

Towns Around Częstochowa

Krzepice and the Surrounding Area

The town was founded in 1364 [sic 1364] by the Polish King Casimir [III] The Great [*Kazimierz III Wielki*], on the banks of the [Liswarta, a tributary of the] river Warta. The town gained fame throughout the region for its blacksmithing and, at the beginning of the 17th century, cannons, cannon-balls, machines and also metal wire (which was made in a large factory) were produced in the town's workshops.

In 1765, a synagogue was established in the Kuźniczka area (one kilometre from Krzepice), in whose Holy Ark were kept Torah scrolls from generations upon generations. The scrolls were of varying sizes, bound with sashes and covered with embroidered ornamental mantles. Prayer services were only held in this synagogue on *Shabbes* and holidays.

Among the public figures and providers of Krzepice, Reb Abram Lejbuś, son of Reb Jakób Leslau (5595-5665) [sic 5598-5669¹³³], stood out. He was the owner of an iron foundry in Kuźniczka and he managed all the town's affairs.

Reb Leibisz, "The *Shoichet* from Wieluń", had a pleasant voice and served as cantor at the synagogue, with several worshipers alongside him to accompany the singing. The *shoichet*, Reb Hersz Mojsze [Gerszlik Mosek] Filip, who was the synagogue's last prayer-leader, also taught boys the Talmud.

During the First World War, the Germans damaged the synagogue and turned it into stables for horses. Only in the years of the Polish [State] were lessons taught by the *shoichet* and the last rabbi, Reb Dawid Szlojme Bomac, who was a great-grandson of the prodigy Rabbi Ze'ev [Wolf] Chaim [Bomac] and a descendant of the *Mogen Avrohom*¹³⁴.

There was also a Y.L. Perc Library in town.

In 1847, 1,954 [sic 1054] Jews lived in Krzepice and, in 1860, [there were] 1,069, who were engaged partly in agriculture, in craftsmanship and in commerce. The number of Jews in 1880 increased to 1,456 but, in 1897, it dropped to 1,395.

On 7th Tamuz 5702 (22nd June 1942), the local Jews, as well as those of Kłobuck and most of the surrounding villages, were assembled at the Krzepice synagogue and were sent to Auschwitz.



Zhurik (Żarki)

Located between Częstochowa and Zawiercie, [Żarki] also served as a centre for a number of smaller towns around it - Kurzelów, Janów, Żłoty Potok and Lelów. The majority of Żarki's residents were Jewish.

¹³³ [TN: Born on 30th December 1837, died on 12th October 1908. Source (tombstone): <https://www.geni.com/people/%D7%90%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%94%D7%9D-Leslau/600000004057530002>]

¹³⁴ [TN: "Shield of Abraham," by Rabbi Abraham Abel Gombiner, a famous 17th century Polish rabbi.]

There were four cemeteries in the town and, contained within them, were tombstones more than two-hundred years old. There was a special synagogue there called “The Little Synagogue”, which was also known as “The German Synagogue”, due to the fact that the worshipers there conducted business with the Germans and were in constant contact [with them]. The Large Synagogue, which had been built on the ruins of the Old Synagogue that had burned down, was a spacious, beautiful building, decorated with paintings.

Next to the synagogue stood an old edifice - the study-hall. Besides that, the town also had *shtieblech* of Ger, Aleksander, Skierniewice, Radomsko, Trisk and Brzeziny *Chassidim*, which served the 3,000-strong Jewish community.

There were nine families of “holy civil servants” in the town. [First,] the local rabbi, Rabbi Symcha Swarcberg, [who was] the grandson of the town’s [former] Head of Court, Rabbi Yehosua’le [Szyja] son of Reb Józef Swarcberg - author of five books: *Avnei Yehoshua*, *Beis Y.*, *Divrei Y.*, *Chomer Y.*¹³⁵ [and] a book of innovations on the *Ritvu*¹³⁶. Reb Symcha’le was only appointed as a halachic authority, but [actually] served as rabbi.

Rebbe Aron-Duwid’l Twerski of Trisk was appointed *Rebbe* of Żarki and attained a large following. From there, he moved to Częstochowa.

The town also had three ritual slaughterers, the cantor at the Large Synagogue, the synagogue warden, the study-hall warden and Leibisz the grave-digger.

There were active institutions and organisations in the town, such as a “*Talmud Torah*” [viz. free *cheder* for the poor] [and institutions for the] support of orphans, clothing for the needy, visiting the sick, aid to poor brides [and] “Supporter of the Fallen” [charity fund].

