

## Częstochowa – a Source of Charity and Goodwill!

Just as each and every city in the Diaspora, Częstochowa, too, was blessed with men of charity and goodwill, who did much in the different areas of extending aid to the needy in all kinds of ways. We may well state that our city was among the most excellent in this field. It is by no means an exaggeration if we say that there was no one in the city who did not belong to some society, organisation, charitable institution for interest-free loans and banks, community committees, synagogues etc., whose purpose it was to help the needy in every manner. There were also some activists in our city who literally chased and sought out those in need of aid, but who were ashamed to tell [anyone] about their difficult financial situation. They would ferret them out in different manners in order to extend to them substantial aid, [such as] loans, medical care [and] the rehabilitation of collapsed businesses. They stood guard and did not relinquish the “prey” they had snared until they had stood him up on his own feet.

Those activists, who chased after deeds of charity and goodwill, doubled their efforts in the case of Torah scholars, because the essence of men of Torah, whose life is their studies - in the great majority of cases - [is to be] introspective and withdrawn inside their personal space and, therefore, a special approach must be taken in extending aid to them, so as not to injure their dignity and status. They came up with various “tricks” in order to achieve the aspired goal of “*Blessed is he that considereth [i.e., ponders upon] the poor*” [Psalm 41:2]. Many were assisted who did not know from whence the aid had come. It is utterly impossible to describe the respect and love for men of Torah and the needy among them in particular. And this kindly spirit did not necessarily prevail only in regards to the townspeople, but also in regards to any Torah scholar or “*maggid*” who came to our city. They were provided with all their necessities and, sometimes, even more. In this sense, Częstochowa was famous throughout Poland.

Study-hall students were particularly admired and esteemed. In this area, the scope was larger. A study-hall lad, who fell ill, was never left in solitude. There were men and women who nursed him in his illness and his convalescence, until he had completely recovered. There were many cases of prolonged illnesses, which continued for months and, during the entire time, loyal men and women activists did not stop extending neither physical nor emotional aid.

I recall one instance, when a young man from the *yeshivah* was hospitalised in the city’s Jewish Hospital and lay there for a very long time. As he had a pleasant voice and loved music, he was visited on Saturdays in order to encourage him and to cheer him up. This and similar cases were not few in our city and many of those alive with us today know and remember this.

There was, in our city, a “Supporters of Bachelors Learning Torah Organisation”, which operated in an organised manner and proved itself with its numerous and elevated actions.

*Yeshivah* students were treated with a special deference, although there were not many *yeshivot* in our city, as the bulk of a religious youth’s studies were carried out at the study-hall or in limited circles which studied with the city’s distinct scholars. But, from 5689 (1929) onwards, when the “*Keser Torah*” *yeshivah* was opened by the *Chassidim* of Radomsko, it was mainly pupils from other towns in Poland who studied there (Pabianice, Piotrków, Działoszyce, Będzin, Mstów and Wieluń). Some of these *yeshivah* students had “eating days” with the city’s residents. They were treated with

kindness everywhere and it was seen to that each of them should have stable “days” for every day of the week. Around 200 young men studied at this *yeshiva* and they were all provided for. However, this did not suffice. The boys lacked the warmth of a home and family [and] the townspeople provided this as well. Dozens of them together were invited on *Shabbes* and holidays to the houses of different people, where they spent the *Shabbes* or holiday together with the families of their hosts.



*Young men from the “Keser Torah” yeshivah at a Purim party at the house of Reb Berisz Tiberg in 5695 [1935], with him at the head [of the table].*

One of these houses was that of Reb Berisz and Fajgele Tiberg. Every *Shabbes* afternoon, about 40 youths from the “*Keser Torah*” *yeshivah* would gather at their house for an “*Oyneg Shabbes*<sup>1</sup>”, and spend the time there seated at the family table, with the homeowner at the head, for “the third [*Shabbes*] meal”, which included – besides refreshments of food and drink - a friendly closeness, so that the lads should feel themselves as if in their fathers’ homes. Words of Torah and singing were heard. They [davened] public *Mincha* and *Ma’ariv*<sup>2</sup> services and remained there until after the “*Havdulah*”.

On the last *Purim*, in 5695 (1935), before the Tiberg family made *Aliyah*, all the pupils of the *yeshivah* were invited to that house for a special *Purim* party (as a farewell party). The youths came (some in fancy dress) and spent time in this house with singing and plays until a late hour at night. They then parted from their benefactors with feelings of gratitude and blessing.

(Thus was the Jewish city of Częstochowa, which is no more. Of it and the like it is said: “*Woe to those who are gone and are no longer found* [Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 111a]!”)

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: “*Oyneg Shabbes*”, literally “joy of the Sabbath” in Heb., refers here to a celebratory gathering held on *Shabbes*, usually with food, singing, etc.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: *Minche* (*Offering*) is the afternoon prayer and *Ma’ariv* (*Dusk*) is the evening prayer. *Havdulah* (or *Havdalah*; “*Separation*”) is the ritual held on Saturday night separating the *Shabbes* from the weekdays.]