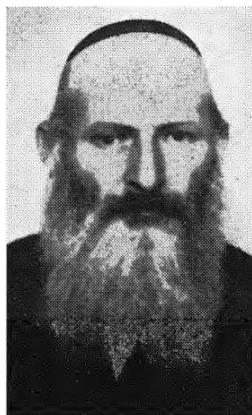


## Reb Abram Henech Finkelsztajn



He was one of the most interesting characters in Częstochowa, whose name is uttered with great respect - even almost thirty years after his death - by our elders, who knew him personally, as well as by all the Częstochowa townspeople - the remaining vestiges - who have heard of him.

Below, we present, in our Memorial Book, an excerpt from an article which was published in the Częstochowa Zionist periodical *"Unzer Weg"* No.40 (dated 1<sup>st</sup> October 1937), written by his son Mordche Finkelsztajn - a gifted journalist and a social activist in Częstochowa (who was also a victim of the Holocaust, *hy''d*).

This is what the paper writes:

*Who did not know him in Częstochowa? He was one of the rare Jews who influenced not with his social deeds, but with his profound and new ideas.*

*He was a social activist, a man of the people, a simple Jew - but a strong individualist.*

*He had a very complex nature. A deep-thinking mind, teeming with serious thoughts - and yet with an absolutely pure simplicity, with an incredibly sensitive heart. He was a sober, logical-thinking machine - and yet a man with a brazen temperament, feeling and a very strongly developed ear for music. He was a Jewish merchant, who was absorbed in commerce and in reality, a spiritual and scientific man - an academic type.*

*A Jew seldom seen, he combined Torah and wisdom within himself. He truly dedicated all his free time to study, always holding a book. Never did a day go by for him without learning! He would study a page of Talmud with commentaries; on another opportunity, he would sit over a philosophical work in German. Today, you would find him delving into theology and Kabbalah - tomorrow into a serious, scientific paper on chemistry, in which he had very wide knowledge. He was a great scholar, full and bursting, a keen expert on the Talmud and Halacha, and on the works of the older and newer rabbis. His vast wealth of knowledge was revealed in a crystal-clear fashion, when he once said, "I've studied all the philosophical methods in depth; I've read Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer, Darwin, Haeckel, Lamarck, and none of their thoughts are new to me. I find them in the Midrash, in short words, such as "Rabbi [so-and-so] said...and thus it is written..."<sup>1</sup>"*

*As a deeply pious man, he was unable to tolerate today's false and numbed Chassidism. Personally, he always used to travel to the Rebbe - as a fervent Gerer chassid - but something came to pass which his honesty could not abide and he completely tore away from this Chassidic group.*

---

<sup>1</sup> [TN: Typical generic citations from the Talmud or Midrash.]

*The "Orthodox Union", which was founded during the German occupation,<sup>2</sup> and which was under the influence of the Rebbes, denounced in its first brochure the Jewish revival-work being done in the Land of Israel, as well as the pursuit of National Rights [by Jews] in the diaspora lands.*

*This was too much for him. His entire being boiled over. With such Chassidism, he had nothing in common - on the contrary, he made it his sacred task to conduct an informational campaign within the pious Chassidic circles, that they should not fall under the influence of the "Orthodox Union". The ideological battle had begun.*

*"For me, the only authority is the "Shulchan Aruch" [official Halachic legal code], which explicitly states that the settlement of the Land of Israel is one of the greatest mitzves...", were the words with which he answered the Gerer Rebbe, who had specifically called him in, to make this "revolutionary" become a compliant sheep again.*

*As a faithful, committed with his entire heart and soul, religious-nationalistic Jew, he viewed the Zionist movement in our times in the light of Jewish religion and the interests of the Jews as a nation, which he regarded as two manifestations of the same concept. He therefore committed himself unconditionally to the Jewish revival idea, and threw himself into the battle for nationalistic ideals with all his temperament.*

*The war was difficult and bitter. The persecutions and humiliations which he was forced to endure would have embittered a stronger man's life. Living within a Chassidic environment, which had not developed enough to comprehend him, he was - for many years - alone among his own kind, humiliated and persecuted!*

*I once asked him what had made him, being completely immersed as he was in Chassidic life, to especially travel (before the War) to the Zionist Conference in Katowice, to which he answered, "What do you mean? It [was about] the settlement of the Land of Israel!"*

*He was a great Jew and a great man, dreaming of social uprightness, of a better world with justice and honesty. Within his heart dwelt a feeling of deep inner responsibility, which accompanied him during his whole life.*

*One of his greatest dreams was to settle in the Land of Israel and see it being built with his own eyes. But, sadly, his life-thread was cut off. The great heart stopped beating and he was torn from us forever.*

*The people who knew him closely as a Jew and as a man, and his rich inner world and fine spirit, are able to assess the great loss and comprehend that one of the best has passed away.*

---

<sup>2</sup> [TN: Clearly a reference to "Agudas Yisroel"; this party, however, was founded in 1912, two years before the German occupation of Częstochowa in 1914.]