The *cheeders* of renown were those of the [following] *melamdin*: Szaja Piski [sic Panski?], small children; Jankel Dancyger; Abram Frank’s “Progressive *Cheder*”; Mendel *Melamed* taught Pentateuch and Talmud; Josel *Glotzer* [of Glatz (Kłodzko)?] taught Pentateuch and Talmud, as well as writing in Yiddish and German and there were also four more Talmud teachers: Chaim’l *Kaminker*¹³⁷, Szlojmele Kon, Jossele Pardes [and] Icek *Leizerle’s* [viz. son of Leizerle]. The town’s [most] excellent prayer-leaders were: Old Mojsze’l Kon, Rubin *Shoichet* and his son Chaskiel, Icek *Leizerle’s*, Izrael Studenberg, Chaim’l Slonimski [sic Slomnicki], Berisz Szlifka, Icyk Mendel Kohlenhandler¹³⁸ [and] Alter *Blimale’s*.

Rebbe Icchok of Warka, the founder of the Warka dynasty of *tzaddikim*, was born in Żarki.

On the anniversary of the death of Reb Duwid’l of Lelów (7th Shvat), the Żarki study-hall served as a gathering-place for those visiting his tomb. From there, a multitude of men and women would leave in a procession to prostrate themselves¹³⁹ on his grave.

¹³⁵ [TN: *Stones, House, Words, and Materials of Joshua*, respectively.]

¹³⁶ [TN: Also pronounced *Ritvo* or *Ritva*; acronym of Rabbi Yom Tov ben Abraham, a medieval Spanish rabbi and head of the Seville yeshiva, famous for his commentaries on the Talmud.]

¹³⁷ [TN: Although without quotation marks in the original, this is probably not his surname but a nickname meaning he originated from the Kaminka locality.]

¹³⁸ [TN: No such surname is found in the records.]

¹³⁹ [TN: Figuratively speaking.]

Abraham Józef Szybel, the great Maecenas [i.e. patron] of Hebrew literature, was [also] born in Żarki, where he established a large library in his wife's name - Zysel-Malka - which contained thousands of volumes.

The [political] parties in the town were "Zionist Union," *Ha'Chalutz* [and] *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair*, as well as the "Maccabi" sports organisation.

Among the town's opulent were Reb Szlomke, son of Reb Mojsze Aron Tenenbaum, an influential person who was known for his acts of charity and who was popular with the Christians also. He was held in such esteem, that they named him Chief (*Komendant*) of the Fire Brigade.



Kłobuck

Kłobuck is one of the oldest towns in Poland. In 1935, the town celebrated its 800th anniversary. It is unknown at what point Jewish settlement began there, but there was an old cemetery in Kłobuck in which they had not buried the deceased for a long time, to which the town elders would go on the 9th of Av and where they would point out an old tomb as being that of Kłobuck's first rabbi - Rabbi Izrael Szyja Lipszyc¹⁴⁰ *ztz''l*.

Following his death, the position of rabbi was filled by the renowned Chassidic *tzadik* Reb Jankele Rabinowicz *ztz''l*, who was considered a miracle-worker and, thanks to his good name, the town also gained fame. This was Reb Jankele Rabinowicz, the son of the *Chessed Le'Avruhom* and grandson of the *Tiferes Shloime* of Radomsko. He published a book entitled *Emes Le'Yankev* ["Truth to Jacob"] and died, in his prime, on 21st Iyyar 5662 [28th May 1902]. Many miraculous tales¹⁴¹ were told of him in the town. The town's last rabbi, who perished in the Holocaust, was Reb Icchok Henech Goldberg, a grandson of the *Chidyshei Ha'Rim* [of Ger].

The first Jews to settle in Kłobuck arrived from Działoszyn. The age of the synagogues and study-halls destroyed by the Germans is unknown. The synagogue had stood for about eighty years, but it had been preceded by the study-halls. The Kłobuck *kehilla* existed for about two-hundred years and, to it, were affiliated the Jewish residents of the neighbouring villages - Miedzno, Kocin, Grabówka, Nowa Wieś, Ostrowy, Neudorf¹⁴², Walenczów, Łobodno, Złochowice, Libidza, Wręczyca and Kamyk.

In 1808, Kłobuck was still annexed to the Częstochowa *kehilla*.

At the synagogue, the prayer-leaders were Reb Dawid Hersz [Dawidowicz] and Reb Mojsze Zander - both *schoichtim*. The town also produced the "young prodigy of Kłobuck", Reb Abram Naftuli Goldberg, who was born in 1896. He was the author of a book of innovations and homiletical interpretations entitled *Ma'ase Zais* ["Act of Olive"] (5693) [1933].

