God for everything – for the good and for the bad. Because everything is given by God and is for the benefit of man*<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> A. Polonsky, *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce i Rosji*, Warsaw 2014., p. 204.

<sup>25</sup> A. Polonsky, *Dzieje Żydów...*, p. 204.

<sup>26</sup> A. Kamińska, *Posłowie do wyboru...*, p. 167.

For the religious Jew, prayer is one of the most important obligations. *Prayer is like a ladder on Earth whose "peak reaches Heaven"*<sup>27</sup>. In explaining the essence of prayer in Jewish religious life, it is stressed that:

*It is close to a person's heart and helps man reach the heights of spiritual life. Every prayer has value and every prayer reaches heaven. It constitutes the most intimate expression of humanity. The cleaner and more intimate, the better it will be accepted into heaven*<sup>28</sup>.

From the early morning, a Jew should be thinking about his Creator. Rabbi Josef Karo, author of the Shulchan Aruch, said, "When you rise in the morning, be as strong as a lion in order to serve your Creator"<sup>29</sup>. Rabbi Zev Greenwald, in stressing the importance of the obligation to serve the Creator, stated that *a Jew serves his Creator from the moment he gets up in the morning, ready to faithfully follow the mitzvot which the Divine has provided so as to provide order to our lives, to raise us above the materialism of everyday life to a level of spiritual ideas and spiritual meaning*<sup>30</sup>.

Every aspect of life was sanctified by religious regulations. No activity carried out by a Jew was neutral religiously. Personal care was even covered by religious dictates, thanks to which, especially those relating to hygiene, Jews survived unscathed through many of the epidemics of the Middle Ages which wreaked havoc, not only in cities, but in entire countries. The commandment to bathe and to wash the hands meant that they rarely succumbed to infectious diseases. There was even a special blessing after a bowel movement, because it was noticed that a body's correct functioning was dependent upon physiological activities. Wisdom and the knowledge of medical sages were drawn from the observation of life. Passing on these commandments either orally or via the written Talmud became an important religious obligation for a religious Jew.

Amongst the commandments were those essential for health, such as the washing of crockery after a meal and the maintenance of proper nutrition. *A wise man should never live in a town which has no vegetables*<sup>31</sup>. This is obviously a recommendation to eat vegetables. However, according to Halacha, the vegetables must be carefully cleaned, washed and

<sup>27</sup> *Bramy Halachy...*, (Bereshit 28:12), p. 33.

<sup>28</sup> Z. Greenwald, *Bramy Halachy...*, p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> Orach chajim 1:1.

<sup>30</sup> Z. Greenwald, *Bramy Halachy...*, p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> A. Kamińska, *Posłowie do wyboru...*, p. 168.

inspected for any worms and insects which must be removed, as Halacha forbids the consumption of insects and worms.

In the stories and memoirs of pre-World War II Częstochowa residents, they would stress that the smell of garlic and onions would waft from the city's Jewish districts. The consumption of these cheap vegetables by the religious and poorer sections of the Jewish community, besides complying with religious regulations, satisfied their appetites and maintained their health. Today, the local pharmacist will often recommend garlic and onion as anti-bacterial agents to prevent many illnesses. Also, nowadays, it is recommended to eat only until the stomach is one-third full, and not to excess. It is possible to state, with some confidence, that the majority of the Częstochowa Jewish community had more of a problem with hunger, rather than with over-eating. The prevalent opinion of the non-Jewish residents of the city was that the majority of Jews were poor and that, for them, in accordance with the Halacha of previous centuries, the normal practice was to drink more than to eat.

Immediately upon awakening, in accordance with the commandment, a Jew should wash his hands: *One must not touch bodily orifices such as the mouth, eyes, nose or ears before performing "netilat yadayim" (washing of the hands). One should also not touch any food before performing "netilat yadayim"*<sup>32</sup>. The commandment to wash the hands also applied to the following circumstances: 1) after leaving the bathroom, even if not using the toilet or taking a bath, 2) after cutting hair, shaving or cutting fingernails, 3) after visiting a cemetery or after a funeral.

The times for prayer corresponded to the times for making offerings in the Temple<sup>33</sup>. The prayer *Shmoneh Esrei* (also referred to as the *Amida* or *Standing Prayer*) should be recited while facing in the direction of Jerusalem. One needs to prepare oneself before reciting

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<sup>32</sup> Orach chaim 4:13. In explanation, Rabbi Zev Greenwald states that *when we sleep, our hands probably touch body parts which are usually covered during the course of the day. Through our hands, they become ritually unclean. [...] After waking, there is a spiritual impurity which remains within a person. We remove it by pouring water over each hand, in turn, three times..* Z. Greenwald, *Bramy Halachy...*, p.34.

<sup>33</sup> *Prayers, which we recite, are a replacement for devotions made in the Temple. Shacharit, the morning prayer, corresponding to the morning "Tamid", Mincha, the afternoon prayer, corresponding to the afternoon "Tamid" and Ma'ariv, corresponding to the evening "Tamid". Musaf, recited after Shacharit on Shabbat, during Yom Tov (holydays) or Rosh Chodesh (the first day of a Jewish calendar month), corresponds to an additional "Tamid". Our prayers contain a request for the speedy rebuilding of the Temple so that we may again pray before God. Service in the Temple will take our entire people to the heights of spiritual life and bring us closer to God. Ibid., p. 40.*

prayers<sup>34</sup>. Prior to the first morning prayer (Shachrit), a man must be appropriately prepared. He would put on a *talit*, the four-cornered prayer shawl, which would be made from white wool, silk or cotton, with black or red striping. When wearing a *talit*, there are also biblical prescriptions: *There should be fringes on the corners of your clothes [...] When you look at them, you will remember all of God's commandments, which you are to fulfil*<sup>35</sup>. When beginning the morning prayer, a man should stand, holding the *talit* and recite the appropriate blessing. After reciting the blessing, he should cover himself with the shawl, so that the head and the body are well covered. The four fringes should be draped over the left shoulder. After reciting the next sections of prayer, the shawl should be drawn so as to allow the *tefillin* to be worn. The shawl, however, should be worn such that two of the fringes are at the front and two at the back. Under his clothes, a religious Jew, throughout the day, wears a *smaller talit*, four-cornered with fringes. Within religious Jewish circles in Poland, the tradition was that only married men would wear a prayer shawl. As a result, bachelors were easily recognisable.

*Tefillin* were made from the leather of a kosher animal and contain parchment also made from the hide of a kosher animal. On the parchment, a *sofer* (a scribe) had handwritten four extracts from the Torah<sup>36</sup>. One tefillin box is tied with straps to the left forearm, while the

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<sup>34</sup> *Preparation for prayer includes dressing appropriately. Dress should be such as one would wear when meeting an important person. A person, who normally wears a hat when leaving the home, should also wear a hat during prayer. During prayer, both the stance and position of the body should be appropriate to the holiness of the prayer. [...] Therefore, if someone needs to use the toilet, they should do so before beginning prayer. One should ensure that one's body is clean and ready to stand before God. When reciting prayers or studying the Torah, the upper part of the body should be separated from the lower part by a belt around the waist. The reason for this commandment is that the heart should not see the nakedness of the body. [...] This should be especially attended to so as avoid unpleasant smells or bodily impurities - for example, dirty nappies are removed from the place of prayer. [...] While in the toilet, it is forbidden to speak or even think about study of the Torah nor is it permitted to pray. A man should not pray when standing before an improperly dressed woman. A man should also not say a prayer while standing near a married woman whose hair is not covered. Even though a man should never listen to a woman singing, he should be especially careful regarding the tune, when praying or studying the Torah. [...] One should not pray nor recite a blessing when one's hands are dirty as they may have touched the shoes or a part of the body which should remain covered or may have scratched the head. Parts of the body which should remain covered include the torso, shoulders above the elbows, the legs and the feet. Ibid., p. 46, 48, 49.*

<sup>35</sup> Bemidbar 15:39; *The tzitzit have the extraordinary power of reminding us of God's commandments and of motivating us to follow them. Both the number of threads, twists and knots refer to the name of God and the 613 mitzvot. The numerical value of the word tzitzit is 600. If we add the eight threads and the five knots, then the total is 613. Ibid., p. 55.*

<sup>36</sup> *The four excerpts written on parchment inside the tefillin are: Sanctify Me (Exodus 13:1-10), When God brings you (Exodus 13:11-16), Hear O'Israel (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) and If You Observe My Commandments (Deuteronomy 11:13-21) [...]. They are placed inside the tefillin worn on the arm and also inside the tefillin placed on the head. In the first instance, they are all written on the one piece of parchment, while in the second, they are all written on separate pieces of parchment. Ibid., p. 64.*

other is placed over the forehead. This ritual is performed every day, except for the *Shabbat*<sup>37</sup>. The words written inside the tefillin should be *a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for ornaments between your eyes so that God's Torah will be upon your mouth because it was God who led you out of Egypt with His immense power*<sup>38</sup>. It was stressed that the wearing of the tefillin is a reminder of the most important event in the history of the Jews – the exit from Egypt, the alliance with God from whom they received laws and which they obliged to follow<sup>39</sup>. Many prayers are only to be recited in the presence of a *minyan*, ten men or more all of whom are aged thirteen or more (past the age of Bar Mitzvah), who pray together in the same place<sup>40</sup>.

The clothing of religious Jews is also connected with many commandments. In accordance with religious imperatives, a man must wear a yarmulke or hat as a sign of respect for *Shechina*. The Talmud teaches that *covering the head fills a man with humility and fear before God. It also helps his 'midot' (characteristic traits). It is also a virtue for a man to*

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<sup>37</sup> *It is forbidden to sleep while wearing the tefillin. For this reason, it is not permitted to wear the tefillin at night, in case one should fall asleep by accident. The tefillin may be put on from the moment the light of day is strong enough to recognise a familiar face at a distance of four amot.* Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>38</sup> Shemot 13:9, citation: *Bramy Halachy...*, p. 64.

<sup>39</sup> *The two containers of the tefillin are made from the skin of a kosher animal. On the parchment, written by a scribe, are four excerpts from the Torah. They are: Sanctify Me (Exodus 13:1-10), When God brings you (Exodus 13:11-16), Hear O'Israel (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) and If You Observe My Commandments (Deuteronomy 11:13-21). [...] these excerpts are placed inside both the container placed on the arm and the container worn on the head. In the first, they are written on the one piece of parchment, while on the other, they are written on separate pieces of parchment. [...] The containers are tied, using straps, to the left forearm and on the top of the forehead. Tefillin should be worn every day, except on the Shabbat. It is forbidden to wear the tefillin while sleeping. For this reason, it is also forbidden to wear the tefillin at night in case, by accident, one may fall asleep. Tefillin may be worn from the moment one sees daylight strong enough to recognise a familiar face at a distance of four amot. [...] The words written in the tefillin were intended to be a sign on your hand and between your eyes, so that God's Torah should be on your mouth because, with immense power, God led you out of Egypt, (Shemot 13:9). It is stressed that wearing the tefillin is a reminder of the most important event in the history of the Jews – leaving Egypt and an alliance with God through which they received the commandments and which they were obliged to obey. The tefillin on the arm must be ... on the lower half of the bicep of the weaker arm [...] closer to the elbow than the armpit. It should also be turned a little in the direction of the body. When placed on the arm, the tefillin shel yad (the tefillin worn on the arm) should be directed towards the heart, in accordance with: These words [...] will be in your heart. [...] The tefillin worn on the head, after having previously placed the tefillin on the arm, are placed above the hairline, exactly in the middle of the head, between the eyes. The knot of the strap on the head tefillin [...] should be in the middle of the head, above the hairline. It is recommended that it should be exactly in the centre of the hairline, from the back of the head, slightly above the neck. [...] After the correct placement of the tefillin on the head and on the arm, the next activity is to tie the strap three times around the middle finger,, with the remainder wound around the palm. There is also a tradition is storing the prayer shawl and the tefillin. They should be placed inside a special small bag. Then, and to this day, there is a rule, amongst orthodox Jews, regarding the preparation of the tefillin containers and the straps, as well as the writing of the excerpts from the Torah.* Bramy Halachy..., pp. 64-67.

