

The Gotlib and Wargoń Families

One of the oldest and most deeply-rooted families in Częstochowa for generations was the Gotlib family (from which also the Wargoń family sprouted forth), whose forefathers were noted for their Torah study and Chassidism.

They were descended from famous rabbis, who propagated the Ba'al Shem Tov's Chassidism in Poland. This glorious dynasty spanned five generations in our city, until the Holocaust. They were Reb Isuchor Berisz Gotlib z''l, his son Reb Lewi Icyk z''l, his son Reb Jakub Elchunon z''l, Reb Jakub Elchunon's son-in-law Reb Józef Szaja Wargoń z''l and his son Reb Lewi Icyk *hy''d*.

The head of the family was Reb Lewi Icyk, son of Reb Isuchor Berisz Gotlib, who lived in Częstochowa and is buried in the city's Old Cemetery.

Reb Isuchor Berisz and his brother, the prodigy Rabbi Abram Elchunon, Head of Court at Połaniec and author of "*Birkas Avruhom*" ["Abraham's Blessing"], had the honour to look upon the countenance of that righteous man and lover of [the People of] Israel, *Rebbe* Lewi Icchok of Berdyczów ztz''l, as is written in the foreword to his book "*Birkas Avruhom*". [Rabbi Abram Elchunon] was [also] a friend of the *Rebbe* Reb Jakub Icchok Horowicz ztz''l, the "Seer" of Lublin.

Reb Lewi Icyk's wife, Ruchel, was the daughter of the rabbi Reb Nechemie, the son of the *tzadik* *Rebbe* Duwid'l Biderman ztz''l, who was known as Reb Duwid'l *Lelówer* and the sister of the *Rebbe* Reb Janke'le of Opatów. Reb Lewi Icyk's son was Reb Jakub Elchunon, whom people called "Reb Chuna Reb Lewi's", who was one of the most prominent *Chassidim* and among the founders of the Szydłowiec *shtiebel* (named for Reb Majer Duwid Mordche, the *Rebbe* of Szydłowiec, who was the son of the aforementioned Reb Janke'le of Opatów, and a follower of the "*Tiferes Shloime*" of Radomsko).

The sons of Reb Jakub Elchunon (Reb Chuna for short) were Duwid Isuchor the *shoichet*, one of the most senior ritual slaughterers in Częstochowa, and one of the oldest Radomsko *Chassidim* there. Mojsze Nechemie and Reb Szlojme Majer (the *shoichet* at Czeladź). His son-in-law was Reb Józef Szaja Wargoń.

The sons of Reb Duwid Isuchor the *shoichet* were Reb Mendel Szlojme (the father of Abram, Jakub, Icyk Gotlib and their sister Dorka, who all managed to emigrate to the Land [of Israel]), and Reb Nechemie the *shoichet*, who was murdered by Polish assassins in a pogrom on 27th May 1919.

As mentioned above Wargoń family emerged from this family.

[My] grandfather Reb Józef Szaja Wargoń (a descendant of the famous Reb Szlojme Wargoń of Włoszczowa) was one of Częstochowa's most respected merchants. He owned two manufactured goods shops, in the Nowy Rynek and in the alleyway of the Stary Rynek. [He was] one of the most loyal and devoted followers of the Radomsko *Rebbe* (the "*Chesed Le'Avruhom*"). He led the morning prayer services on the High Holidays and blew the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*, where the *Rebbe* prayed, and was also part of the *Rebbe's* entourage on his visits to the *Rebbe* Reb Avruhom, the "Maggid of Turisk" ztz''l.

My grandfather had four sons - Reb Szlojme, Reb Szmul-Leib, Reb Zvi Herszel and my uncle Reb Lewi Icyk, who was noted for his exalted attributes. He gained renown as a young prodigy and an extremely apt scholar. He was a select pupil of Rabbi Mojsze Aron Ha'Levi, the Rabbi of Pacanów and author of "*Ner La'Muor*" ["A Candle for Lighting"].

My uncle, Reb Lewi Icyk, was famous for his dedication to public needs and especially for his activism for the "*Keser Torah*" *yeshivah*, founded by the Radomsko *Rebbe*. (He died the death of martyrs and pure ones, through the troops of Hitler, may his names be honoured, together with the members of his congregation.)

