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Reb Berisz Częstochowski z”l

In Częstochowa Chassidic circles, Reb Berisz Częstochowski stood out in particular as he was one of the few in whose heart the Zionist ideal had nestled from the dawn of his days.

Reb Yissuchor-Dov [Berisz] was born in Częstochowa in 1870. His father was Reb Mojsze Częstochowski, one of the prominent Radomsko *Chassidim* and a confidant of the [Reb] *Chesed Le’Avruhom* and *Kneses Yechezkel* through to the last *Rebbe*, Reb Szlojme Henoch *hy”d*. He was raised and educated in the lap of Torah and Chassidism by his forefathers and was endowed with talents, distinguishing himself as an assiduous, young prodigy. He was a disciple of the rabbi and prodigy Reb Efroim *ztz”l* of Mstów, who ran a *yeshiva* in that town, to which only talented individuals were admitted as pupils. (During this period, the renowned writer Hirsz Dawid Nomberg also studied there and was among Yissuchor-Dov’s classmates.)

Following his nuptials, he engaged in business and achieved becoming a distinguished figure, who was popular amongst the city’s residents from all circles, for his beaming countenance and warm-hearted attitude towards each and every individual. He was also a good singer and a wonderful prayer-leader. His prayers constituted a religious experience, burning with Sacred Fire. For many years, he led the *Mysef* prayer services at the Radomsko *shtiebel*.

Although he was not officially affiliated with the Zionist Movement, he was committed to the Zionist ideal and always stood to the right of [i.e. supported] young men who had been “seized with Zionism” and who introduced the *Mizrachi* ideology within the walls of the *shtiebel*. He was among the first share-buyers in The Jewish Colonial Trust ([*Jüdische*] *Kolonialbank*), at the beginning of the Zionist activity - back in Herzl’s days - and he suffered for his adherence to this cause.

In 5693 [1933] he emigrated to Palestine, where his two daughters Shoshana and Yafa were already living in [*kibbutz*] Ein-Harod. The *Chassidim* wished to prevent his emigration and they sent a special delegation to the last Radomsko *Rebbe*, to entreat him to dissuade him from taking this step. The delegation told the *Rebbe* that Reb Berisz proposed to settle in [the secular *kibbutz*] Ein-Harod, of which the religious fanatics disapprove. All the efforts of the *Rebbe* and his friends could not prevent him from emigrating to the land for which he yearned. When he arrived there, he settled in Haifa.

With the outbreak of the War, when news reached him of the annihilation of the Polish Jewry and that the majority of his sons and large family had perished, his face darkened. But he recuperated and found solace in his Torah lessons, alone and in public, in the Talmud, Zohar and Midrashim. Shortly before his death, he had completed the entire Talmud for the seventh time.

When the Second World War began, his sources of income - the funds which his sons, who had continued running his business in Częstochowa, used to send him - were stopped and he moved to Ein-Harod, where his daughters had been among the *kibbutz*’s builders since the beginning of their *Aliyah*. He gained the esteem of all who knew him there, despite the fact that he carried on in a Chassidic manner, studying Torah and fearing God, and everyone admired him for his honesty, patience, and radiant countenance, which exuded happiness and joy at the young generation’s work of building and pioneering creativity. He died in ripe old age.