<sup>40</sup> *All ten men, including the Shaliach Tzibur (the man leading the prayer), must pray in the one place. Kadish, Kedusha, Birkat Kochanim may only be recited in the presence of a minyan, the same applying to the reading of the Torah in a synagogue. When a minyan is not present, these prayers are omitted. They are also omitted when praying alone.* Ibid., p.49.

*cover his head while sleeping*<sup>41</sup>. A Jew's behaviour was also subject to commandments: *The prophet Micha said to the people of Israel, "Go with humility before your God (Micha 6:8) A Jew should not behave in such a manner as would draw attention to himself. He should be discrete. Tsniout – discrete behaviour and modest dress, and also busha – a feeling of shame against inappropriate behaviour – these are noble virtues which draw a person closer to the Torah. [...] The same applies to the way we groom our hair, the way we speak and our general mode of behaviour*<sup>42</sup>. In practice, this meant circumspection regarding fashion, dressing in a manner which makes one not stand out from the community within which one lived. A Jew preferred to maintain modesty and to eliminate pride and conceit. It should be stressed here that, in the 19th century, social stratification was clearly evident amongst the lives of individual Jews and also entire Jewish families. Poverty was prevalent within a significant majority of the Jewish community, with only a small percentage being well-to-do and extremely wealthy. So, it must be said that one's attire confirmed one's social status.

The modesty and moderation displayed by religious Jews were also included within many specific commandments. Clothing could not be made from fabric determined to be *shatnez* – material which linked wool with linen. As A. Unterman states, *The reason for shatnez is not known. It is one of the incomprehensible divine regulations. [...] The principle of shatnez carries the message that, in God's divine creation, everything has its place and man is obliged to respect that*<sup>43</sup>. So, the traditional attire of a Jew could not utilise cloth of a wool and linen blend. From the famous, pre-War textile factories of Bielsko, Łódź or Częstochowa, the most valuable material for suits was the so-called "setka" – material made from 100% wool.

Following morning prayers, men would put on an outer shawl with tassels (*talit*) and *tefillin*. During some holidays, they would don a full-length *kittel*. They wore a head covering which was to remind them of God's presence. On Shabbat and on religious holidays, Hassidim wore a *shtreimel*<sup>44</sup>, which was made of a round piece of black velvet, surrounded by fur. A small *yarmulke* would always be worn under the *shtreimel*. Hassidim, moreover, wore

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, pp. 36 – 37.

<sup>43</sup> A. Unterman, *Encyklopedia tradycji i legend żydowskich*, Warsaw 2000, p. 261.

<sup>44</sup> As A. Unterman states: *The shtreimel, at one time, constituted a part of Polish dress. Jews adopted it following the spread of western European fashion throughout Poland and Russia. Keeping this type of head covering, distinguished Jews from the rest of the Polish population, establishing it as a characteristic element of Jewish attire. A shtreimel is usually first worn after one's marriage. Today, it is still favoured by Hassidic Jews, while other orthodox Jews, as a rule, wear normal hats.* A. Unterman, *Encyklopedia tradycji...*, p. 274.

long, black, long-sleeved jackets called a “bekishe” or a “kapota”, with long, white stockings. They did not wear ties as these were seen as *symbols of an unnecessary barrier between the mind and the heart. However, when praying, they wore a “gartel” (belt), which separated the heart from the genitalia*<sup>45</sup>. In this instance, the Halacha clearly stresses that *when blessings are recited or the Torah is being studied, the upper part of the body should be separated from the lower part by a belt or by some other piece of clothing which should be worn around the waist. The reason why this commandment should be obeyed is so that the heart should not see the nudity of the body.*<sup>46</sup>

Being a Hassid not only determined one’s lifestyle, at the same time it meant that one’s entire life was saturated by a mystical bond with a tzaddik. Tradition demanded that a sage (*chacham*) never appear in stained clothing, but due to their social standing, it was fitting for them to appear in black attire. In Częstochowa, Kromolow Hassidim<sup>47</sup> prayed in the *shtiebel* at ul Warszawska 22. In the beginning, those praying there were widely referred to as the “Kraków minyan”. They prayed according to the style of the Kromolow rebbe. The great Rabbi of Kromolow, Natan-Chaim Rabinowicz, was one of four sons of a tzaddik from Radomsk. Among those who prayed in that *shtiebel* were Rabbi Zwi Hirsz Kleiman and his son Abracham Mosze, who, on the high holydays, would read from the Torah. Leader of the prayers (Baal Koreh) was Rabbi Fiszel Weidenfeld, famous for his beautiful intonation and his ritual recitation of the prayers. Szlomo Złotnik was the *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) and was active in the preparation of kosher food. Others to participate in the prayer services were Meir Bar Kartuz and his son Dudel, and in the pre-WWII years, Izrael Częstochowski, Meir Bar and Izrael Garmo. Garmo was famous for his stories about the lives of Hassidim.

According one report, during the interwar period, a section of those who prayed at the Hassidic *shtiebel* at ulica Warszawska 22 were more progressive in their style of dress. They wore pressed shirts with artificial collars and would wear a tie. They would not wear the long traditional, Hassidic jacket, but would even wear fashionable suits.

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<sup>45</sup> A. Unterman, *Encyklopedia tradycji...*, p. 291.

<sup>46</sup> Z. Greenwald, *Brany Halachy ...*, p. 48.

<sup>47</sup> According to Chaim Ben Szlomo, from the Hebrew of Rachel Fleishman-Seidmann, Kibbutz Kfar Masaryk, Israel 1998.

In his memoirs about Sara, his mother, Jerzy Einhorn<sup>48</sup> wrote:

*Sara came from a large Jewish family comprised of eight or nine girls and one boy. [...] Sara dared to break with old traditions – she dressed in a modern fashion and learned a trade. Sara’s parents, my grandfather Szyja and grandmother Szpryca, were not too pleased by this. [...] Maybe Sara was stronger and more independent [...] Sara continued to live in the family home and her flamboyance shocked her parents, siblings, relatives and neighbours [...] her siblings admired her for her self-confidence and strong willpower, as well as for her ability to resist the pressures of her surroundings [...] young Sara would return home from work in the most fashionable, wide-winged hat with a black ribbon. Sara organised paid employment for herself, instead of getting married in her teenage years, as was the custom amongst orthodox Jewish families in those years. [...] She had good taste and dressed elegantly, but not provocatively. She was an unusually chic woman whom men would notice. She always knew what she wanted and she usually got it<sup>49</sup>.*

The example of Einhorn’s mother confirms the many other examples, from those times, of leaving the traditional/cultural ghetto and surrendering to acculturation, or even assimilation, through personal strength, having one’s own goals in life and wishing to break the corset of traditional imperatives which impeded their attainment. The modernisation process, which every young generation deals with, often manifests itself as rebellion against older generations. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Częstochowa, that rebellion encountered a new basis. The relatively rapid development of the city absorbed an ever-increasing number of new residents. These newcomers arrived, most often, from small towns. They were pioneers arriving, also most often, with large families. They aspired to change and improve their lives. In their new place of residence, they were, to a lesser degree, subjected to the pressures of tradition guarded by multi-generational families and neighbours. Just as with every newly-formed community and in the industrialisation period of the Congress Kingdom of Poland, developing urban centres were characterised by a multi-coloured communal life, significantly influenced by multi-culturalism and a deepening social stratification.

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<sup>48</sup> J. Einhorn was born into a Jewish family in Częstochowa in 1925. He was in the Częstochowa ghetto and in the HASAG-Pelcery forced labour camp. He wrote his memoirs under the title *Chosen to Live*, published in 1996 in Stockholm. The Polish language version was published in Gdańsk in 2002.

<sup>49</sup> J. Einhorn, *Wybrany aby żyć*, Gdańsk 2002, p. 11.



In accordance with ritual, religious Jewish women cut their hair after marriage. This arose from the commandment that only their husband should see her hair. In the 19th century, the custom spread whereby a married woman would wear a wig. Wigmakers and hatters enjoyed a significant popularity in 19th century Częstochowa, not only amongst a Jewish clientele. In many instances, the wigs were prettier than the natural hair and conferred a certain charm on the women wearing them. However, in accordance with Halacha: *A man should not pray standing before an inadequately dressed woman. A man should also not pray standing before a married woman whose hair is not covered*<sup>50</sup>. Men are also *never permitted to listen to the singing of a woman. They should be especially careful, regarding this, when praying or studying the Torah*<sup>51</sup>.

In 19th century Częstochowa, an order issued in 1825 by Tsar Nicholas I was met with passive resistance. It required all residents of Russia to stop wearing national attire and to dress in a European manner. The introduction date of this Tsarist order was ignored by the Jews. In response to that, the police were given the authority to implement this regulation by force.

Standing by their faith, the Jews reacted to this open repression in their own manner – by fasting, praying and searching for support and comfort in passionately obeying God's commandments. Through this, they fully expected God not to desert his chosen people in their misfortune. However, the police carried out their orders. Armed with large scissors, they cut the beards and long coats of Jews whom they encountered in the streets and who were dressed in traditional attire. Among the victims of these excesses was sixty year old Rabbi Rachmiel Landau, whose beard was shaved off at the Częstochowa railway station. On that same day, a policeman ripped the wig off his wife's head, a wig traditionally worn by married Jewish women. At that time, men with bandaged faces were often seen in the synagogue on ul Prosta and in other places of prayer. In this way, they hid the shame of having had their beards and *payot* cut off. As S. Rumszewicz<sup>52</sup> informs, one Saturday morning, fighting for the Europeanization of Jews, several Polish cavalrymen appeared in front of the synagogue in which Jews were praying. As people left, they ensured that all the men and women were dressed in accordance with the law. Those inside worked out what was happening and decided not to leave the synagogue until dusk.

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<sup>50</sup> Z. Greenwald, *Brany Halachy...*, p. 48.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> S. Rumszewicz, *Żydzi Częstochowianie*, (in) *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 28/12/ 1915.

