

PROKOSZ Józef (1869-1942), rabbi. He was born in Ołpiny, Jasło County (now Tarnowski County), the son of Szmul and Ruchla née Flaum.

Already as a child, Prokosz had a phenomenal memory and made great progress in his studies. Soon, none of the religious schools in Galicia could offer him anything [educational], so he left to study in the famous yeshivah in Mstów.

In the 1890s or at the beginning of the 20th century, he moved to Częstochowa. According to one version, he had already received his *smicha* (rabbinical certification) in Mstów. According to another version, it was probably only in 1910, in Częstochowa, that he received it from → Rabbi Nachum Asz. In 1911, he became an assistant rabbi in Częstochowa and a member of the Beit Din (rabbinical court).

Following the death of Asz in 1936, he excused himself from taking on that position (as did other assistant rabbis), declaring that he did not feel that he was worthy of such a great legacy. The real reason was the dominance, in the Jewish community, of Asz's sons. However, Prokosz was, informally, the main rabbi in Częstochowa.

He also retained that position during the German occupation, managing the numerous staff of the rabbinate. In September 1942, he fell ill and was taken to the Jewish Hospital (at ul. Przemysłowa 10). On 4th October 1942, on the order of Degenhardt, he was poisoned by injection, along with all the other patients in the hospital. His remains rest in a mass grave on ul. Kawia in Częstochowa.

In 1886, in Mstów, he married Dwojra née Amsterdamer (1870-1933), the daughter of Hersz Joel Amsterdamer. They had six children. Two daughters perished with them - Gnendla and Estera. Also to perish under German occupation were son Joel and daughter Ruchla. Szmul Prokosz and Chana (married surname Boruchowska), survived the war and lived in Montreal.

Orenstein, *Churban Czenstochow*, pp. 351, 352; *Czenstochow – Our Legacy*, Montreal 1993, p. 46–49.

Wiesław Paszkowski