On Kłobuck's Synagogue Street there lived the Chassidic *tzadik* Reb Jankele Rabinowicz and, on *Shabbosim* and holidays, many *Chassidim* were with him. They came from afar to hear the Radomsko songs of the *Tiferes Shloime*. On that same street, there were also the Ger and Aleksander *shtieblech* and the Charity Fund. Other institutions in the town included *Bikur Cholim* [Visiting the

¹⁴⁰ [TN: This same account appears also on page 11 of the Kłobuck yizkor book, *Sefer Kłobuck*, but, there, it is stated that the tomb was that of Reb Icyk'l, and that he was the first rabbi. Rabbi Szyja Izrael (and not Reb Izrael Szyja as mentioned here) appears there on page 14 as Kłobuck's second rabbi.]

¹⁴¹ [TN: See there, p.18-21, where several of these stories are recounted.]

¹⁴² [TN: Germanic name for the Nowa Wieś that is mentioned already in the list. See there, p.34.]

Sick], *Chayei Odom* [(Society for) Human Life], with its own *shtiebel*, and *Chevras Bucherim* [Society of Bachelors (for Torah study)]. There was also a Y.L. Percec Library and a dramatic circle.

[Political] parties in the town included *Ha'Mizrachi*, *Tzeirei Ha' Mizrachi*; *Agudas Yisroel* - with a *Beis Yaakov* school and *Yesodei Ha'Torah* [Foundations of T. (a *cheder*)], United, Gordonia and Betar.

In 1856, there were only 444 Jews in Kłobuck, in 1897 – 1,027 and, in 1923, their number grew to 1,600.

Lelów

Lelów is one of the oldest towns in Poland. It is located on a hilltop, surrounded by swamps and mud from which springs gush forth in several spots. The town was built on the banks of the Białka River, on the road [from Częstochowa to] Jędrzejów, a distance of two miles from Szczekociny¹⁴³. Already, by the 13th century, Lelów was considered a very ancient town and it is mentioned in the documents as “Old Lelów”. This town has a very rich history in the annals of Poland.

In the pre-war¹⁴⁴ Kingdom of Poland, Lelów was a county town in the *Krakowskie Województwo* [Kraków Province]. In a special census which was conducted amongst the Jews of the *Krakowskie Województwo* in 1765, 3,415 Jews were found in Lelów County, with six *kehillas*: Lelów, Nakło, Janów, Pilica, Szczekociny and Żarki.

The Lelów community numbered 539 Jews, who had always enjoyed the rights of freeman burghers and felt as if they were in their own element. Six fairs took place in the town every year and, every week, there was a market-day, which served as a source of income for the Jews.

In 1846, there were 449 Christians in Lelów and 650 Jews, who earned their livelihoods from farming and small-scale commerce while, in 1856, Lelów had 328 Christians and 428 Jews. In the census which was conducted in 1897, there were already 729 Jews within a general population of 1,236 people. This town gained a reputation due to Reb Duwid'l of Lelów, who is famous in the Chassidic world for his humble ways. He would make souls for Chassidism and who discovered, among others, Reb Icchok Kalisz - the [future] *Rebbe* of Warka - and Dr Chaim Dawid Bernhard¹⁴⁵ of Piotrków. Reb Duwid (lived between 5506-5574 [1746-1814]), the son of Reb Szlojme Zvi, was born in the village Biała next to Lelów, and was a disciple of *Rebbe* Elimelech of Leżajsk and *Rebbe* Jakow Icchok, the “Seer” of Lublin. Reb Duwid'l did not set up a Chassidic court like the other *Rebbes* of his day but, instead, greatly influenced individuals with his own personality. His sayings are spread throughout Chassidic literature. He had a little shop in town, from which he drew his meagre livelihood and he had a rule - never to sell in one day more than he required for that day's sustenance.

Rebbe Duwid's son, *Rebbe* Mojsze of Lelów, was also named for the town. He was born in 5535 [1776] and, like his father, was literally willing to risk his life for the love of Jews. At the end of his days, he ascended to the Land of Israel and died in Jerusalem. He left after him a dynasty of *tzaddikim* of the surname Biderman – both in Israel and in Poland.



¹⁴³ [TN: Lelów is 10 miles from Szczekociny.]

¹⁴⁴ [TN: In the 14th century.]

¹⁴⁵ [TN: Famous “repentant sinner” who was a physician and later came to be considered among the *tzaddikim* of his generation.]

Kamyk

Kamyk was the smallest of all the towns around Częstochowa, but its history is known. The town is on the banks of the Trzopka River, at a distance of 11 *verst*¹⁴⁶ from Częstochowa. The Jewish quarter in Kamyk was separated from the Christian one by flowing water. It is unknown as to who planned this division but, in order that suspicion should not fall on the Jews of Kamyk of having made a "ghetto" for the Gentiles, they moved all religious services, such as the synagogue, the rabbi's house, the *mikvah* and the *shames* to the Christian quarter.