The interference of the authorities into a tradition, so closely linked to religious regulations, went so far as to force a rabbi to advise every bride, during the wedding ceremony, that she was forbidden to cut her hair or to cover her head with anything.<sup>53</sup>

### 3. Education and the Studying of Holy Books<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Art 1. Because preventing Jewesses from shaving their head when entering matrimony largely depends upon rabbis and the clergy, therefore in order to conform with regulations, during the marriage ceremony, the shaving of the head must not be mentioned; whereas should rabbis and other orthodox Jewish clergymen not adhere to this regulation, the matter will be referred to the appropriate criminal court for the imposition of a penalty as stipulated by the Tsar. That is incarceration in a Correctional Home from two to three years [...] if they will again be convicted of the same offences, they will be handed over to the army to serve without rank. If they show themselves to be incapable of military service, they will be sent to a correctional facility for a period from ten to twelve years. Art. 2. Jewesses, who contravene the ban on shaving the head, will be taken before a police court and, for each contravention, will be fined an amount of five rubles. Art. 3. Funds accumulated from penalties resulting from the above Articles will be passed on to the Board of Management of the Central Welfare Council for the Care of Orthodox Jews, Law Journal, Duchy of Warsaw, Congress Kingdom of Poland, Vol. XLVII, pp. 29-33.*

<sup>54</sup> Selected extracts from the Talmud:

#### 1. About sages – those learned in scripture:

*A sage is more important than a prophet. (Bava Batra 12) A sage precedes a king. (Horayot 13) No one can replace a deceased sage. (Harayot 13) A sage should be flawless. (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 4) When a sage knows the beginning of a matter, he also knows its ending. (Sotta 8) Each generation has its own learned, each generation has its own sages. (Sanhedrin 35) According to Rav Yehuda, whoever dresses in the robes of a sage, and is not a sage, will not be admitted before Him who is holy. (Bava Batra 98:1) Three people require supervision and care – a sick person, a fiancé and a fiancée; and there are those who also say a sage at night. (Berachot 54) A trio who hate each other – dogs, cockerels and partners; there are those who say also the sages in Babylon. (Pesachim 113) From the wisdom of the Talmud, selected by Sz. Datner and A. Kamieńska, Warsaw 1988, 3rd edition: Mędracy, Nauczyciele, Uczniowie, pp. 98-119.*

*Avitalion said: Sages, be careful with your words lest you incur the penalty of exile and are called to a place where the waters of learning are impure and the disciples that come after you drink of them and die; and the Heavenly Name is consequently profaned. (p. 5.) Study (of the Torah) has a higher standing than the priesthood and higher than (secular) authority. Because, it is possible to attain secular authority with thirty attributes. To achieve priesthood, twenty four will be sufficient. But to master the Torah, forty eight conditions must be met. They are: academic work, focussed attention, language competence, intelligence, fear of God, respect (for teachers), modesty, joy, cleanliness, communing with sages, an assortment of company, participation in discussions, diligence, knowledge of the writings and of the Mishnah, moderation in commercial dealings, moderation in worldly matters, moderation in recreation, moderation in sleep, moderation in speech, moderation in play, patience, goodness of the heart, trust in the sages and a readiness to bear suffering (p. 28) (Whoever wishes to master the Torah) should know one's place, be content with one's lot, moderate one's words, not flatter oneself, to be loved, love God and people, readily perform good deeds, love righteousness, love to be taught, shun honours, not boast of one's learnedness, not take pleasure in a judgment, help a neighbour to carry a yoke, judge him according to service, take the route of truth and peace, give one's heart to learning, ask appropriate questions and give appropriate replies, listen carefully and pass on what is heard, learn so as to be able to apply knowledge in practice, recognise the wisdom of one's teacher, consolidate the lessons, acknowledge the authors of opinions; education stems from this: whoever reads the words of others should acknowledge the author, he who brings salvation to the world, because it is written: "And Esther said to King in the name of Mordechai". (p. 29) A selection from: Ethics of the Fathers ..., (pages are indicated after the citations).*

#### 2. About teachers:

*It is not possible to compare a self-educated person to one who has received an education from a teacher. (Ketuvot 111) Love without admonition is not love. (Bereshit Rabba 44) Be careful when learning, because a mistake in learning is greater than a sin. (Avot 4, 16) From the Wisdom of the Talmud ..., pp. 101-109. Joshua, son of Perachiahi, was in the habit of saying, "Choose for yourself a teacher, acquire a friend and judge every man on his merits. (p. 4) Rabbi Eleazar of Modaim said, "Whoever sullies holiness, whoever*

The system of Jewish religious education was well developed. It was based on deep traditions of teaching and studying the holy books and was one of the fundamental principles of Judaism. *Cheders* and *yeshivas* were an integral part of every Jewish community. Within Jewish families, knowledge and learning were instilled from a very young age. Humility and patience, which were to be rewarded, dominated even over a child's rebellion against hard work and a concealed hatred for a *melamed*, not always acting according to demagogic principles. Fathers cautioned pupils against laziness and superficial studying stating, "Whoever forgets even on word to his acquired study then, according to the Talmud, risks his life"<sup>55</sup>.

Studying the holy texts was not only the fulfilment of a religious obligation, but also had as its aim the strengthening of faith and the arming of oneself with religiousness in arguments against attacks by heretics. The Talmud commanded one to *be diligent in studying*

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*publicly insults his neighbour, whoever violates the covenant of the forefather Abraham and falsely comments on the Torah, even when he displays knowledge and good deeds, will not be able to participate in eternal life. (p. 13) Rabbi Ishmael, his son, said, "He who avoids being a judge, frees himself from judging, frees himself from hate, deceit and perjury. Whoever displays coarseness when teaching is stupid, vile and conceited. (p. 17) Rabbi Eleazar, son of Shamai, said, "Let the honour of your pupil be as precious as your own and the honour of a friend – it is the respect due to your teacher, whereas that respect will be equal to the fear of heaven. Rabbi Yehuda said, "Be careful when teaching as a mistake when teaching means a misdeed". Rabbi Shimon says, "There are three crowns – the crown of the Torah, the crown of the priesthood and the crown of the authorities. But the crown of a good name stands higher than them all. (p.18). Selected from Ethics of the Fathers ..., (page numbers after each citation).*

### 3. About pupils:

*Hillel and Shamma once said, "Whoever unduly chases after fame will lose it. Whoever does not study deserves death. Whoever exploits (for himself) the crown (of learning) will perish". Shamma said, "Make studying the Torah a permanent habit. Say little, do much and treat everyone with kindness (p. 5). Rabban Gamaliel, son of Yehuda ha-Nasi said, "Do not say 'I will get down to study when I have time for it', because such a time may never come about". Rabban Gamaliel, son of Yehudy ha-Nasi, also said, "The more the meat, the more the vermin. The more the wealth, the greater the worries. The more the women, all the more is the charm. The greater the addiction, the greater the debauchery. Many addicts- much pillage. The more one studies the Law, the longer one will live. Whoever is more diligent will achieve greater wisdom. Whoever seeks the advice of others will gain reason. Whoever performs good deeds is working towards peace. Whoever attains a good name, has gained something for himself. Whoever has studied the Torah ensures for himself eternal life (p.70). Rabbi Yose said, "Let your friend's money be as valuable to you as your own. Adapt yourself to studying the Torah, because knowledge is not inherited. Everything you do is for the glory of Heaven". Rabbi Shimon said, "Be attentive when reciting the Shema and other prayers. Do not fall into a routine when you pray. Let your prayers express a request for the mercy of God, because it is said that God is kind and merciful, and that He is reserved in anger and generous in favours, while feeling regret for adversity". Rabbi Tarfon said, "You do not have to do all the work by yourself, but you are also not allowed to give up on it. If you study the Law carefully, you will be greatly rewarded, because you can trust in your creator. He will repay you for the hardship you have endured. Know that, for the righteous, there is a reward in the next world". (p.9) Rabbi Meir said, "Occupy yourself less with business. Deal more with the Torah. Be humble towards every man. If you neglect the Torah once, many people will consider you to be careless. If you trouble yourself with the Torah, He will greatly reward you." (p.17) I grant you valuable instruction. DO not give up on studying (the Torah). (pp. 26-28) Selected from Ethics of the Fathers..., (pages are indicated after the citations). A happy pupil who thanks his teacher. (Berachot 32) He is poor who does not have knowledge. (Nedarim 41) My swoje, oni swoje. (Berachot 8). Selected from the Wisdom of the Talmud, pp. 101-118.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ethics of the Fathers ..., (Avot 3:8), p. 12.*

*the Torah so that you know how to answer a heretic. Know with whom you deal and He, who is your creator, will one day reward your bravery*<sup>56</sup>. Every word of the Law had a deep meaning. Studying it required careful reading and such concentration on the text that not one sentence would escape attention. Similarly, in *Ethics of the Fathers*, it is stated that the contents of the Law cannot be interpreted literally. It directly follows that whoever translates the text of the Law literally, falsifies it and commits idolatry and the gravest of sins. Both sages and teachers also extracted, from the context, individuals sentences, or even parts of sentences, and interpreted them separately. Every word became the object for in-depth analysis.

An obvious fact is that, in order to acquire such extensive knowledge, the help of a teacher was essential for a young man to implement the ritually complicated and codified detail of religious life. Respect for Talmudic knowledge was linked with respect for the teacher. It resulted from the pupil-teacher connection, but also had a wider dimension. One's level of Talmudic knowledge determined one's places in the hierarchy of the Jewish community. In accordance with the text of the Talmud:

*One, who learns Torah in order to teach, is given the opportunity to learn and teach. One who learns in order to do, is given the opportunity to learn, teach, observe and do. Rabbi Tzaddok would say: Do not make the Torah a crown to magnify yourself with, or a spade with which to dig. So would Hillel say: one who makes personal use of the crown of Torah will perish. Hence one who benefits himself from the words of Torah removes his life from the world.*<sup>57</sup>

Those cautions placed, upon the entire Jewish community, a religious duty to assist in the development of teachers and to provide them with the conditions to carry out their work. In practice, this meant establishing and maintaining religious schools – *chederim* and *yeshivot*<sup>58</sup>, as well as providing financial help to students of modest means. This also meant

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., (Avot 2:14), p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., (Avot 4:5), p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> *The schedule of study was as follows: young men and boys were obliged to study with the head of the yeshivah in the summer, from the beginning of the month of Iyar (the end of April or the beginning of May) until the 15<sup>th</sup> Av (mid-August) and, in winter, from the beginning of the month of Cheshvan (the end of October) until 15<sup>th</sup> Shevat (early February). From the beginning of the month of Iyar until Shavuot and in winter, from the beginning of the month of Cheshvan until Channukah, students studied Gemorah, with Rashi commentaries and Tosafot. In summer, students were only excused from study in the afternoons. From Shavuot until Channukah, or from Channukah until Pesach, or until Rosh Hashanna, the yeshivas head did not occupy himself with "pilpul" (in-depth Talmud analysis), but lectured sages on the "four mitzvot of Purim" (the Halachic law of Jakub ben*

that two of the primary activities of a local Jewish community council were educational and charitable in nature.

