

Majer Biczner

“Biczner¹” played a similar role to that of Urn and Kalman Shames. His real name was Icek-Majer Baum. He was the *shames* of the *Machzikei Ha'Das* Society and the *gabbai* [trustee/collector] of the *Chevra Kadisha*. He was a Jew with money, who owned a building at ul. Senatorska 20 and had a good, serene, old age. No one knew how old he was, for all the elderly Jews in town had known him, from their childhood years, as an old man.

He inspired deference with his age and importance, and was mainly known for his *Tzduku Tatzil Mi'Muves*² [charity] boxes. Majer Biczner was also involved with the *Talmud Torah* [public *cheder*] that *Machzikei Ha'Das* had, where the poor children, whose parents were unable to pay tuition fees, studied. Biczner's assistant, the *shames* Jechaskiel, knew each pupil and his parents' financial situation. It regularly happened that a pupil brought a sixer³ for tuition fees and he gave him back a tenner in change. The *gabbai* Reb Menasze Margulies' arguments were to no avail - he had to cover all the *Talmud Torah's* expenses.

Reb Icek-Majer Baum was a unique man. He was not afraid of the world to come⁴ - on the contrary, having a clean conscience and being in deep old age, he considered the afterlife to be a spiritual continuation of life in the material world. He prepared himself for it at all times, whenever his call came. He did not reproach the Creator of the World, heaven forbid, nor did he fear the Angel of Death and he, therefore, prepared for himself *tachrichim* and a headstone while he was still alive and kept them with him at home.

¹ [TN: We have been unable to ascertain neither the origin nor the meaning of this nickname.]

² [TN: (צדקה תציל ממוות) “Righteousness delivereth from death” (Proverbs 10:2).]

³ [TN: It is unclear to what currency the author is referring.]

⁴ [TN: Contrary to the common misconception that “Jews do not believe in hell”, the concepts of hell and the purgatory are a central part of religious Judaism and many pious Jews live in constant fear of it.]