About a hundred Jewish families lived in Kamyk, the majority of whom were cattle dealers and butchers. They almost all had plots of soil which yielded potatoes, corn and wheat, which served as an additional source of income. The tanning business also flourished amongst the Jews of Kamyk, among other enterprises. A Jewish "nobleman" named Zandsztajn lived in Kamyk. He controlled the town, in every way like a Polish nobleman - with a court and a palace, a flower garden, fruit trees surrounding the palace, fields of grain and pastures, woodland, domestic animals, a flour mill, and a sawmill.

Rabbi Zelinger lived in Kamyk lived back during the Russian reign [of Poland]. He was a native of Wolbrom and the son of the religious barber, Rubin Zelinger of Wolbrom. When he died, his son served in his place and, from him, the rabbinical position passed on to his son, who perished in the Holocaust together with the entire community. (Either the son or the grandson of the last rabbi lives in Rishon LeZion.) The last Rabbi of Kamyk was the son-in-law of Rabbi Izrael Szyja Lipszyc of Kłobuck.

The *Chevras Tehilim* ["Psalms Society"] in Kamyk would hold "inauguration" festivities, having completed [the writing of] several Torah scrolls, as well as [holding] *Melave Malka* [banquets at the close of *Shabbes*]. On *Simchas Torah*, the local Jews would go out on processions with torches, dancing and music.

At a later period, a youth circle called "*Chevras Bucherim*" was established in the town, which organised its separate prayer-group with its own Torah scroll. This group's *Simchas Torah* celebrations surpassed those of the *Chevras Tehilim* and thus a sort of competition arose in the town between these two societies. However, the youth group outshone the first group in every way.

Following the First World War, when the situation in town was not brilliant, public institutions were opened with the aid of Jews from America. These included a children's soup-kitchen (where they received several daily meals) and a Y.L. Percec day-care centre. The first teacher to work there was Fajgele Berliner, who elevated the institution to a high level.

In 1882, the population of Kamyk and the vicinity was 6,344, among whom 1,437 were Jewish. According to the census of 1897, the population of Kamyk was only 885 people, of whom 368 were Jews.



¹⁴⁶ [TN: Obsolete Russian unit of length; 1 *verst* = 1.0668km.]

Janów

During the reign of the Kingdom of Poland, Janów belonged to the Kraków Province. It is located in a hilly region, by the route from Szczekociny to Częstochowa, three miles from Żarki. The town was founded in the 17th century by Jan Aleksander Koniecpolski. In 1765, Janów and Częstochowa had 623 Jews. In 1863, there were 512 Christians and 448 Jews in Janów, the majority of whom were engaged in farming and small-scale commerce. Six fairs were held in the town each year.

The Janów *kehilla* far preceded that of Częstochowa and, in the second half of the 18th century, the Częstochowa Jews would transport their deceased to be buried at the Janów *kehilla's* cemetery. Częstochowa was annexed to Janów and its *kehilla* waged a prolonged war against its hegemony which, by its own nature, opposed the efforts of the Częstochowa community to become an independent *kehilla*. The first dispute between the *kehillas* of Janów and Częstochowa emerged in 1808. Janów *kehilla* had once encompassed the *kehillas* of Działoszyn, Krzepice, Mstów, Cynków, Kuźnica, Kłobuck, Łobodno and Miedzno.

In the summer of 1942, the Germans banished the Jews of Janów and Olsztyn and concentrated them in the Częstochowa ghetto.



Olsztyn

This was founded in 1488 by the Polish King Kazimierz [IV Andrzej] Jagiellończyk and it is located two miles from Żarki. [In the 14th century,] Casimir the Great [Kazimierz Wielki] had built himself a small castle there and it is surmised the locality was set up for German immigrants, who answered the call to come and settle in Poland. That is the origin of its Germanic name - "Holstein" - and of the concessions which the authorities granted them. The Jews, who were not numerous there, lived mainly from farming, [the same] as in a few other localities around it, where - in those days - agriculture was the main occupation of the Jews. In 1856, 518 Christians and 82 Jews lived there. In 1865, there were 535 Christians and 931 [sic?] Jews and, according to the census conducted in 1897, of a general population of 747 people, 140 were Jewish.

Olsztyn lay 21 *verst* from the Prussian border which, according to a Russian decree, was part of the "Pale of Settlement" in which Jews were not permitted to reside.

The same as with all the other Jews of the neighbouring towns, the Jews of Olsztyn, during the Nazi occupation, were imprisoned in the Częstochowa ghetto and, there, they perished in the same manner.

