

Some Details Regarding Religious Life

As late as May 1939 (a few months before the destruction of Polish Jewry), a Częstochowa Jewish weekly newspaper published the following articles:

Up to One Hundred Prayer-Houses in Częstochowa

In connection with the election campaign which is being conducted within the Jewish block, it has emerged that there are about one hundred prayer-houses and Chassidic *shtieblech* in our city, thank God.

These numbers give us food for thought. On the one hand, we may ascertain that the Jews are very religious. Brand them heretics and Bolsheviks as we may, they attend prayer services, thus expressing their religious convictions. At a time when, in Częstochowa, over 100,000 Christians live and have only 8-9 churches, the 27,000 Częstochowa Jews have almost 100 prayer-houses. On the other hand, we must stress that the vast number of Jewish prayer-houses is a consequence of a lack of unity amongst the Jews. They are divided amongst themselves and this causes different Jews, who think of themselves that "*all of us are wise, all of us are sagacious*¹", to desire to be all *gaboim* and all cantors. Above all, there is the fact that *Chassidim* travel to different *Rebbes* which, in any case, forces them to set up separate *shtieblech*.

We shall not judge, here, which of these two standpoints is the more correct. But it is a fact that, in a city of 134,000 inhabitants, over 100,000 residents have less than ten churches, while just 27,000 Jews have almost 100 prayer-houses.

(Alas, Hitler's hordes put an end to the Jewish prayer-houses and their worshippers - whilst the cathedrals have remained standing and the pious Catholics pray there to their god.)

Celebrating the Municipal Study-Hall's 100th Anniversary

On Wednesday night, 7th Adar 5694 [21st February 1934], a grand celebration was held at the municipal study-hall to mark its 100th anniversary.

The study-hall was very beautifully decorated and 345 candles were lit, symbolising the name "Moses²" - the name of Moses our Teacher, the first redeemer of the Jewish People, who freed them from slavery in Egypt and also gave us the Torah.

A first-class orchestra played various marches and cheered the crowd, which filled the study-hall.

The assembly gave spiritual honours to Rabbi Mojsze Halter and the Halachic authority Reb Benjamin Rubin, who delivered speeches pertaining to the occasion.

¹ [TN: Quote from the Passover Haggadah.]

² [TN: Moses in Heb. (מֹשֶׁה) has the numerical value of 345 in gematria.]

Rabbi Rubin mentioned the renowned scholar Reb Fajwiz Kurland z"l who, for many years, taught the simple people who prayed at the study-hall Pentateuch with *Rashi* and *Midrashim*, and he emphasised that he regarded it a great privilege that he was continuing the deceased one's fine custom.

The municipal cantor Reb Józef Badasz sang appealing prayers.



Two weeks later, on Adar 24, 5694 [Mar. 11, 1934], at the initiative of the Rabbi of Częstochowa Reb Nuchem Asz z"l, a larger assembly of public figures and important members of the study-hall was held, at which it was decided to rebuild and renovate the hundred-year-old study-hall and to adapt it to the religious needs of the large Częstochowa community.

A committee, which took upon itself the task of seeing this project through, was immediately appointed, comprising Rabbi Nuchem Asz as Chairman, Leib Sojka, Honorary Chairman and Józef Wajnryb, treasurer. The Construction Committee comprised Henryk Szpaltyn as Chairman, with Mendel Kopinski, Józef Wajnryb, Izaak Ber Rotbart, Józef Krauze and Aron Berkman.

The Publicity Committee comprised Simche Dziubas, Henryk Szpaltyn, Abram Gliksman, Cantor Józef Badasz and Mendel Asz.



The work of rebuilding the study-hall was carried out quite intensively.

Because Rabbi Asz³ had always distinguished himself with his indefatigable work in aid of the Jewish population and its communal and religious institutions, the *Kehilla* management unanimously decided, at one of their meetings in 1936, to name the new study-hall after the deceased Rabbi Nuchem Asz z"l.

At the same meeting, it was also decided to hang a picture of the beloved, deceased, spiritual leader in the *Kehilla* meeting room.



We hereby quote an account that was published in an article from a Częstochowa Jewish weekly journal on how simple Częstochowa Jews once made merry, when they had the privilege of writing their own Torah scroll⁴ and with what enthusiasm and happiness they celebrated its completion.

This is something that must be immortalised in the Memorial Book of the Częstochowa community.

Simple Folk Write a Torah Scroll

Say what you may, if we were to tell this to a Gentile, he would not understand it at all. Nowadays, when for Jews icy winds blow from all directions and when the entire world is warned against the "Jew", and a constant agitation is conducted to annihilate the Jews, these same Jews - and not the

³ [TN: Rabbi Asz died on May 12, 1936.]

⁴ [TN: I.e., donating money for a scribe to write it.]

prosperous among them, but precisely the poor craftsmen and small tradesmen - write a Torah scroll and celebrate its completion.

As is usual with Jews - and common people in particular - such a celebration is a great joy for them and they make merry with all their hearts. Music plays and they dance with character - with a fire such as only simple people can express.

The completion of the scroll took place on Sunday at the "*Hachnoset Orchim*" [see earlier article].

The music played and our simple folk, the toil-weary Jews, made merry. We must add that these common Jews, men and women, brought forth very fine donations to complete this Torah scroll. The comedian Monowicz showed his expertise and, we must admit, he is talented and that it is a good thing that he did, cheering the hearts of these unsophisticated, but kind-hearted Jews with his witticisms.

(In the street, our "noble" neighbours embraced Hitler's methods of burning synagogues and Torah scrolls, whilst within the four walls of the "*Hachnoset Orchim*", the Jews completed a Torah scroll, thereby dancing to the rhythm of a music that played the tune: "You burn down our synagogues, tear up our Torah scrolls, but you shall destroy neither us nor our Torah, which is forever new, and we shall write everything down and preserve it").

It was, concludes the editor, a spiritual treat for me, seeing simple folk exhilarated with the joy of having completed their Torah scroll.

"The Society for the Support of Bachelors Studying Torah" of the "*Beis Ha'Talmud*"

[see earlier article]

We hereby announce that, this year too, *Erev Pesach "siyemim"*⁵ for the firstborn will be held at the following locations:

- 1) "*Beis Ha'Talmud*", ul. Ogrodowa 4;
- 2) "Old Study-Hall" (next to the synagogue)
- 3) "*Machzikei Hadas*" study-hall, ul. Nadrzeczna 50.

Take heed, **The Administration**

Please note: The *siyemim* will be held between 6:00-9:00 a.m.

⁵ [TN: Pl. form of "siyem" or "siyum", Heb., "completion"; a celebratory meal held upon the completion of any unit of Torah study, such as a tractate of the Talmud. All firstborn males are required by Halacha to fast on the Eve of Passover (in commemoration of the 10th plague, the Death of the Firstborn), but this is traditionally avoided by attending a "mitzve feast", such as a "siyem".]