Boys would already attend a *cheder* from the age of three to five years old. Religious parents would entrust their children to the care of a *melamed*, who would teach them to read and write in the “holy” Hebrew language. In a realistic way, Zygmunt Hoffman describes the moment a child is sent to study at a *cheder*:

*When a little boy was three years old, the father and mother would then bundle him up in his father’s prayer shawl and carry him to the cheder. At the entrance to the house, the mother would dress him in “tzitzit”. This is a symbol of full compliance with the laws of the Torah<sup>59</sup> A religious Jew would wear them all his life.*

According to the picture drawn by Z. Hoffman, a child:

*... would be seated before a rebbe, who would show the child the letters shin, dalet, yud, alef, mem, taf. He would later join these letters to form the words “Shaddai emet” (The God of Truth). It was forbidden to say the name of God. Instead, it was replaced by one of the divine adjectives. Dawidek repeated what the rebbe said and such began his cheder education<sup>60</sup>.*

The method of teaching the basics of readings in *chederim* had not changed in centuries and has remained traditional in *chederim* almost to this day. It was a scholastic method of learning by heart the program material. The number of children who would study together in a group was kept low, at most twenty five pupils. Since learning was based in rote learning and reading aloud, the children’s voices would resound such that nearby local residents would often refer to it as “the Jewish hullabaloo”. The minds of the young children

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*Asher, +1340), while he taught Alfás to the young men (the commentaries to the Talmud of Izaak Alfás of Fez – a sage of the 11<sup>th</sup> century) as well as other works of that nature. For a few weeks prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> Av, the yeshivah head allowed one of two of his pupils to replace a teacher in order to deliver, to the others, a “chiluk” (his own interpretation of Talmud text). They delivered their “chiluk”, while the yeshivah head would listen and offer a critique. The aim of this was to sharpen the minds of the yeshivah students. Every yeshivah head had a sexton who, daily, would go from one class to the other, checking that all were applying themselves to their studies. On Thursdays, boys would go together to a superior who would examine them on what they had learnt during that week. If someone did not know an answer or made a mistake in answering, the superior would recommend that the sexton administer a number of lashes in front of other pupils. Hannover’s description of the organisation of teaching in yeshivahs did not fundamentally change for centuries. It formally lasted until the last days of the Second Polish Republic (beginning of WWII). Z. Hoffman, “From Cheder to Yeshivah”, [in:] *Kalendarz żydowski 1985 – 1986*, Związek Żydowski Wyznania Mojżeszowego w PRL, 1985, pp. 87-88.*

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

in the preliminary classes, referred to as “dardeki”, absorbed the material without any special difficulties. As Zygmunt Hoffman writes:

*After spending half a year studying in the cheder, Dawidek could already read the text of short prayers (Actually, he knew them by heart.) as well as all the necessary blessings which a religious Jews would recite at every meal*<sup>61</sup>.

Both in the family home, as well as in the *cheder*, it was instilled into the child that it would be a sin to swallow the first mouthful of food or sip a drink without first thanking the Lord and showing respect for tradition and religious law.

A higher level of *cheder* learning for a boy, following the “dardeki” stage, was Torah study with the commentaries of Rashi (the short name for Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki of Troyes, 1040-1105). This study lasted for two years. Students acquired the ability to speed-read the commentary texts, printed in a different font to that of the *Chumash* text, and similar to that used in the first Hebrew books printed for women. The traditional method began with the *melamed* reading through the original text, translating each sentence into Yiddish, based on the 18th century textbook of Beer-Moshe (Moshe Serteles, author of a Yiddish translation of the *Chumash*, Prague 1604), which became an important aid to the teaching of languages<sup>62</sup>.

Prior to a boy advancing to the higher level of *cheder* learning, his parents would arrange a celebration at home to mark the event. This is also described by Z. Hoffman. Apart from family, friends and acquaintances, also present at the celebration would be the boy’s new teacher, his *Chumash Melamed*. The boy, dressed in new clothes, would be kissed by all the women and showered with raisins and almonds. He would then deliver a ceremonial oration, in Hebrew, in the form of replies to his *melamed*’s questions. The course of the oration (in brief) would be as follows:

- Melamed: Little boy, what are your father and mother doing now?
- Boy: Father and mother are celebrating.
- Melamed: Is the celebration because you are beginning to study the *Chumash*?
- Boy: Yes, my teacher, you guessed.
- Melamed: Perhaps you would like tell us something you know from the Torah?

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

- Boy: Of course, I am prepared for that. Even though I am not old enough yet to say the words of the Torah to you, my teacher, I will say a few sentences from *Bereishit* (Genesis).
- At this point, three blessings were made over the boy, one of which was: *I wish that the blessings you have just heard be fulfilled and, to them, I only want to add the wish that your life, and the lives of your family, be full of sweetness, as the fruits of the trees which bloom in the spring.*

The exchange between the *melamed* and the boy continued:

- Melamed: What will you begin to study now, my little friend?
- Boy: The *Chumash*, my teacher.
- Melamed: What does the word *Chumash* mean?
- Boy: Five
- Melamed: Five what?
- Boy: The five books of the Torah.
- Melamed: What are the names of the books?
- Boy: *Bereishit, Shemot, Vayikra, Bamidbar, Devarim.*
- Melamed: Which book will you study now?
- Boy: I will learn from the third book.
- Melamed: What is that book's name?
- Boy: *Vayikra* (Leviticus).
- Melamed: What is the meaning of *Vayikra* ?
- Boy: "And He Called"
- Melamed: Who called? Maybe it was a rooster on a chimney.
- Chłopiec: No, it was God who called Moses, in order to teach him about the ways to make an offering (... and so the dialogue continued)<sup>63</sup>.

A distinctive feature of a sage was supposed to be modesty<sup>64</sup>. A modest sage was not ashamed to admit his inability to answer a question asked of him and to reply with "I don't know"<sup>65</sup>. This was not a sign of ignorance. It was to indicate that he was careful, in his position and was displaying modesty with regard to a huge amount of knowledge, all of which

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 84 - 85.

<sup>64</sup> *Zfom the Wisdom of the Talmud...*, (Derech Erec Zutta), p. 100.

<sup>65</sup> *Teach your tongue to say "I don't know", so that you will not be miserably caught out in a lie.* Ibid., (Berachot 4), 4. 117.

would be difficult for one individual to master<sup>66</sup>. That carefulness in speech was articulated in other statements: *One should not accept anything that is contrary to reason*<sup>67</sup>. On the other hand, it was emphasised that *a sage, who does not have his own opinion, is worse than carrion*<sup>68</sup>. The imperative for sages was to take care in their own judgements, to always deepen their knowledge through studying the holy books and to ask themselves questions and not to draw conclusions from those responses which confronted hypotheses drawn during the course of their studies.

In many places, a great deal of space is devoted to stressing the importance of rabbinical recommendations regarding the raising of the young generation. Elisha ben Abuya says: *One who learns as a child is compared to what? To ink written on new parchment. And one who learns as an elder is compared to what? To ink written on scraped parchment. Rabbi Yose bar Yehuda, a resident of a Babylonian village, says: One who learns from young ones is compared to what? To one who eats unripe grapes and drinks wine from its press. And one who learns from elders is compared to what? To one who eats ripe grapes and drinks aged wine. The Rabbi says: Do not look at the jug but rather at what is in it. For there are new jugs full of old, and old that do not have even new within them*<sup>69</sup>. Learning is a complex process, requiring from the student not only good intentions, but also the application of appropriate methods.

A few sentences here merit our attention:

*There are four types of students: There are those who comprehend quickly and forget quickly – their gain disappears in their loss. There are those who are slow to comprehend and slow to forget – their loss disappears in their gain. There are those who are quick to comprehend and slow to forget – they are fortunate. There are those who are slow to comprehend and quick to forget – they are unfortunate*<sup>70</sup>.

*There are four types of listeners to (the lessons of) the sages: A sponge who soaks up everything. A funnel who takes in at one end and lets out at the other. A strainer who*

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<sup>66</sup> *Did he cease to be a great man because he did not know something?* (Sages). Ibid., (Gittin 6), p. 102.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., (Gaon Shmuel Ben Chodni), p. 117.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., (Vayikra Rabba 1), p. 101..

<sup>69</sup> *Ethics of the Fathers ...*, (Avot 4,20), p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., (Avot 5,12 ) p. 23.



*which lets out the wine and retains the lees. A sieve who lets out the coarse meal and retains the choice flour*<sup>71</sup>.

*Seven features describe a fool and seven a sage. A wise man never goes on at length in the presence of someone who surpasses him in terms of knowledge and age. He does not hurry to reply. He asks sensible questions and replies appropriately to the first (question), as he does to the last. If he does not hear something, he says "I didn't hear". He acknowledges the truth as being the opposite of something stupid*<sup>72</sup>.

*There are four kinds of temperaments: Easy to become angry, and easy to be appeased: his gain disappears in his loss. Hard to become angry, and hard to be appeased: his loss disappears in his gain. Hard to become angry and easy to be appeased: a pious person. Easy to become angry and hard to be appeased: a wicked person*<sup>73</sup>.

The *Ethics of the Fathers* divide students into four groups on the basis of diligence and a sense of responsibility towards studying:

*There are four types among those who frequent the study-house (Bet Midrash): He who attends but does not practice: he receives a reward for attendance. He who practices but does not attend: he receives a reward for practice. He who attends and practices: he is a pious man. He who neither attends nor practices: he is a wicked man*<sup>74</sup>.

In Częstochowa, the network of religious schools underwent constant changes as the result of the growth in the number of Jewish residents. These schools were private in nature and almost every *melamed* could establish his own *cheder*. Working conditions in a *cheder* depended on the affluence of the school's owner. Most often, the school rooms which, in part, served as the *melamed*'s home, were quite poor.

Amongst the documents preserved in the Częstochowa State Archives is the biography of Dawid Frank. It is typical of *melameds* and owners of Jewish religious schools. He was born in Żarki, in a small town near Częstochowa. His father owned a *cheder* in that town. He received a religious upbringing and, as he said himself, became acquainted with Jewish

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., (Avot 5,14 ) p. 24.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., (Pirkei Avot), p. 22.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., (Pirkei Avot), p. 23.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., (Pirkei Avot), pp. 23-24.

history. At thirteen years of age, he continued his religious studies in yeshivot with rabbis from Wolbrom, Warsaw and other Polish cities. His studies lasted for eight years, until he was twenty one. At twenty five years of age, he established, for the first time, a *cheder* in Częstochowa. For many years, he worked as a *melamed* and as an owner of a religious school<sup>75</sup>.

The owners of religious schools, themselves, set the monthly payment for students. These payments varied. Most often, the more expensive *chederim* were where the conditions were better and where the *melamed* was a recognised authority within that circle. In some *chederim*, *melameds* hired their own assistants (*belfers*), paid for by the owners, namely the *melameds*. Study in the *chederim* lasted all day. It began at 8:00am with prayer, with ten-minute breaks until 1:00pm. Following a two hour break, it would continue until 6:00pm. The week would begin on a Sunday and would end on the Friday afternoon. *Chederim* competed with each other in their efforts for students. That rivalry was not always honest in nature. Quite often it resulted in disputes and even quarrels. In the heat of the battles, rabbinical courts were turned to for decisions and, sometimes, matters were referred to the civil administration authorities.

