

From My Memories of the *Gerer Shtiebel*

(established by Reb Chaim Weksler *hy''d*)



Reb Chaim Weksler's *shtiebel* was in the city centre - on the main Aleja at No.6. About sixty people prayed there. There were two *minyanim*, one in the morning and one in the evening.

The majority of the worshippers were merchants and small manufacturers, who sent their children to the Hebrew secondary school, whose management and teaching staff were staunch Zionists.

This was a "progressive" *shtiebel* and most of the congregation were members of the "*Ha'Mizrachi*" organisation, who also set aside time for regular Torah study.

Over forty years have passed since I was one of them, but it is impossible not to mention at least some of their names - Szmul Goldsztajn, Chaim Weksler, Anczel Warszawski, Becalel Potaszewicz and Reb Herszel Trajman. The first three were members of the *Kehilla* council. Reb Becalel Potaszewicz was a Jew of the old generation, with a long beard flowing over his garments and a true *Gerer chassid*. Reb Herszel Trajman held nationalistic values dear and had a known affinity for "the Holy Tongue" [Hebrew].

In that *shtiebel*, Talmud lessons were also held in the morning and in the evening, in which around ten youths participated regularly, three of whom I remember - Awrum Pik *hy''d* – one of the best of "*Tzeirei Ha'Mizrachi*", Mojsze Duwid Kohn, the son of one of the owners of the great "Kohn Bros." firm on ul. Ogródowa and the lad Elimelech (whose surname I do not recall), who was an innocent youth, diligent and who studied Torah for its own sake¹. He was the brother-in-law of Reb Jakób Lewit, who is in Israel.

It should also be mentioned that those who participated in those lessons also used to hold half-hour discussions in Hebrew on different subjects every evening. The elderly Reb Herszel Trajman would also occasionally join us in these discussions, in which he proved his expertise in the Hebrew language. He would sometimes say to us, passionately, "I believe that you will live to see the State of Israel already established. Whether I shall as well – I doubt it." (To the sorrow of our hearts, all perished. Blessed be their memory!)

¹ [TN: Meaning that he did not study to gain renown, respect etc.]