

Lipman Rajcher

The “Beis Yaakov” School for Girls

Among the numerous institutions in Częstochowa was “Beis Yaakov” which, in the spirit of traditional Judaism, provided a broad, life framework for girls and young women. The initiator of the idea to build such schools in Poland was Mrs Sara Schenirer from Kraków.

That idea was accepted and implemented by “Agudas Yisroel”. Mrs Schenirer visited Częstochowa and helped make the project a reality. The school was established on the second floor of ulica Katedralna 10, and comprised five rooms. There were few teachers at the institution, but the number of students reached three hundred. Studies were taken in shifts. The possibility was also given to students of other schools to receive a Jewish, religious education in the afternoon hours. Girls from secular homes also studied at this school. They had an interest in this method of education and, over the course of time, they also adopted Jewish-orthodox views.

Among the teachers and instructresses who excelled in their work, we should mention teachers Chana Fliderbaum and Wassercug, and the instructresses Taube Gelibter and Riwke Goldbaum, who instilled the spirit of Judaism and the sense of dedication for the school in their pupils’ hearts.

Teaching was conducted in Yiddish and, in the last years, the study of Hebrew was also introduced as a separate subject.

A very special atmosphere prevailed in the school. On the walls were displayed diverse slogans, verses from the Hebrew Bible, from “*Pirkei Oves*” [Mishna; The Ethics of the Fathers] – the handiwork of the students.

The “Beis Yaakov” council, which brought about its existence, comprised Reb Dawid Szlojme Erlich, Reb Józef Gerzon, Reb Mendel Fogel, Reb Simche Ferleger and, still living, Reb Noach Edelist, Reb Hendel Pradelski and Reb Lipman Rajcher.

With great dedication, the council worked to maintain the institution, both financially and spiritually, because the decisive majority of the three hundred girls were without means and the institution did not receive any support from the municipality or from the state. Sometimes, the council was unable to pay the teachers’ wages or the school’s rent.

Once, during a financial crisis, the girls “arranged” a “minyan” at the school. They invited *ba’alei tfile** and sold tickets to the worshipers, in aid of the school’s maintenance. On another occasion, when the school had been closed down because the rent had not been paid, *Shabbes*, between *Shacharis* and *Musaf*** , some students entered the *Gerer Chassidim*’s study-hall and told the crowd about the financial situation which jeopardised the school’s existence.

On [yet] another occasion, they locked the study-hall with the worshipers still inside and would not allow the crowd to exit before they had pledged to settle the institution’s deficit problem.

* [Translator’s note: A *ba’al tfile* (Heb.; lit. “master of prayer”), not to be confused with an official cantor, is the lay leader of prayers, mainly in Chassidic prayer groups.]

** [Translator’s note: Two parts of the *Shabbes* and holiday morning prayer service, which have an intermission between them when important announcements etc. may be made.]



For the school's maintenance, "Bnos Agudas Yisroel" [The Girls of A.Y.] and "Beis Yaakov" students also put on plays, the proceeds of which were mainly allocated towards teachers' wages and the rent. A small part of the earnings also went towards the library, which had books in Yiddish and Polish. All this was the fruit of the students' [own] strenuous work.

Only a few of the students have remained alive and, even if today they find themselves in an entirely secular framework, they maintain a deep connection to Judaism – and this is because of what they learned in their youth.



"Beis Yaakov" school for girls – founded by "Agudas Yisroel" in Częstochowa