The image of the work conditions and their resultant financial effects is described in a document, preserved from the inter-War period, submitted by the *melamed* Luzer Laucman to the Częstochowa municipal authorities:

*I have been the owner of a religious school in Częstochowa for thirty years. I have conducted it in various locations. Recently, wishing to enlarge the school and to have appropriate premises, I rented the abovementioned address which I thoroughly renovated at the cost of several thousand zloty, being my entire funds [...] For me, this matter is vital as, in the case of a refusal, in my old age, I and my family will be plunged into an abyss of endless poverty after thirty years of arduous work<sup>76</sup>.*

This request hid the many problems of Jewish religious education. Thirty years of work did not guarantee the *melamed* financial security in his old age. He had not earned enough to own his own premises nor had he acquired any significant wealth. From this, it is possible to conclude that this kind of enterprise was not financially lucrative. After many

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<sup>75</sup> Częstochowa State Archives, [further: APC] zespół Magistrat Częstochowy [further: mag. Cz] File No. 7696, p. 533.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 528.

years of work, that teacher lived with an uncertain future and on the verge of poverty. The poorest section of the Jewish community lived in the area of ulica Warszawska 14, where the school was to be located. Fees for education could not exceed the financial capabilities of the parents. So the fees had to be modest and were not sufficient to meet the needs of the school. That *melamed* himself worked from morning to evening.

At the turn of the 19th century, Ashkenazi Jews who represented the Haskalah movement (Jewish enlightenment) were referred to as *Maskilim*. This Jewish religious and social movement aspired to break with the traditional forms of Jewish life. First of all, it wanted to leave the cultural ghetto and to integrate into the rest of the population of the country in which they lived. They stressed, however, the need to maintain religious separation, but called for reforms in observance. This position was based on perceptions of the culture of the community amongst which they lived, while still placing limits on the acculturation in order to preserve their core religious identity. Haskala began a battle to break the centuries-old monopoly of religious schools. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Poland, they had little impact on content and teaching organisation in Jewish religious schools. With the implementation of compulsory school attendance, Jews were recognized only as a religious community and not as an ethnic grouping. This meant that the only change was to the organisation of teaching and, sometimes, the establishment of semi-legal and illegal schools.

The traditional model of education, complying with the will of the father, mother and older members of the family, became disrupted by examples of individuals achieving prominence in community life. The family's educational aims were not always in accordance with that of the young person's. The creators of these new models and attitudes were individuals who had achieved a higher standing in the community through a higher than average level of education, a better knowledge of and respect within the community, were professionals, had achieved financial success, had appropriate political views, a different than usual lifestyle and who were open to new ideological, cultural or fashion trends. These individuals had strong personalities which exerted direct or indirect influence on the lives of other family members or on the Jewish community.

#### **4. The Family and the Home**

In 19th century society, the home performed special functions. Częstochowa's location, linked to its history, multicultural tradition and culture, made this city a specific

place for the development of Polish and Jewish identities within Polish and Jewish families. For Poles, this period of partition, for the residents of Częstochowa, was a time of appropriating many spheres of life through foreign laws, a foreign economy, a foreign ideology and politics. The public space was a foreign space, even a hostile space from the point of view of the Poles. This sense was heightened as new buildings were erected. The designs were foreign, as were the functions they served. Names of streets and squares were changed. New signs began to dominate, with foreign municipal rituals (parades, holidays). A significant number of institutions, especially schools, courts, public administrations and economic institutions were controlled, subjected to Russian control. To a certain extent, even the Church gave itself up to supervision. Under these conditions, it was actually the family home, being away from the direct interference of authorities, which could maintain the function of the private sphere, without controls. Furthermore, thanks to its privacy, the home could become an area of activity which reached beyond that privacy.

A Jewish family was part of the local Częstochowa community in two ways: 1) as a Jewish family within the Jewish community (amongst other Jewish families – a ghetto, 2) as a Jewish family amongst non-Jews, families forming the common community of the city (Poles and Jews as the entire Częstochowa community). In principle, the Jewish ghetto became an urban enclave. It could be described as a local community which was limited to a certain area of the city, comprised of Jewish families and their temporal-spatial character. There was a great significance in the “long-standing” of families within the local area - families living here from the beginnings of the Jewish community, settling here in the 19th century, or families who arrived in Częstochowa later.

The house and the apartment were the centre of every Jewish family’s private and intimate life. The walls were witnesses to the events, changes and processes which affected generations of Częstochowa’s Jews. After fitting out, it was possible to determine the decor, standard of living, social standing and culture of the family living there. In terms of furnishings, the homes occupied by Jews did not differ from those occupied by Częstochowa Poles. There were, however, differences, especially with respect to financial status, cultural level, attitudes towards religious, ethnic and family traditions. Each Jewish household had an individual and specific family climate. Although all Jewish families were characterised by a shared, collective identity, they also maintained a specificity which made them different to the specific identity of other families. The determining factors were the family’s level of wealth,

where they lived, the number of people living in each dwelling, their attitude to religion and tradition, etc. That is the way it was in the poorer, modest house – clean and neat, with a prevailing warm-homely atmosphere. In the hallways of the rented tenements, one could hear the loud and, sometimes, sharp exchange of words between neighbours. Some of the courtyards were extremely neat, while others contained heaps of rubbish, stinking gutters and the smells of waste produced by small-scale craftsmen and small shops.

The hullabaloo, the hubbub, the loud discussions and the door-to-door salesmen were a daily presence in the crowded streets and districts inhabited by the Jewish population. Like with every community, the Jewish community was a diverse mixture of characters, temperaments, individuals and social attitudes which all contributed to the overall picture of the community. In many instances, attitudes towards tradition and religion were treated selectively, i.e. these imperatives were adhered to and/or they were interpreted to fit the individual. This would also lead to many disputes and discussions which would lead to opinions being sought from rabbis or from rabbinical courts. There were also instances where Jews sued each other in civil courts.

It should, however, be stressed that Jewish women, mothers and wives, played a huge role in the creation of a family atmosphere. In orthodox families, they were the ones who maintained the observance, ardour and enthusiasm of religious life. In the Jewish community, the family (Hebr. *mishpacha*) always played a special role: *The family is like a pile of stones. When you move one, they can all collapse*<sup>77</sup>. Belonging to the Jewish community is passed on through the mother's line, while the status of *Levi* (*priest*) comes through the father's line. One's position in society and identity within the community was consequent on one's family lineage (*yichus*). A married man committed himself to the marriage and to procreation. Children are regarded as a blessing from God. Marriage and procreation are considered a Jew's obligation. Joining two people through marriage is nothing more than a crucial moment in the individuals' lives and achieving a level of humanity<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Genesis 100:7.

<sup>78</sup> The status of women in Talmudic tradition resulted from the assumption that "women were a separate people". As such, they were different to men with respect to laws and obligations. However, within the Talmud, men and women are considered equal. Children are required to obey their parents, while the parents are obliged to raise their children to be good Jews. The Talmud forbids striking a child. It is forbidden to threaten a punishment. It should be imposed immediately or not at all". The parents' fundamental responsibilities are to teach their children Torah. *When you acquire wisdom, you will lack nothing. When you lack wisdom, you will have gained nothing. Ethics of the Fathers ...*, (Lev. R. 1:6), s. 4. This responsibility rests directly upon the father, who should

In traditional Jewish families, the man was the head of the household and exercised authority on religious matters, as well as those relating to the home. The Talmud devotes many sentences to this: *Be careful in exercising power, as it does not benefit a man, but for his gain, it pretends to love when it suits, but does not help in hard times*<sup>79</sup>; *Authority without advisers is not authority*<sup>80</sup>; *The law of the land is the law*<sup>81</sup>; *Each generation has the authority it deserves*<sup>82</sup>, Jose, son of Joezer said, “*Let your house become a meeting place for sages and you should sit at their feet and drink in their words as water for the thirsty*”. Nitai the Arbelite said, “*Distance yourself from a bad neighbour. Do not befriend a wicked person and do not despair under the influence of misfortune*<sup>83</sup>. An ideal wife was considered to be one who fulfilled her husband’s wishes. However, there were instances where the formal dominance of the husband just screened the unofficial role of the wife and mother, who ruled despotically and who was excessively protective. Jewish rituals maintained certain elements of male superiority, although factually it may have been different.<sup>84</sup> In any case, the family was an institution of strength and the father was the authority.

Every house and apartment built by a religious Jew was required to be blessed. A religious Jewish family would nail a *mezuzah* to the doorpost of the entrance. It constituted a sign and symbol that the spirit of the Almighty was within it. The act of nailing a *mezuzah* to the doorpost was a religious activity during which an appropriate blessing was recited. It was often linked to a dedication of an apartment or an entire house. It had a familial character, conducted in a family traditional manner or that of the local Jewish community<sup>85</sup>. Within an

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pass this knowledge onto his son, or find a teacher for him. The role of the mother consists of creating an appropriate home climate favourable for learning. The responsibility to educate children was connected more with sons than with daughters. Men felt immense pressure to increase their religious knowledge, which involved long study away from the home and did not leave a great deal of time for other activities. This resulted in women having to bear the weight of running and maintaining the household. The consequence of this was that women played a decisive role in what happened in family life, while maintaining the formal status of the father as head of the house. Jews regarded earning a living through hard, physical work as unsatisfying. They considered physical effort as “stupefying” and a distraction from thinking about knowledge, which was all that counted. The family performed social function and a sex life was not regarded negatively. On the contrary, sex was regarded as a gift from God and should be exercised appropriately and in moderation. Its main purpose was procreation. Interestingly, in a direction to men, the Talmud warns *the sages state that men who devote a lot of time to conversing with women are doing themselves harm. It distracts from the words of the Torah which, in the end, ends in hell. Ethics o the Fathers...*, s. 4.

<sup>79</sup> *From the Wisdom of the Torah ...*, (Avot 2,3), p. 213.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, ( The Wisdom of Rabbi Eliezer), p. 208.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, (Bava Kamma), p. 206.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, (Eruvin 17), p. 206.

<sup>83</sup> *Ethics of the Fathers...*, (Pirkeij Avot), p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> A. Unterman, *Jews Believe ...*, p. 242

<sup>85</sup> Rabbi Simon Philips De Vries Mzn., wrote: *The Hebrew word “Mezuzah”, by itself, means a “jamb” in the door frame, or the door frame. It became, however, a symbol which should be nailed to the door frame and*

orthodox Jewish family, as one left the home, the *mezuzah* would be kissed or touched with the fingers and the fingers would then be kissed. The *mezuzah* casing could be made from various, but long-lasting, materials – most often metal. The workmanship, together with the decorative artwork and selection of materials gave evidence about the occupants of the home, their attitude to religion and tradition, their affluence, their sensitivity to aesthetics and beauty, etc. Orthodox Jews had other attitudes to the *mezuzah*, about which Alan Untermann wrote:

*Many, even non-orthodox, Jews have a mezuzah, at the very least, on their entry doorways as it is universally regarded as a type of talisman, protecting the home against evil. Those, who advocated treating a mezuzah as a talisman, were Halachists, being influenced by Kabbalah, with such attitudes being supported by Talmudic precedents*<sup>86</sup>.

