

**M.Ch. Tyberg**

## **Religious Pioneers in Israel**

In the pioneering *Aliyah* from Poland, which intensified at the start of the 1920's, also included our city of Częstochowa. Pioneers from all the youth circles began arriving in Palestine, in all legal and illegal ways. A significant section of these pioneers were from the circles of *Mizrachi* and the youth of *Ha'Chalutz Ha'Mizrachi*.

In 5673 (1913), the leaders of *Mizrachi* in Częstochowa, Reb Szmul Goldsztajn, Reb Mechel Leib Mindycz and Reb Majer Gitler visited in the land of Israel and, thus, the first seeds were sown, which began to sprout and take root in our city.

An encouraging and promising development had already begun in Częstochowa in the years 5676-5678 (1916-1918), with the establishment of the *Ha'Mizrachi* Movement and its different factions, among which the *Tzeirei Ha'Mizrachi* youth organisation was particularly prominent.

The *Aliyah* that enveloped the youth swept with it dozens of religious youth from the study-hall benches, from among the craftsmen and workshops, service workers, merchants and the religious intelligentsia.

An especially large impression was made by the personal example of several of the leaders of the religious youth - J. Leslau, Sz.Z. Shragai, Dov Goldberg (Achiyahu) and the deceased Berlinski z"l, who emigrated in 5684 (1924) through Vienna, where they joined a group of religious emigrants from other cities. Although they had been preceded by pioneers from our city - Yitzchaki, Benjamin Yemini (Karmazin) and others - with their arrival in the country, they reinforced and reorganised the *Ha'Poel Ha'Mizrachi* organisation and received, in an orderly fashion, members from Częstochowa who arrived after them, encouraging them and serving as their guides to become integrated in the country.

The great exploits of the aforementioned [members] for the religious organisations in Israel, the economy, culture, education and immigration are widely known. Particularly noteworthy are the achievements of J. Leslau, the original founder of the *Ha'Poel H'aMizrachi* Bank, who acted extensively for the development of financial and social institutions in Israel at whose head he stands, and of Mr Sz.Z. Shragai, who has accomplished great things for immigration and integration as a member of the management of the Jewish Agency, [as well as] in the field of culture and education, in journalism and in his involvement in various institutions.

In 5683 [1923], a horticultural farm was established in Częstochowa, at which *Ha'Chalutz Ha'Mizrachi* organised a group of land-workers, among whom numbered those mentioned above. Almost all the members of this group shortly emigrated to Palestine and ascended to the first row of Częstochowa religious pioneers there. This group of members continued realising the pioneering ideal and, in 5685-5686 [1925-1926], they took land in Rehovot.

Rehovot's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet tells about their first steps in the locality:

*They made their way, on foot, from one settlement to another, seeking an appropriate location to settle as a group, until they reached Rehovot. During their survey of the locality,*

*they visited Reb Aron Ajzenberg z"l, one of the founders of Rehovot, who encouraged them to stay there temporarily, until the proper time came for them to move to a settlement [of their own]. Shortly after the [High] Holidays in 5686 [1926], they pitched their tents and, afterwards, built themselves wooden shacks on the settlement's Council land, a plot of 10 dunams [2.47 acres], which was outside the settlement, near the herd (nowadays the Tnuva dairy, Fire Department, and marketplace on Bilu Street).*

*[...] The group called itself "The Yehuda Aryeh Group", after the rabbi Reb Juda Leib Kowalski z"l, the Rabbi of Włocławek in Poland, one of the first founders of Ha'Mizrachi and it was affiliated to the Ha'Poel Ha'Mizrachi organisation. In the settlement, they were called "Ha'Mizrachi'im" [The Mizrachi (people)]."*

The arrival of religious labourers at the settlement, as an "organised group", made waves with their appearance - they wore hats at work and, here and there, [ritual] tassels peeped out from under their shirts. They very soon proved themselves as workers, thus conquering bit-by-bit even workplaces where there had previously been no Jewish labour.

This group was unable to attain a settlement due to budgetary reasons on the part of the Jewish Agency. Some of the members remained in Rehovot, while the rest dispersed as individuals to different localities in the country - and they achieved much - each one in his place, in various fields - as did the rest of the pioneers from our city.