

ASZ Nachum (1858-1936), [Chief] Rabbi of the city of Częstochowa, city councillor, charity activist and author of publications. He was born on 15th January 1858 in Wyszogród, the son of Dawid Hersz, a Talmud scholar, and Blima Estera née Goldfarb.

Asz studied in the Talmudic school of Rabbi Awigdor Lewental in Koło and, later, in the school of Rabbi Samson Arensztajn in Kalisz. He received his rabbinical *smicha* [qualification] in 1884 in Warsaw. He assumed the position of rabbi in Nieszawa, serving there from 1889 to 1894. He later became the rabbi of Częstochowa, a position which he held until his death.

He was actively involved in helping those in need. In 1904, he headed the committee to help the victims of pogroms in the Russian Empire. This committee collected money for the victims. (Asz proposed that, instead of giving out the money as gifts, they would grant loans. He believed that a person, out of honour, would sooner agree to accept a loan rather than a donation.)

He was active as vice-president of “Linias Ha’Tzedek” (Society to Aid Poor and Sick Jews), as well as in the Charitable Society for Jews (TDdŻ), where he served in the anti-begging and support for the poor sections. In 1927, he initiated the formation of the *Tow. Ochrony Zdrowia Ludności Żydowskiej TOZ* (Society for the Health Protection of the Jewish Population). He personally donated 100 zł towards this purpose and called upon industrialists to do the same. In December of that same year, he appealed to the Jewish community to collect clothing and shoes for the poor, and to donate them to the “Ezra” Jewish Women’s Circle. On 16th November 1913, he spoke during the opening of the TDdŻ hospital, a project made possible thanks to the efforts of the local Jewish community.

During World War I, he came into conflict with the *Tzadik* Awigdor Szpiro. The dispute concerned the purchasing of potatoes on the Sabbath (the German authorities had determined that day). The *Tzadik* had favoured the keeping of the Sabbath while Asz, in turn, believed that the hungry must be able to buy food.

As one of the most outstanding representatives of the Jewish community, in July 1915, he was included into the Częstochowa City Council, a position he held until 1917. In 1919, he again became a city councillor, standing for election on behalf of the Jewish Electoral Committee (ŻKW). However, he soon resigned that position, as his candidacy was proposed only in order to gain support for the ŻKW. In that same year, he joined *Komitet Obywatelski Popierania Pożyczki Państwowej* [the Civic Committee for the Support of State Loans].

On many occasions, on behalf of the Jewish community, he would appear at various ceremonies, among them at the dinners of the 27th Infantry Regiment and the 7th Artillery Regiment. On 1st April 1925, during the academy, organised in Częstochowa to mark the opening of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Asz delivered a speech in Hebrew, translated it into Yiddish and published a one-day event ("A One-Day Ticket Issued by the Częstochowa Committee to Celebrate the Opening of the University in Jerusalem", Częstochowa 1925). In 1930, during a visit to Częstochowa by the President of the Republic of Poland, Ignacy Mościcki, Asz, at the head of the representatives of the Jewish community, welcomed the President in a short speech which he delivered in Hebrew.

He was involved in cultural activities. In 1929, he was one of the co-organisers of *Tow. Przyjaciół Żydowskiej Sztuki Teatralnej* [Society of Friends of Jewish Theatre Plays]. In 1934, during the Exhibition of Polish Books and Regionalism of Częstochowa and the Surrounding Area, he presented a number of books from his own collection, among them being those he authored: *Unzer flicht in die teg fun not* (Our Obligations in a Time of Poverty, Częstochowa 1926); *A trajstwort farn jidiszen folk*, (A Word of Consolation for the Jewish People, Częstochowa 1924); *Kos Nychumym* (A Word of Consolation, Częstochowa 1932); *Ojtot szabat* (On the Sabbath Rest, Częstochowa 1934). He was the author of *W obronie uboju rytualnego* [In Defence of Ritual Slaughter] (three editions up to 1936).

Asz lived at ul. Ogrodowa 14 (now ul. Berka Joselewicza). He later lived at ul. Piłsudskiego 11, with his son → Leon Lejb. He died on 12th May 1936 in Częstochowa and was buried in the Jewish Cemetery (grave No. 33 III).

His wife was Sura (Sara) (6th September 1861 Krośniewice - 24th January 1928 Częstochowa) née Arensztajn, the daughter of Sender and Ruchla née Goldberg. The couple had ten children: Blima Balbina (11th January 1895 Częstochowa -), a teacher at Primary School No. 13 in Częstochowa, → Leon Leib, Dawid Herz (22nd December 1888 Kalisz -), a trader, sports activist, Mojżesz (25th January 1885 Ozorków - 1942 Treblinka), a merchant, Samson (18th June 1905 - 21st August 1906), Tauba (18th August 1891 Nieszawa - 1942 Treblinka), married to Moszek Grundman, Felicja Fajga (10th May 1900 Częstochowa -), who graduated from the Waclaw Golczewski-Chrzanowski Girls' Gimnazjum (matriculated 1919), Mieczysław Menachem Ber, Dwora Dora (1887 Kalisz - 1943 Częstochowa), married to Izrael Poznański.

Paszkowski, *Cmentarz żydowski*, vol. I, p. 20. - Cała, *Żydowskie periodyki i druki*, p. 992. - Kociołek, Zaleska, *Gimnazjum i Liceum im. J. Słowackiego*, p. 121 (regarding his daughter, Felicji); Mizgalski, *Tożsamość polityczna*, pp. 246, 266; J. Mizgalski, *Życie religijne częstochowskich Żydów w XX wieku przed holocaustem*, in: *Z dziejów Żydów w Częstochowie*, ed. Z. Jakubowski, Częstochowa 2002, pp. 93-126. - Szwed, *Żydzi w samorządzie*, p. 166; *Wystawa książki polskiej oraz regionalizmu Częstochowy i okolicy, Częstochowa 8–22 IV 1934*, Częstochowa 1934. – “Express Częstochowski” 1930, No. 99, “Goniec Częstochowski” 1913, No. 314, 1915, No. 169, 1919, No. 48, 1919, No. 67, 1930, No. 98, 1936, No. 113; “Nowy Express Częstochowski” 1927, No. 284, p. 4, 1928, No. 22, p. 3, 1928, No. 23. - *Handlowiec. Kalendarz 1913, 1914*, p. 291, 292; *PCK. Sprawozdanie 1933*. - APCz, AmCz 8909, pp. 111–116 (regarding the Asz family), No. 170, p. 85. – USC Częstochowa, death certificate (of Nachum Asz) No. 104/1936. – <http://db.yadvashem.org/names/search.html?language=en>. – Materials (extracts from civil registers and record books) in the ODDC collection. Materials collected by Katarzyna Bednarska.

Wiesław Paszkowski