Observant Jews would traditionally hang kabbalistic pictures and formulae on an eastern wall of their home – a wall in the direction of Jerusalem. Often, they would be paintings or drawings of two hands. In accordance with Halacha, in memory of the

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*became a term describing one of the “signs” on doors [...] In chapter 6 of the Book of Moses, beginning with verse 6., “Hear oh Israel. The God is our Lord, the Lord is one. You shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates” That provision is repeated twice more, which indicates the seriousness incessant reminding is considered – so much so that this sign of sanctification should be put on the doorway of every house and on the gates to cities. However, it should not be written about in a simplistic manner. Again, tradition plays a role here. [...] The entire quotation above, together with a second excerpt, taken from chapter 11, verses 13 to 20, is written onto parchment, in Hebrew of course. [...] That piece of parchment is then folded from the back to the front (i.e. from left to right) because, in Hebrew, reading and writing is from right to left. When someone were to unroll this tiny document, the first words one would see would be the beginning. He rolled up parchment is than placed inside a little box or casing. This cover may usually contain a small window through which one could see the reverse side of the parchment. The reverse will have written upon it the word “shadai”, meaning “Almighty”. The parchment will be placed into its container in such a manner as to enable that inscription will be visible from the exterior. In addition, several letters are written on the upper edge. Thanks to that, whether unwinding or unfolding it, the text is immediately visible. The beginning and ending are also both immediately ascertained. This prevents the mezuzah from being placed into its container upside down. The casing, with the parchment it contains, is attached to the doorframe with two nails. It should be in a place where it can be seen, on its own, when leaving or entering the house or apartment – it is always place on the right hand side as seen when entering. The place should correspond with the height of a person, at his line of sight. It should not be vertical, but on angle, with the bottom towards the exterior. The casing can be made from various materials. It must always be visible to the eye which constantly says, “May your home shine! May your home not just be a roof, nor your castle, but may it be your temple!” S. Ph. De Vries Mzn, *Rituals and Symbols of the Jews*, Kraków 2000 pp. 76-77.*

<sup>86</sup> A. Unterman, *Żydzi wiara i życie...*, p. 241

destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, a small section of the wall would be left unpainted. It constituted a symbol of mourning for its destruction.

Jewish family holidays were observed in memory of historical events, not only biblical, but also post-biblical. The former are ceremonial, while the second are since they lack any religious requirements. The religious holidays include Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkoth and Simchat Torah. These holidays were connect to Jewish history. On Sukkoth, (the Feast of Tabernacles), the Jews built huts with roofs made of palm branches, under which they lived for seven days. This biblical holiday related to the Jewish exodus from Egypt, during which, according to the holy books, *For seven days will you dwell in the huts.... so that your generation will know that I commanded the Israelites to live in hut when I led them out of the land of Egypt*<sup>87</sup>

A picture of family ties and concern for family members in difficult times can be evidenced from preserved documents, for example, from records of the Family Council (Rada Familijna) from 1832 and from an inventory following the death of the Cześćochowa Jewish Tempel family<sup>88</sup>. The Tempel couple were an affluent Jewish family living in Cześćochowa. They ran a stall selling a range of cloth, dressmaking, tailoring and metal materials. They had eight children. At the time of their parents' deaths, three of their children were aged ten, twelve and fourteen, which meant that they were still juveniles, unable to make decisions for themselves or relating to the legacy left them by their parents. In order to safeguard the future of the children and to divide the estate amongst the beneficiaries, a Family Council, comprising relatives from both the father's and mother's sides, met on numerous occasions in the presence of municipal officials. The appointed a guardian to care for the underage children and to manage the legacy for all of the siblings. They made a detailed "inventory" and estimated its total value. From the preserved document, it is possible to conclude that the family was religious and living an observant lifestyle. The inventory included "a brass candelabra, namely a menorah", "a copper pot for meat", "a ten-piece set of plates used for Pesach", "krążek mactworem zwany sztuk 2", "stęпка do maccy", "a silver pepper shaker", "a fur covered in silk" and "a coat, namely a chalat"<sup>89</sup>. The inventory also included "a bench in the synagogue, No.7 from the eastern side" and "a bench at the school". The affluence of the family is attested to by the inventory including domestic appliances,

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<sup>87</sup> Kpl. 23:42.

<sup>88</sup> Cześćochowa State Archives, File No. 76, z. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



considered valuable in those times, plus brass, copper, tin, iron and other crockery. Additionally, there were “large ducats”, “nine strings of pearls”, “a gold ring”. “a gold ring with a goldfinch”, “a gold ring with a gemstone”, “a pair of earrings”, “seven rolls of beads”, “a silver snuffbox”, “a pair of knives and forks” and “four silver spoons”. The assets were sold and the proceeds were distributed amongst the heirs. One interesting fact was that the husbands of the married daughters appointed to deal with their inheritance. With regard to the three juvenile children under the care of a guardian, the Family Council recommended that, upon reaching the age of majority, they would receive their share of the inheritance without any reductions in value.

The Jewish family structure fulfilled many functions. The family home sustained a Jewish awareness, prepared the younger generation to make the right choices from a Jewish ethnic and religious viewpoint. This was achieved through the collection of “meaningful” objects, an education at home and the passing on of traditions. The Jewish family provided a moral foundation, instilled modes of life, success and career. It taught values such as friendship, honesty, justice, responsibility and the like. At home, a Jewish child learned the community’s acceptable forms of behaviour and norms, and learned about values and criteria which should be considered when making choices in certain situations.

In excerpts from the Talmud, one can read a number of interesting statements: *Rabbi Yehuda ha-Nasi says, “Remember that above you is an eye that can see, an ear that can hear and a book into which your acts are written”*<sup>90</sup>. *Rabbi Ishmael says, “Obey your elders, be gentle with the young and accept everyone with joy”*. *Rabbi Akiva says, “Games and recklessness lead a man to debauchery. Masora (tradition) constitutes a fence around the Law. Tithes are fences for enriching oneself. Vows are fences for restraint. A fence to wisdom is silence”*<sup>91</sup>. *There are four kinds of benefactors. One willingly gives alms, but does not want others to give. Such a one is envious of the service of others. The second wants others to give alms but will not do so himself. Such a one is mean and unkind. The third gives and wants others to give also. Such a one is a righteous and pious husband. The fourth does not give wants others also not to give. Such a one is immoral”*<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> *Ethics of the Fathers* ..., p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

In stressing the role of the home in a religious Jewish family, Rabbi Simon Philips De Vries stated:

*The home will be sanctified through religious gatherings during which the Bible will be opened and where learning will take place from the holy books – whether it is directly from the words of the Torah or the Mishnah or other writings. The Book of Psalms will provide appropriate thoughts for every circumstance. A Jewish mood will simply penetrate the interior of the home during those religious and festive gatherings.*<sup>93</sup>

Religious life in the family home, according to Rabbi Simon Philips:

*.. is not limited to reading the Bible or to the scrupulous observance of ritual regulations. It is also about the mood which prevails in the home and about the perceptible atmosphere of piety within it*<sup>94</sup>.

All the religious holidays also connected their texts with the home:

*Our mothers have always understood that they should consider themselves as priests within their own home temple and that they should serve at the altar of their own house. And to raise it to a high position. (...) They create the holiday atmosphere within a Jewish home, thanks to which it becomes a steadfast bastion of Jewish family life through which Judaism is passed from generation to generation*<sup>95</sup>.

Shabbat and all the Jewish holidays within the religious year and all family celebrations “from cradle to grave” had their ceremonies within the home. They demanded a knowledge of the rituals, a strong commitment and a faith in carrying them out. For example, on Shabbat, at least three meals had to be prepared - Friday night dinner, Shabbat breakfast and a third meal most often eaten in the late afternoon. Preparing these meals was covered by numerous rules. Adherence to those rules depended upon a Jewish family’s attitude to religion and tradition. They were followed differently by orthodox Jews, by progressive Jews and by those for whom religious tradition was only a childhood memory from the family home or something to be reflected upon at family gatherings, etc.

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<sup>93</sup> S.Ph. De Vries Mzn, *Ceremonies and Symbols* ..., p. 244.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

Jerzy Einhorn, in his published memoirs, describes the celebration of holidays in Częstochow:

*Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), fall in autumn, in September or October. They are our most important holidays. Even non-religious Jews go to synagogue on those days, perhaps in order to preserve a tradition thousands of years old, maybe in order to pray “just in case” or simply to be within their own community when people wish each other a “Happy New Year” and together sing songs which end the celebrations and which are remembered from childhood. Yom Kippur is a day of fasting when, for a while, the hardships of everyday life are forgotten, the deceased are honoured and we reconcile with ourselves and with our relatives over what may have occurred over the previous year. It is intended to be a day of quiet meditation which should end with mutual reconciliation. The day of fasting ends with a shared meal<sup>96</sup>.*

In the recollections of his childhood and family home in Częstochowa, Sigmund A. Rolat states:

*We lived at al. NMP 6, in a comfortable, spacious apartment. I had many friends there with whom I played in the large courtyard. (...) In that entire building, only the caretaker was Roman Catholic. There was a shtiebel on the first floor – a small place for reciting prayers. During the festival of Succot, both courtyards were filled with huts set up by deeply religious Jews, like our closest neighbours, the Freimauer family<sup>97</sup>.*

The family home was a “magical” place from the point of view of emotions and feelings of closeness to others, with the creation of a space and a personal socio-cultural environment according to one’s liking and needs. It was magical because it provided personal experiences which satisfied one’s Jewish spiritual, aesthetic and emotional expectations. It was not easy because the Jewish home, as a social institution, was usually responsible, simultaneously, for meeting the social and cultural expectations flowing through its surroundings. The appearance of the home, its division into rooms and the significance

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<sup>96</sup> J. Einhorn, *Wybrany aby żyć*, Gdańsk 2002, p. 92.

<sup>97</sup> S. A. Rolat, „*Garstka wspomnień*”, [in:] *Żydzi częstochowianie- współistnienie, holocaust, pamięć*, ed. J. Mizgalski, foreward by Z. Rolat, Częstochowa 2006, p. 8.

assigned to its different parts help to understand the social and cultural system which dominate within one's own life in the Diaspora.

Respect for elders was a basic fundamental of Jewish communal life<sup>98</sup>. The significance of the link between age and experience manifests itself within a Jewish family in the form of advice drawn from the Talmud. Age groupings were not totally rigid, always overlapping a little. Advice drawn from the Talmud guaranteed respect for elders and aided in the rearing of youth. Judaism, just as with other cultures based upon tradition, entrusted seniors with the important role of preserving and passing on legacies drawn from the past. Talmudic Judaism teaches to surround with tender care elders who, through their age, may have forgotten all that they once knew. Halacha, speaking about the duty “towards the grey-haired and giving back to the elderly”, is referring here to people over the age of seventy, irrespective of whether they are learned or not.

