

EPSTEIN (EPSZTAJN) Icek Mendel (1873--), industrialist, merchant, social and religious activist. He was born on 8th February 1873 in Wolbrom, the son of Lajbiuś Josek and Sura Itla née Ryterman.

He was a descendant of *tzaddikim* from Pińczów. As a fourteen-year-old boy, he left home to study in a number of *yeshivot* in Płock, Łódź and other places and, at the same, learned the profession of wine-taster. Circa 1894, he was mobilised into the cavalry of the Russian army, serving in Połtawa and Charków. He also played the clarinet in the army orchestra.

After leaving the army, he came to Częstochowa, where he opened a wine shop at Stary Rynek 14 (in the Gajsler building). At the beginning of 1933, he moved his shop to the corner of the Nowy Rynek and ul. Warszawska, and took on a partner, Szymcia Szczupak. He established two liqueur factories – one in Łódź and the other in Jędrzejów.

Being financially well off, he was interested in various social issues, allocating funds for these purposes. He belonged to the “Mizrachi” Orthodox Zionist Organisation – he was its representative on the Jewish Community Council [*Gmina*]. He founded the Association of Small Merchants and Stallholders, representing that organisation on the evaluation committee of the taxation office. He was active in two religious organisations - *Hachnasat Orchim* on ul. Garncarska and in the *Mikveh* (ritual bathhouse) on ul. Garibaldięgo. The Epstein family belonged to Mendel Rajcher’s synagogue (*minyán*) at Aleja 36. He was one of the founders of *Bejs Lechem*, serving it for many years as its president. He was also active in “*Linás Ha’Tzedek*” and the “Dobroczyńność” Charitable Society for Jews. He helped financially in the establishment, in 1917, of the Jewish Gimnazjum, and was a member of that school’s parents’ committee. He belonged to the group of the most distinguished social activists. His patriarchal appearance was also impressive – he was tall, with a long beard. During his deportation to the extermination camp, he voluntarily appeared for selection, with his wife, believing that, with his death, he was saving the lives of the young. He perished in Treblinka on 5th October 1942.

In 1900, in Częstochowa, he married Frajndla Hinda née Zilbersztajn (8th January 1878 Radomsko - 5th October 1942 Treblinka), the daughter of jeweller Awrom and Tema née Krowicki. The couple had six children:

- Gustaw Gitman (15th December 1903 Częstochowa - April 1929 Częstochowa), who died of natural causes

and three sons who were killed:

- Jakub (28th August 1902 Częstochowa-)
- Duwcie (Majer Dawid) in Częstochowa, and
- → Nuchym in Gardelegen.

Two daughters remained alive:

- Estera Epstein Pratt (→ Estera Epstein) and
- Tamara.

Orenstein, *Churban Czenstochow*, pp. 366-368. – “Częstochower Cajtung” 1929, No. 18, p. 1, 1933, No. 9, p. 1.

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