

JUSTMAN Pinkus Mendel Lajzer (1848–1920) a *tzaddik* and rabbi of the Pilica, Wieruszów and Częstochowa *Chassidim*. He was born on 21st July 1848 in Warsaw, the son of Benjamin Lajzer and Cyna Pessa née Alter, the daughter of Icchak Majer Alter, the first *tzaddik* of Góra Kalwaria [known as the “Gerer Rebbe”]. His mother died when he was still a child. He was brought up by his grandfather, Icchak Majer, and his wife.

Circa 1857, his grandfather took him to visit the *Tzaddik* of Kock, Menachem Mendel Morgenstern. This event made a great impression on him, which lasted for the rest of his life. In 1905, the *Tzaddik* of the Góra Kalwaria dynasty, Juda Arie Lejb Alter, died and the majority of his court of *Chassidim* chose his son, Abram Mordechaj Alter, to succeed him.

However, some became supporters of Justman, who then moved to Pilica, where he became the rabbi and leader of the *Chassidim*. He attained the nickname of the “Pilicer Rebbe”. When he was very sick, on 23rd Tamuz 5672 (12th July 1912), he took on the third name of Eliezar (Lajzer) in order to avert the danger of death. (The “Angel of Death” calls a dying person by name). He soon recovered.

In 1915, with his family, he moved to Wieruszów and, in 1918, to Częstochowa. (He lived at ul. Warszawska 23.) Here, the Justman family met with resistance from the local *Kehilla* and did not manage to gain any position within the *Gmina*. Apart from his religious activities, the *Tzaddik* was also involved politically and communally, supporting the party of the traditionalists - *Agudas Yisroel*.

Justman wrote a commentary to the Torah entitled *Sifsei Tzaddik*, which was published after the author’s death by his son, Rabbi Henoah Gad Justman and Rabbi Menachem Mendel Alter of Pabianice. His commentaries to the Talmud and to the Psalms were lost during the Holocaust.

He died on Saturday, 20th November 1920, in Częstochowa. Disputes broke out between the Pilica and Częstochowa communities about where he should be buried. This meant that his funeral did not take place until the Monday. The *Tzaddik* was buried in the Częstochowa cemetery (grave No. 1649 I), his grave being a destination for Chassidic pilgrimages.

In 1864, he married Hendla Laja née Alter (circa 1846-1915), the daughter of his uncle. They had several children. His second wife was Chaja Juta née Rotenberg, with whom he had no children.

Wodziński, *Groby cadyków*, p. 211. – “Goniec Częstochowski” 1920, No. 270, p. 3. – USC, Jewish deaths 1920/402.

Wiesław Paszkowski