## Work

The importance of social roles was taught within the family and the family home – how to be an adult Jew, a merchant, a craftsman, a tailor, an agent, etc. Important social models were also shaped in the family home, such as models of work (e.g. through the use of tools). Even in families which did not work together, models were formed – participation in communal life, recreation, spending free time, developing and maintaining interpersonal contacts. Jerzy Einhorn, in his memoirs, emphasises the courage of his father and mother who, at the beginning of the 20th century and against family traditions, went beyond their

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<sup>98</sup> *The Talmud refers to old age in many places: Happy is our youth which has not disgraced our old age. (Sukkah 53a), p. 265; Happy is the generation where the elderly listen to the younger. (Rosh Hashanna 105) p. 265, Be understanding towards the elderly who, due to infirmity, have forgoteen their knowledge, as it is said, “Next to you, in the Ark of the Covenant, are the whole commandment tablets and tablet fragments. (Berachot 8:2), p. 267. Selections from The Wisdom of the Talmud ..., (pages noted after each citation); Yehuda, son of Teym, said, “At the age of five, a man should begin to learn to read and write, at the age of ten he should study Mishnah, at the age of thirteen he should fulfil all the religious commandments, at fifteen he should begin to study Talmud, at eighteen he should marry and at twenty he should earn a living. At thirty, a man reaches his physical peak, at forty he reaches his spiritual peak, at fifty he matures in wisdom, at sixty he transitions to old age, at seventy he becomes grey-haired, at eighty extreme old age and at ninety he is already in a state of senility. At one hundred he is as though dead and finished and lost to the world. Ethics of the Fathers, ... p. 26. Rabbi Shimon, son of Yehuda, says in the name of Shimon bar Yochai, “Beauty, strength, affluence, wisdom, old age, greying and offspring are attributes valued by righteous husbands and by the whole world, because it is said that ‘Grey is the decorative crown with which can be found the road of the righteous’ and ‘The wreaths of the elderly are their grandchildren, while children are the ornaments of their parents. The pride of young men is their brawn, while the splendour of the sages is their grey hair”, and also “Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed; for the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his elders shall be glory.” Ethics of the Father..., p. 30..*

family's hallowed principles, customs and expectations of life plans. Writing about his father, he states:

*Chil Josef (ed: Jerzy Einhorn's grandfather) wanted Pinkus, his elder son, to become a learned man and that he should go to an orthodox school in the Jewish district where his family lived. At five years old, Pinkus began studying in the cheder where he learned to read, recite excerpts from the Bible and to count. He was supposed to continue studying at a higher level, in a yeshivah, so as to become a rabbi, as my father wanted, and not a butcher. (ed: Jerzy Einhorn's great-grandfather was a butcher.) But Pinkus understood that new times were coming and that he was standing at the entrance to a new world. Pinkus wanted to go to an ordinary school so as not to spend the rest of his school years in debate over various commentaries to the Talmud. At the age of thirteen, Pinkus ran away from home, taking with him only a pair of shoes and a suit. By accident, he met a tailor. His dream of going to an ordinary school remained unfulfilled. Instead, he learned the trade of a tailor<sup>99</sup>.*

Leaving orthodox circles was not synonymous with breaking away from the Jewish religion or from the Jewish community.

There were also others. Just as he has often stressed in his memoirs and in his public appearances both in Poland and abroad, Czesłochowa Jew, Sigmund A. Rolat, writes this about his first lessons received from his grandfather:

*I was born in Czesłochowa and Czesłochowa was, is and always will be my little homeland. I will briefly say a few words about my family. By profession, my grandfather was a teacher and ran a small school in one of the buildings on Czesłochowa's Stary Rynek (Old Market Square). Lessons in all subjects were given in the Polish language, which was a phenomenon within Tsarist Russian annexed territory. My dad, Henryk Rozenblat, for a certain time, worked as a mathematics teacher in grandfather's school. (...) My grandfather, who was already by then an older man with an imposing beard, always spent the summer with us. He never stopped being a teacher – he taught me masses of interesting things like, for example, how to count to one hundred in Russian. He once gave a globe of the world, two halves set around a central pivot, which allowed me to read the names of capital cities and other useful information about all the countries of the time around the earth. I was*

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<sup>99</sup> J. Einhorn, *Wybrany aby żyć...*, p. 9.

*probably the only five year old in Częstochowa who knew that Bangkok was the capital of Siam and that Siam was a kingdom. Now, I look at it more symbolically in that I consider that educational toy not so much as a “globe of the world”, but more as a “key to the world”, which I received in my childhood from my beloved, educated grandfather Abram<sup>100</sup>.*

Work and a respect for work came second to the important religious requirement of studying the holy books. Both in the Torah and in the Talmud, the importance of work is stressed for the existence of man and is an obligation imposed by the Creator:

*Rabbi Eliezer also said, “Work is an important thing. Just as the Israelites were commanded to keep the Shabbat, they were also commanded to work, as it is said, ‘For six days you shall work and complete all your work. However, the seventh day is a day of rest, devoted to your Lord, your God’<sup>101</sup>.*

Rabbi Meir recommended that parents prepare their sons for *a clean and light* craft. He also stressed, as a sage who considers that the highest aim in his life is to study the Torah, should also earn his living through, for example, performing a craft. Rabbi Joshua ben Hannanya declared that one who devotes himself to study morning and evening and spends his day working, fulfils all the commandments of the Torah. Rabban Gamaliel, son of Yehuda ha-Nasi said:

*All study, not connected with work, is empty and leads to sin. All study which does not finish with craft (melacha) ends with inactivity and leads to sin. All those, who work for the community, should work in the name of love of God. Only will their ancestors’ services support them and their virtue will live on for centuries. They will be rewarded as though they, themselves, had earned it<sup>102</sup>.*

The short phrase, *the day is short, but the work is great*, can be taken to be a call to mobilise one’s strength to perform deliberate undertakings. But when those undertakings go beyond the capabilities of an individual, the Talmud puts forward a simple answer by suggesting: *You do not necessarily need to finish all the work (that has begun)*. There is also

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<sup>100</sup> S. A. Rolat, *Garstka wspomnień*, [in:] *Żydzi częstochowianie- współistnienie, holocaust, pamięć*, ed. J. Mizgalski, with foreward by Z. Rolat, Częstochowa 2006, pps. 6-7.

<sup>101</sup> *The Wisdom of the Talmud...*, p. 217.

<sup>102</sup> *Ethics of the Father...* p. 6.

an instruction encouraging the taking on and completing an undertaking to its end: *If you trouble yourself to open it, trouble yourself to close it*<sup>103</sup>.

The glorification of work can be discerned in the following statements: *Fifty who are working is better than two hundred who are not*<sup>104</sup>. *Work is better than a good birth*<sup>105</sup>. *Work is important because it warms the workers*<sup>106</sup>. *Work is important because it gives the workers dignity*<sup>107</sup>. *One whisker added to another leads to a greater number*<sup>108</sup>. *It is more pleasant to gain one thing through than one hundred free of charge*<sup>109</sup>. *If you don not plough on sunny days, what will you eat on rainy days?*<sup>110</sup> *If a man does not work before Shabbat, what will he eat on Shabbat?*<sup>111</sup> *He who lives from his own work is better than one who fears God*<sup>112</sup>.

During Częstochowa's dynamic development in the second half of the 19th century, the labour market expanded as did the demand for consumer products – basic needs items as well as industrial. Department stores, agencies, storehouses, packing and dispatch companies grew around the newly created textile factories, ironworks and glassworks. Homes for factory workers and private workers cottages sprang up in both Old Częstochowa and New Częstochowa, which were merged in 1826, as well as in housing estates in the older adjacent suburbs. The demand for building materials supported the development of the ceramics and chemicals industries. Brickyards, tileworks, limekilns and limestone quarries were established. In the courtyards of homes in the Stare Miasto (Old Town), as well as in newer districts, many small factories and workshops sprang up, many of which were owned by Jews. For example, there was the “Bocian and Cymerman Printworks” at Aleja 6 and 8, the Kryman timberyard and ul. Nadrzeczna 48, Lederman at Ogrodowa 7, Silberstein at ul. Krótka 35, Szpringer at ul. Spadek 16 and Mostowa 41. Stonemasons producing ceramic wares were located at Gelbard's at ul. Wilsona 6 and Hasklowicz's at Aleja 18. Ritual baths were produced at ul. Spadek 10. For carpentry and furniture, there was Froim's at ul. Nadrzeczna 6, Hyndroff's at Nowy Rynek 15, Warszawski and Fajermann's at Stary Rynek 31 as well as others..

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<sup>103</sup> *From the Wisdom of the Talmud*,... (Bava Batra 59), p. 217.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, (Pea 8) ..., p. 218.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, (Genesis Rabbah) ..., p. 218.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, (Gittin) ..., s. 219.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, (Nidda) ..., p. 219.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, (Bava Batra 9) ..., p. 219.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, (Avot de Rabbi Natan) ..., ps. 218.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, (Midrash Mishele 6) ..., p. 219.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, (Sotta 31) ..., p. 220.

The production of consumer goods and product finishing, using the latest production technology, was dominant within Częstochowa's Jewish enterprises. Raw materials for these small businesses were most often supplied by large factories. The characteristic tall chimneys of these factories gave evidence of the size of the city and the modern, for those times, application of steam to power machinery. Referring to a production plant as a "factory" raised the owner's prestige and was significant in advertising. As a result, many smaller plants in the city also called themselves "factories". The names stuck and took on a colloquial meaning within the Częstochowa community, even up to the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the main, those small Jewish plants were centred on crafts and the employees within them were most often members of the owner's family. Non-Jews were also employed here, but they usually came from a Jewish environment. In Częstochowa courtyards, in annexes, basements, sheds and even in apartments, there were woollen and semi-woollen weavers, dye-works, hosieries, embroiderers, rope makers, sorting houses, rag collectors, makers of rugs from rags, jewellers, optical products, wig-makers, sheet-metal workers, locksmiths, boilermakers and monumental masons.

In those businesses where the owner was a Hassidic Jew, most often, all those working for him would be religious Jews. Only men would be employed – not women. During the hours of work, the men would wear long smocks, their long beards wrapped in linen, with their lean bodies bent over the machinery in such a way so that only their backs could be seen. Local factories were often simultaneously both a working area and an office. Empty space was always utilised with shelving. Stock would be wrapped up in paper, either in boxes or lying on the floor. Dust hovered above the machines, settling on everything. The bosses of these Hassidic companies would go to the synagogue together with their employees. They would often go in their work clothes, straight from their workplace.

The work ethos from the religious texts was linked with ethics, production quality, reliability and honesty towards the customer and, in this instance, the conduct expected is clearly articulated:

*It is better for him who leases a small garden which has been carefully fertilised and weeded, than for one who leases many gardens of fallow land<sup>113</sup>. He who performs his work honestly and in good faith gains favour with people and, in the process, fulfils all*

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, (Bereshit Rabba 82)...., p. 218.



*the commandments of the Torah*<sup>114</sup>. *So the gardener, such is the garden*<sup>115</sup>. *Idleness leads to debauchery. Idleness leads to boredom and madness*<sup>116</sup>.

The sages referred to honesty, in particular associated cash loan transactions and usury, stating:

*Shimon ben Elizer said, "About him who has money and lends it at interest, it is written that 'He did not give his money with interest, nor did he accept a bribe against the innocent; he who does these shall not falter forever. (Tehilim 15:5). Thus you learn that he who does lend on interest, his wealth dissolves. (Bava Metzia 71)*<sup>117</sup>.

