

Juda Srebrnik



He is the son of Reb Szyja Srebrnik z''l, whom the *Chassidim* called "*Szyja Błaszker*" [i.e. of Błaszki]. Reb Szyja was the son of Reb Szlojme Srebrnik z''l, who served as Rabbi of Nowy Dwór and, later, of Wieluń.

Reb Szyja had a pleasing voice [and was] a pious and God-fearing man, as befitted a man of sacred origins - a descendant of the righteous man, Rabbi Jakób [sic] Szymoszon ztz''l of Ostropol¹.

Due to these merits, he was made prayer-leader at the house of the *Rebbe* Reb Pinches Menachem Justman ztz''l of Pilica, where he was the cantor on *Shabbes*, as well as lead singer at the *Rebbe's* "table". Also, during his visits to the *Gerer Rebbe*, of whom he was a follower, he was honoured with singing *Zmires Shabbes* [(viz. traditional songs) at the *Rebbe's* table²].

His son, Juda Aryje, who was born in Częstochowa in 1909, was already in childhood gifted with a musical talent and was considered a "*wunderkind*" in the world of song and melody.

The liturgy of the prayers, as well as the Chassidic tone and spirit, he had absorbed from his father z''l.

Although Srebrnik was engaged in commerce, he also extensively broadened his musical knowledge, with which he graced the young song and music lovers, who gathered at the "Lira" Association in Częstochowa and, later, at the conservatory in Katowice.

During the days of the Holocaust, Srebrnik was transported to the Auschwitz death camp and, later, to Dachau and only by a miracle did he survive. The wife of his youth, Dina (the daughter of the renowned cantor Reb Izrael Winer z''l of Kielce) and his son Szyja *hy''d* perished in the Holocaust.

When he was in the Częstochowa ghetto, he organised a mixed choir, under the auspices of "TOZ". While he was being held at Auschwitz, he composed a melody for the prayer "*Gaze down from heaven and see*" [old Jewish song], which became like a "silent prayer" for the tortured Jews in their ordeals.

In 1946, Srebrnik emigrated to Palestine, where he built his home anew. His musical talent as a composer of melodies for Jewish prayers in the traditional style, while incorporating all the novelties of modern music, placed this "new immigrant" in the first row of composers and conductors of the country's most important choirs. There is practically no glamorous, public, festive ceremony in which our modest Częstochowa *landsman* - Juda Srebrnik - does not hold the respected position of the choir's conductor.

Thus, on 1st Nisan 5723 [26th March 1963], we saw him at

¹ [TN: Noted 17th century Polish rabbi and kabbalist, also known as Samson ben Pesach Ostropoli.]

² [TN: As the Gerer Rebbe was estimated to have 100,000 followers before the Holocaust, to sing at his table was a very great honour.]

- *Heichal Ha'Tarbut* [The Culture Palace in Tel-Aviv], at the “*Evening of Cantillation and Religious Song*”, which was arranged by *Heichal Ha'Tarbut*, *Heichal Shlomo*³ and the Municipality of Tel-Aviv;
- the induction ceremony of the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman, may he live a good long life, which was held on 30th Nisan 5724 [12th April 1964] at *Heichal Shlomo* in Jerusalem, in the presence of the President of Israel, the Prime Minister, the ministers, and important guests from abroad;
- the inauguration of the *Atirat Yitzchak* Synagogue (named after Sir Isaac Wolfson of London) in [the] Tzahala [a neighbourhood of Tel-Aviv,] on 11th Menachem-Av 5724 [20th July 1964], in the presence of the Chief Rabbis of Israel and of the IDF, the Minister of the Interior, and the Mayor of Tel-Aviv;
- the World Conference of Synagogue Beadles, which was attended by the President of Israel and the diplomatic corps.

Our *landsman* also graces other events with his vast musical knowledge.

What should be particularly noted was the great contribution of his performance in the magnificent album that was released in Elul of 5724 [August 1964] in commemoration of the Chassidic composer Reb Yankel Talmud *z"l*. As is known, this great Chassidic composer did not know how to write or even read music and always rendered his melodies from memory.

Juda Srebrnik, appreciating the importance of Reb Yankel Talmud's tunes and finding them fit to conserve for [future] generations, wrote down the notes [he heard] from his mouth, which were published in [the book] “*The Composer of the House of Ger*” and, thus, he greatly aided in the immortalisation of Reb Yankel Talmud's Chassidic music for generations [to come]!

³ [TN: *Palace of Solomon; formerly the seat of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, in Jerusalem.*]