

From Generation to Generation

The time span of one entire generation has passed us by, in tears and orphaned, since the terrifying days of horror and pain, when the first impure Nazi feet trampled on the cobblestones of Częstochowa's streets.

Twenty-nine years have gone by since those gruesome years, the remembrance of which makes the blood in our veins boil. Dark years, before which we stand despondent, bowed down and troubled, with a heavy heart and streaming eyes – but, also, with the sacred behest *Remember!* in our hearts!

To remember and to remind of all that once existed and will never be again. To remember and to remind of the thousands of our city's Jews - honest, upright folk of all social scales - brilliant personalities and simple labourers, Torah scholars and plebeians - their rainbow of lifestyles, their creative spirit, their magnificence and radiance - until the deadly hands of the German murderers reached them. To remember and to remind of everything that the modern-day Amalek¹ has done to us and to erect a monument to our brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, and children, whose souls will burn as a burning flame, lighting up the both glorious and tragic past of our Jewish Częstochowa, where they lived and created up to the last minute.



The Częstochowa plaque at the Chamber of the Holocaust in Jerusalem

In Częstochowa, as in the majority of the Jewish cities and *shtetls* of Poland, our forefathers and brothers and sisters lived a full, colourful and ebullient Jewish life - a life fully infused with content and brilliance.

¹ [TN: The Biblical enemy of the Israelites.]

There, on the banks of the Warta River, our forefathers created and built row upon row of their tabernacles of Torah and science, educational institutions, enterprises of culture and art, industry and commerce, and greatly contributed to all fields of the social, financial and cultural life.

Over the course of generations, they wove the thread of their way of life with passion and to the strains of a Jewish melody, which resounded from one end of the city to the other. When *Shabbes* or a holiday came, the streets of Częstochowa bustled and swarmed with the multitude of Jews hurrying to the dozens of synagogues, *shtieblech* and study-halls, to serve God, to study a chapter of the Mishna or Talmud with *Toisfes* and, above all, to give praise and thanks, every day anew, for being alive and to repeat, every month, the prayer² for peace, piety, health and livelihood.

And, among the lines of their righteous prayers, the words *May our eyes behold Your return to Zion*³ were reverently murmured morning and evening - [words] which were engraved in the consciousness of day-to-day life and which swept with them the flower of the youth, who strove to make this dream come true. And being committed to this cause, the younger generation plunged into the raging current of realising the dream of generations, in dozens of community Zionist movements and organisations, preparing themselves to be worthy of the utmost goal - *Aliyah* and the building of their own homeland - a permanent Jewish State for the tortured Jewish People.

There also existed other movements which acted for transcendental causes, as well as productive local institutes dedicated to the here-and-now - educational institutions - Hebrew gymnasia [high schools], Hebrew schools, *cheders*, the Crafts School, horticultural training farms, the publication of periodicals, a regular daily Yiddish newspaper, a Jewish hospital, charitable organisations, institutions for art and culture, sports clubs and a whole series of other institutions of spiritual value, which were founded and maintained lovingly and in a committed manner for generations.

And all around, a great Jewish multitude, which lived and breathed the very distinctiveness of its entity, its individuality and unique qualities - a multi-coloured, honest public which fought for its views and principles, for the ideals and values it had inherited from its predecessors, our fathers and forefathers, to continue lengthening the golden chain!

But Cruel Destiny intervened and, in place of aspirations, hope and life, came death, annihilation, destruction, oppression and humiliation. A bloodbath ensued – the Holocaust!



This gruesome, dark period then passed. The horizon began to clear up and, in the sky, there appeared the first colours of the rainbow which augured the end of the deluge.

Only one solitary colour in it was so dim and pale that it was almost indiscernible...

Only a few survivors raised themselves up from among the ruins and tried to start breathing again, to take a little air into their breasts in order to remain alive. They - the "Surviving Remnant" - and among them the remnant of the remnant - the handful of surviving Częstochowa Jews - attempted to cling on to a small piece of shore, to dig themselves, with their fingernails, into the ground that was not taken from under their feet. [They] strived to re-establish something, to reconstruct, at least, a miniscule part of what had once existed, clutching at a blade of grass, to start from

² [TN: Reference to "Blessing of the New Month", recited during the Shabbes Morning Service on the Shabbes preceding the new Hebrew month.]

³ [TN: From the "Amidah" (silent standing prayer).]

something, from nothing, to gather grain by grain with laborious toil and sweat, to let new branches sprout from the hewed trees - to organise anew a Jewish communal life.

They greatly exerted themselves and acted selflessly to achieve this goal, but all their efforts were in vain.

Even so, the deeds of individuals and the collective efforts to raise up, from beneath the rubble, anything which could be salvaged and resurrected, are worthy of recognition and mention.



The Memorial Book of Częstochowa, Volume One, is presented to Dr J. Kruk. Standing, from right to left: M.Ch. Tiberg, Dr J. Kruk, E. Ben-Moshe, J. Leslau, J. Landau and Ch. Berles



The memorial plaque at the Chamber of the Holocaust

Thus, in this second volume of *Sefer Częstochowa*, we chronicle the services rendered and the efforts made by these same surviving remnants of the Częstochowa Jewry, who attempted to achieve at least something, yet sadly, as we stressed above, to no avail.

No, never again, on the banks of the Warta River, will be heard the sounds of the Jewish language, the sigh of the Jewish masses, the tones of rejoicing and the laments of Jewish pain, for all has been destroyed forever, cut down to the roots!

In this volume, written in tears and in blood, we tell how an entire people was annihilated, and in how many chambers of hell they suffered until the "Final Solution" - as told by the Surviving Remnant. This book also contains chapters recounting the heroic epic of those who walked through the valley of the shadow of death⁴ and breached a crack in the dark wall of death and enslavement. They heroically dared to face the wild beasts and fought a bitter and hopeless war - in the ghettos, camps, and forests - not in order to attain victory, for this was absolutely impossible, but to salvage the honour of the humiliated Jewish People.

Sorrowfully, they did not have the good fortune to survive to the *Great Day* and witness the fall of Hitler's Germany. They could not see it, for they had not remained among the living. Only the memories have remained - and the time has come to carve the monument which has stayed in our

⁴ [TN: Phrase from Psalm 23:4. In the Yiddish version of the preface, the expression used is "those who tarried in Satan's Cave".]

memory, so that our children and children's children, and all generations after us, should be able to read from the "Book of Memories" - with bated breath - the story of the Days of Darkness.



With the publishing of Volume Two, we wish to express our fullest gratitude to those who did so much for the completion of Volume One, Messrs.: Ch. Berles, R. Ben-Shem and S. Geshuri.

We also take the opportunity to thank Mr Emanuel Eshed, Headmaster of the Max Fine School in Tel-Aviv, and his teaching staff, for their contributions to the Memorial Project - by adopting the name of our city for their school.

We also wish to thank and acknowledge all those who collaborated in the publishing of this second volume, thus aiding us in the fulfilment of our sacred obligation.