In turn, Rabban Gamalieli, son of Yehuda ha-Nasi said:

*The stupid person is not afraid of sin. The uncouth person is not pious. The shy person does not learn and the quick-tempered person does not teach (others). A man does not become wiser from big business*<sup>118</sup>.

Rabbi Yehuda gave this warning to the fathers of families, *He who does not teach his son a trade, teaches him to be a brigand*<sup>119</sup>. In turn, a summary of the deliberations included in the Talmud about work could be the statement of Shammai who said, *Love the work, hate power, and do not seek favour with the powerful*<sup>120</sup>.

Jewish religious law, determining in a detailed manner the behaviour of an orthodox Jew in different life situations, also refers to the exploitation of the strength of animals within work. The collection of Jewish laws according to Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, known as the *Shulchan Aruch*, contains a section entitled "On the Care of Animals". Amongst its many recommendations are those directed at coachmen and at others who utilise the pulling power of horses:

*When horses, drawing a cart, come to a rough road or to a steep hill, and it is hard for them to draw the cart without help, it is our duty to help them, even when they*

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., (Sifre Vayikra)..., p. 220.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, (Sanhedrin 2)..., p. 220.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., (Ketuvot)..., p. 217.

<sup>117</sup> *Ethics of the Fathers* ..., p. 116.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> *From the Wisdom of the Talmud*, (Kiddushin 29)..., p. 222.

<sup>120</sup> *Ethics of the Fathers* ..., p. 4.

*belong to a non-Jew, because of the precept not to be cruel to animals, lest the owner smite them to force them to draw more than their strength permits*<sup>121</sup>.

It is emphasised that:

*It is not permitted to unnecessarily cause distress to animals, to overload them or to beat them when they cannot walk or to tease a cat so as to make it squeal. Jewish sages say that the Lord God will punish riders who hit the horses upon which they sit*<sup>122</sup>. *One should not hit a beast which has strayed, as something is apparently bothering it and it is a sin to overstrain its strength*<sup>123</sup>. *Zabrania się zawiązywać nogi bydłociu, zwierzęciu lub ptakowi w sposób sprawiający ból*<sup>124</sup>. *It is forbidden to place a bird onto the eggs of a bird of another species as this will cause the bird pain*<sup>125</sup>. *It is forbidden to place a bird onto the eggs of a bird of another species as this will cause that bird pain*<sup>126</sup>. *It is forbidden to place a bird onto the eggs of a bird of another species as this will cause the bird pain*<sup>127</sup>. *One should not cut off a beast's tail as this deprives him of the possibility of using it to chase away flies, the result of which will give it trouble*<sup>128</sup>.

Częstochowa Rabbi Nachum Asz, writing on the issue of animals in work and the day of rest from work, stated that *You shall work an ox and a donkey together*<sup>129</sup>. In clarification of this imperative, the Częstochowa rabbi said:

*This provision, according to the philosopher Philo of Alexandria, takes into account the care of animals, because the ox has more power than the donkey and working them together will be extremely tiring for the donkey*<sup>130</sup>.

Referring to the same book, Rabbi Asz stated: *You shall not tie the mouth of a restless ox*<sup>131</sup> and *Domestic animals are to be free from work when they are to give birth*<sup>132</sup>.

<sup>121</sup> Kitzur [in:] Shulchan Aruch, 186:2

<sup>122</sup> Księga Sefer Chasidim §44, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie uboju rytualnego*, Warsaw 1936, p. 20.

<sup>123</sup> Księga Sefer Chasidim §668, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie...*, p. 20.

<sup>124</sup> Zarys Praw Żydowskich, [w:] Kicur Szulchan Aruch §19, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie...*, p. 20.

<sup>125</sup> Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie...*, p. 20.

<sup>126</sup> Księga Sefer Chasidim §589, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie...*, p. 20.

<sup>127</sup> Fifth Book of Moses 22:10, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie ...*, p. 18.

<sup>128</sup> N. Asz, *W obronie...*s. 18.

<sup>129</sup> Fifth Book of Moses 25:4, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie...*p. 18. 5 Księga Mojżesza 25:4.

<sup>130</sup> Księga Sefer Chasidim §667, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie...*p. 18. .

<sup>131</sup> Third Book of Moses 13:28, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie...*p. 18.

In another notation, this time from the Sefer Hassidim (§687) it states that *it is not permitted to slaughter if it will lead to spoilage*. Within Jewish religious books, attention is paid to the suffering an animal experiences when watching the slaughter of its own foetus. It is emphasised that animals feel an attachment to their offspring, the same way as do humans:

*Cow, as well as sheep, with their offspring shall not be killed on the same day<sup>133</sup>. If you should notice that a donkey is labouring under its load, would you not stop this in order to help it? Indeed, you would rescue it<sup>134</sup>.*

Commenting on this imperative, the Talmud mentions:

*Caring for animals is a religious commandment, sanctioned by the Torah, and therefore one should remove the load and allow the beast to rest, without any request for remuneration<sup>135</sup>.*

The Chief Rabbi of Częstochowa, Nachum Asz, in his March 1936 publication “In Defence of Ritual Slaughter”, discussed in detail the principles of ritual slaughter. He made the assumption that, since the Jewish religion regards the care for an animal’s life as so important, it also shows special care in sparing an animal pain and suffering at the time of slaughter:

*Since the killing of animals is necessary for the feeding of people, animals should be killed in the least unpleasant manner, and that this ritual slaughter is performed according to the details of established principles. These principles categorically prohibit any hunting which causes the animal extreme unpleasantness and pain<sup>136</sup>. To Jews, no other manner of slaughter is permitted other than ritual slaughter. Animals shall not be used in games which result in their oppression or death, such as bullfights, etc.<sup>137</sup>.*

He pointed out that the principles of ritual slaughter were drawn up *Chullin* tractate of the Babylonian Talmud, in Maimonides’ System of Jewish Law and in the collection of

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<sup>132</sup> Second Book of Moses 13:5, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie...*s. 18.

<sup>133</sup> *Talmud Babiloński*, tractate Baba Mezia, book 32b.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, tractate Aboda Zara, karta 18b; *Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chaim, art. 316.

<sup>137</sup> N. Asz, *W obronie uboju...*, p. 22.

Jewish laws, the *Shulchan Aruch*. In accordance *Yore De'Ah* of the *Shulchan Aruch*, the section dealing with *shechita*:

*Only a religious and unblemished person, who is acquainted with the regulations regarding Jewish ritual relating to slaughter, may be a slaughterer. A candidate for slaughterer should undertake a theoretical and practical examination. The practical examination includes the slaughter of several head of cattle and fowl, examining their intestines and checking their prickliness. A person whose hands are hesitant in movement cannot become a slaughterer*<sup>138</sup>.

After successfully passing the examination, the slaughterer (*shochet*) would receive rabbinic authorisation. The *shochet* would carry out his duties under the supervision of a local rabbi. The *halaf* is the *shochet*'s tool of trade – a large one for cattle, a medium-sized one for calves and a small one for poultry. They were made of medium strength steel. If they were too soft, they could chip. If they were too hard, then it would be too difficult to sharpen them. The knives' dimensions were determined by religious regulations. The ends of the knives' blades were rounded and the shaft had to be as smooth as a mirror, with no inscriptions or ornamentation. The knife had to be well sharpened and constantly checked.

This whole procedure was aimed at minimising pain to an animal. When numerous animals were to be slaughtered on the same day, the *shochet* had to inspect the knife blade each time. In the event that the slaughter had been performed with a chipped knife, the slaughtered cattle were regarded as *treyf*, which meant that they could not be eaten by Jews. Prior to beginning slaughter, the *shochet* first was required to inspect the health of the cattle. Following the slaughter, he also examined some of the dead animal's internal organs. These examinations were conducted in accordance with religious regulations relating to health and sanitation. Within the religious texts, care for animals can be summarised citations selected by Rabbi Asz:

*Care for animals is commandment, sanctioned by the Torah*<sup>139</sup>. *Whoever feels no compassion for animals shall have suffering brought upon him*<sup>140</sup>.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>139</sup> Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sabat, section 128b and Babylonian Talmud, tractate Bava Me'Tzia, section 36b, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie*, ..., p. 16. .

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, tractate Bava Me'Tzia, section 85a, cyt. za: N. Asz, *W obronie*, ..., p. 16.

Of course, life went on, not always according to religious regulation or good tradition. A person, with all one's weaknesses, would fast, do penance and pray, but would continue to live as desired, driven by the will to profit, to be comfortable, to fulfil one's own desires and achieve one's goals. However, reading the Talmud's instructions and commandments constituted an important element in one's behaviour. The commandments were not articulated such that conclusions drawn from them were considered a threat to an individual's daily observance of them. Developed through study, self-education and reading of the holy books, until "end of one's days", faith was strengthened, respect was inspired for tradition, but, above all, an individual's conduct was shaped. Solutions to many problems, which confronted an individual through every stage of life, were sought through religious passion. Through the Almighty, guidance was sought on selecting the right path in life or in the solution of more immediate problems. The conviction to live according to the commandments of the religion was the main motivation.

## **Conclusion**

For the contemporary researcher, religious regulations constitute essential source material. In view of the scarcity of other sources depicting everyday life, the instructions of the sages included in the Talmud point to the cultural issues of the everyday life of generations living in bygone eras. Maintaining standards of behaviour in various life situations and solving existential problems create a certain picture of the life of a religious Jew. Jews learned in religious texts would not notice those norms and principles which would be incompatible with them. Study of the holy books was connected with attentive observance in life and throughout the changes brought about by the progress of civilisation.

However, irrespective of the time in which those instructions arose and the social space in which they functioned, many of them still have a universal significance. Behaviours, attitudes and an individual's relationship with himself and with others have changed little through the centuries. A person controls himself and his own emotions, with all his character traits, and aspires to meet his needs and to work in his own interests or those of a group – the aim of which is to live life according to the precepts of the religion or to articulated ideological ideals.

Tradition, including the building of a basis for a religion, undergoes processes of modernisation. "It's over and done with" is often said colloquially in referring to the past. It is

the simplest way of confirming the passing of a fact. Every generation, every epoch, makes its mark in the process of change in civilisation. It is a contribution which is carried into multi-generational families, local communities, towns, villages, regions, nations and countries. The identity of an individual and or of a community is not, and never has been, a once-and-for-all constant. It, too, undergoes a process of modernisation.

The image of a contemporary Jew, including the religious Jew, does not necessarily fit the models of life moulded over the centuries. In this case, enculturation towards centuries-old tradition has an individual character. It is the individual who decides on his/her place in society and attitude towards religion. However, the diversity of attitudes of individuals and of Jewish communities living in Israel and in various countries of the Diaspora are characterised by a common respect for faith and the traditions of the fathers. This diversity of attitude does not necessarily involve breaking with the religion. Alan Unterman accurately states that Jewish religious law is not only a reflection of a centuries-old lasting tradition, but is also *a rich source of information for historical and sociological research, because questions, and often answers too, reflect the prevailing social attitudes of the time*<sup>141</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> A. Unterman, *Żydzi wiara i życie ...*, s. 155.