

RAWINSON Gerszon (1848–1907) rabbi of the city synagogue [the Old Synagogue]. He was born on 6th November 1848 in Grzywka or Krasław (now in Latvia), the son of the rabbi in Krasław, Josef Rawinson and Bluma, a tenth-generation descendant of a rabbinical family, a descendant of Mojsze Kremer, a rabbinical judge in Wilno.

He had a broad, general education which, at the time, was rare amongst Polish rabbis. He was fluent in Russian and probably also in Polish. He was a rabbi in Sarpa [?] and Połąga. He gained fame as a gifted Halachic authority (in matters of religious tradition). His Talmudic-Halachic deliberations were published in the book *Ojles Icchok* (The Sacrifice of Izaak), by his father-in-law, Icchok Cjon, the Rabbi of Rzeżyca. He published articles in the Hebrew-language magazines "Hamelitz" (the Advocate, Speaker) published in Odessa and in the Warsaw "Hacefir" (Morning Star).

In his Yiddish sermons, he preached the love of Zion, which won him the sympathy of his audiences. At state ceremonies, in the presence of government and military representatives, he delivered speeches in Russian, which were published in several brochures and which earned him recognition as a public figure.

On 18th August 1887, he was unanimously elected as Rabbi of Częstochowa. Like many Lithuanians, he was a *misnagid*, an enemy of Chassidism. He, therefore, immediately became active in the reforms carried out by the Synagogue Supervision at the time, headed by → Karol Ginsberg (1833–1893). He fought bitterly against anything that he saw as fanaticism and backwardness.

In Częstochowa, until 1880, about forty children of poor parents studied, with various *melamdim* [religious teachers], at the expense of an association of wealthier members of the community. The rabbi, convinced of the children's slow progress, collected enough funds and established a Talmud Torah religious school, in a community building on ul. Garncarska, for 125 pupils and three teachers.

His skills and efforts were not appreciated. The *Chassidim* and the traditionalists united against the rabbi and Ginsberg, which resulted in the defeat of the progressives. Ginsberg's death, on 11th May 1893, destroyed the last chance for the rabbi to continue his activity in Częstochowa.

He left the city and took up the position of Rabbi of Płock, Włocławek and Mścisław. Later, he settled in England, where he became the rabbi of the *kollel* (a *yeshivah* for married men) in Liverpool. At the end of his life, he emigrated to the United States and served as a rabbi in Cleveland, Ohio.

He died on 1st December 1907 in Cleveland and was buried in the local Fir Street Cemetery.

His wife was Miriam, the daughter of Rabbi Icchok Cjon and Rachela. They had six children:

- Rebeka Rywka (1882? - 5th February 1965) married surname Biskind,
- Nechamę Annę (1884-) married surname Levinson,
- Ella Helen (1886-?) married surname Krauze,
- Mowsza Maks Ravinson (22nd June 1866 – 2nd January 1943 or 1st February 1943 in Cuyahoga, Ohio, USA),
- Zalman Zygmund Ravinson (1872-1940) and
- Bunim William Ravinson (1886 Przydrujsk near Krastaw-).

For a long time, Zalman and Mowsza remained in Częstochowa and even gained of permanent residents of the city.

J. Szacki, *Jidn in Czenstochow biz cu der erszter welt-milchome*, in: *Czenstochower Yidn*, p. 30; *Sefer Czenstochow I*, col. 529–530; J. Spyra, *Żydowski ksiądz? Rabin w społeczności żydowskiej Częstochowy*, "Częstochowskie Teki Historyczne" 2013/14, p. 148. – *Rocznik częstochowski. Kalendarz 1903*, p. 93. – Portal Geni.com.

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