

BAŁABAN Majer Samuel (1877-1942), historian, high school and university teacher, school principal, researcher into the history of Jews in Poland, co-founder of the *Instytut Nauk Judaistycznych* (Institute for Judaic Studies). He was born, on 20th February 1877 in Lwów, into a family of Jewish printers operating in Żółkiew and Lwów.

Bałaban graduated from the University of Lwów, where he gained his doctorate in 1904. In 1914-17, he was the military rabbi in Lublin and, in 1917-1918, in Częstochowa. Over many years, he worked in secondary education. From February 1918 until November 1920, he served as principal of the Association of Jewish Secondary Schools' high school in Częstochowa (at ul. Dąbrowskiego 3a). In this school, which had the status of a state *gimnazjum*, Bałaban raised the standard of education by replacing a section of the teaching staff and by extending the scope of teaching of the Hebrew language. Later, he became director of the State Seminary for Male Teachers in Białystok (where he also taught history and Latin). He was a teacher at the State Seminary for Jewish Teachers in Warsaw and rector of the *Tachkemoni* Rabbinical Seminary in Warsaw. Bałaban gained his habilitation in 1928 at the University of Warsaw.

In that same year, he was a candidate, from the Częstochowa-Radomsko district, put forward by the Electoral Bloc of Jewish Parties for election to the *Sejm*. However, he did not take part in the election.

He was a co-founder of and, from 1928, a professor at the Institute of Judaic Studies in Warsaw. In 1936, he was a professor at the University of Warsaw and a lecturer at the *Wolna Wszechnica Polska* (Free Polish University). He was considered one of the greatest experts in the history of Jews in Poland, especially in the 16th-18th centuries.

He was the author of a number of publications, among them being *Żydzi lwowscy na przełomie XVI i XVII wieku* (1906), *Dzieje Żydów w Galicji i Rzeczypospolitej Krakowskiej 1772-1868* (1916), *Historia Żydów w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu 1304–1655* (1931, 2nd ed. February 1936), *Zabytki historyczne Żydów w Polsce* (1929), *Bóżnice obronne na wschodnich kresach Rzeczypospolitej* (1927), *Historia i literatura żydowska* (Vol. 1-3, 1920-25).

During the German occupation, he was forced to live in the Warsaw ghetto. There, he headed the Archives Department of the *Judenrat*, while also continuing his academic work. He died there on 26th December 1942 under unknown circumstances. He is buried in the Jewish Cemetery on ul. Okopowa in Warsaw - section 9, row 10.

Słownik historyków polskich, Warsaw 1994, pp. 27–28; *Spis nauczycieli 1926*, pp. 292, 348, 394. - Mizgalski, *Tożsamość polityczna*, p. 267; Pawlina-Meducka, *Kultura Żydów*, p. 57. – “Nowy Express Częstochowski” 1928, No. 10, p. 3.

Juliusz Sętowski