Of his offspring, three daughters were saved - Szyfra-Stefa, Ruchel and Rajzla were able to make *Aliyah* and settle in Israel.

The *Shoichet* Reb Duwid¹ Gotlib z''l



**Shoichet Reb Duwid
Gotlib z''l**

Reb Duwid *Shoichet* was the son of Reb Jakob-Chuna, whom his acquaintances called "Reb Chune Reb Lewi's" (the great-grandson of *Rebbe* Duwid of Lelów *ztz''l*), and the son-in-law of the *shoichet* Reb Mojsze Kaufman.

Our Reb Duwid did not see his profession - the slaughter of animals - just as a source of income, but as a sacred service, and he would say the blessing "*Al Ha'Shechita*"² ["Regarding the Slaughter"] with true awe and passion.



His wife Gitla z''l

He dedicated all his free time to Torah study and contemplation on books on Chassidism and, even at the abattoir or the slaughterhouse for poultry, there was always an open book in front of him, which he studied between slaughters, to fulfil the precept "*Thou shalt meditate therein day and night*" [Joshua 1:8].

He was a Radomsko *chassid* and was, for many years, *gabay* of the Radomsko *shtiebel*, as well as one of the prayer-leaders on the High Holidays, other holidays, and Saturdays during the year.

To the very year of his death, he was honoured with taking the Torah scrolls out of the Holy Ark before the "*Kol Nidrei*" prayer and with saying the verse "*Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart*" [Psalm 97:11], which he rendered with great passion and reverence.

On his visits to Częstochowa, the Radomsko *Rebbe* stayed at Reb Duwid *Shoichet's* house, which would fill with the multitude of *Chassidim* who thronged to the *Rebbe* from the local population and the entire vicinity.

He died, at the age of 72, on the eve of 1st Shvat 5684 [6th Jananuary 1924]. His casket was brought to the Radomsko *shtiebel* and he was warmly eulogised by the *Rebbe* Reb Fajwisz z''l, who told of his good deeds and his conduct in heavenly and earthly affairs.

¹ [TN: Dawid Getzel in the records.]

² [TN: This blessing is said before the act of slaughtering the animal.]

His wife Gitla lived long after his death and died at an advanced age in 5697 [1937].

A. G-B

Reb Menachem Mendel Szlojme³ Gotlib z''l



Reb Duwid *Shoichet's* eldest son was born in Częstochowa in 5630 (1870). In his youth, he studied in different *cheders* and, above all, with Reb Chaim Zvi-Hersz Berkowicz z''l, who was one of the distinguished scholars of his generation, an outstanding Talmudic and Halachic expert. Reb Menachem Szlojme was among his pupils until he married this same teacher's daughter, Perla.



His wife Perla z''l

He, too, was a Radomsko *chassid* and travelled to his *Rebbe* every Rosh Hashanah, taking his young son with him, to educate him in the ways of Chassidism and piety.

These journeys were always carried out as a group, with the congregation of *Chassidim* making its way, merrily singing psalms and drinking "*Le'Chaim*".

During his entire life, he always dedicated time to Torah study and was careful to attend public prayers all days of the week.

On Yom Kippur in 5695 [1935], he prayed and fasted as usual at the Radomsko *shtiebel*. Upon returning home, he performed "*Havdalah*", as is the custom, and when he sat at table to break his fast, he suffered a brain haemorrhage, which also caused partial paralysis. All the physicians' efforts were to no avail and he passed away at the close of the second day of *Sukkos*, being just 64 years of age.

He left four sons and three daughters. Three of his sons and one daughter (besides his wife Perla) emigrated to Palestine with their families. (The rest were killed together with their families by Hitler's troops.)

His wife Perla was noted for her good disposition, and was also "*a help-mate for him*" [Genesis 2:18] in earning their livelihood. She acted extensively for the city's poor and provided for several families, giving of her own bread and also by contributions for the needy from other philanthropists.

She made *Aliyah* with her youngest son Icek [Chuna] in 1936.

She died at a ripe old age on 24th Sivan 5708 [1st July 1948] and was laid to eternal rest at the Nahalat Yitzchak Cemetery.

³ [TN: *Szlama Mendel* in the records.]