

Ajzyk Karpziel

Ajzyk Karpziel¹ was not a nickname - that was his real name. He was a *balebus*², like all the Jews in town³. He wore short garb⁴ and a hat and carried a [walking] stick. In addition, he had a propensity for singing. He did not let himself be begged for a long time when someone encountered him and wished to hear from him a new tune, a little composition.

He was a watchmaker by trade and ran his workshop at Maurycy Neufeld's on the First Aleja. He was delighted when the clocks in his house chimed. Then, he would fall into a state of ecstasy and sang along with each one of them - "*Do, Re, Mi, La...*". He was particularly pleased with a clock of Swiss make that trilled. He wanted to imitate it, but was unable to do so, because he had neither the low range nor the high range.

Walking down the street, Ajzyk Karpziel could be heard "trilling" under his breath. In synagogue, he sat in the first row - at the forefront of the eastern side - waiting for something to go wrong with the cantor⁵, whereupon he was immediately ready to jump onto the plank⁶ and demonstrate his knowledge.

He would be invited to lead [part of] the prayer service on the High Holidays and made the greatest preparations for this. Four weeks before the holidays, he would go about with a thick woollen scarf wrapped around his neck to avoid the calamity of catching a cold, and he stopped all the clocks in his house so that they should not make him deviate from the correct tones.

It was different when he was not invited. He would wander about the bourse [viz. labour exchange] dejectedly, preparing himself to pass his expert comments on the City Cantor's prayer service.

When he was free during the High Holidays, he conducted a "struggle" against Urn *Shames*⁷ and seized from him the "plank" of leading the Thirteen Attributes service of the *Sliches*⁸ and the *minche* [afternoon service] of Yom Kippur.

¹ [TN: In Polish, the word "karpziel", means rutabaga, which is a vegetable belonging to the cabbage family.]

² [TN: Heb., lit. "homeowner", viz. middle-class burgher.]

³ [TN: There is ample evidence from the rest of the *Częstochowa yizkor* books that not all the Jews in town were middle-class – many were actually very poor.]

⁴ [TN: Meaning that he was progressive and did not wear the traditional long Jewish caftan worn by the city's Chassidic community.]

⁵ [TN: Such as suddenly losing his voice etc.]

⁶ [TN: Figurative, meaning to desperately seize the opportunity, like the plank onto which a shipwrecked victim clutches for his life; the expression is also used in Polish, in the form of "*ostatniq deskq ratunku*".]

⁷ [TN: Aron Pelc, the synagogue custodian ("shames"); see his brief biography below, pp.359-360.]

⁸ [TN: Lit. "Pardons" in Heb., the "*Sliches*" are prayers of atonement which are recited daily during the month leading up to the High Holidays. The "*Thirteen Attributes*" is part of this liturgy.]

Ajzyk Karpel liked to pray in the “*Amcho*”⁹ group, where he showed what he knew - a *Kevakoras*¹⁰ by [Louis] Lewandowski, after which he went on to the compositions of [Josef] Josse’le Rosenblatt and other melodies.

He avoided the professional music lovers. Instead, he sought the companionship of the underling singers in the choirs. Every day, he would wait for Najfeld, a bass singer in Cantor Cholewa’s choir, whom he would take home and sing before him a new *Lechu Neraneno*¹¹ or other compositions.

On Sukkos, Ajzyk Karpel would set up a *sukkah* in his courtyard, where Orzynski lived, in order to sing together with him, or in the other courtyard, in order to hear the little Josse’le Birenholc, who had a soprano voice. He competed with him in singing - especially in the *Riboino Shel Oilom* [prayer] of the *Sefira*¹². In the *sukkah*, Karpel displayed his expertise in singing, and the women enjoyed listening to him.

With the advent of the Nazi rule and the deportations in Częstochowa, Ajzyk Karpel was taken away to Treblinka, where he was annihilated.

⁹ [TN: Heb., lit. “Your people”, viz. the common folk; possibly ref. to the minyan mentioned in *Sefer Częstochowa*, Vol. I, col.388: “In a small room on ul. Senatorska 5 there was a minyan, where the so-called “Amcho” people prayed – Jews who, nebech, were blackened the entire week by their hard labour: shoe-making, tailoring, baking and blacksmithing.”]

¹⁰ [TN: (בְּבִקְרַת רֹעֵה עֶדְרֹו) Heb., “As (a shepherd) inspects (his flock)”; part of the “Unesanneh Tokef” liturgical poem recited on the High Holidays.]

¹¹ [TN: (לְבִי גְרַגְגֵּי) Heb., “O come, let us sing (unto the Lord)” (Psalm 95:1); part of the liturgy for the welcoming of the Sabbath on Friday evening.]

¹² [TN: Abbreviated form of “Sefiras Ha’Omer”, Heb., “Counting of the Omer” (“barley sheaves”); verbal counting of each of the forty-nine days immediately following the commencement of the Shavuot festival.]