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The Częstochowa Jewish Community in 1856*

There are no completely accurate figures regarding Jewish settlement in 1856. However, based on the population in 1857, which numbered 2,976¹, we may assume with certainty that, in 1856, the number of Jews was the same as in 1857, or at least not much smaller.

There is also no archival material to provide us with a picture of the life and activities of this small community. Moreover, Częstochowa Jewish community archives were not protected well enough and, after the Second World War, they were completely destroyed. Therefore, any written documents concerning our community, which were saved, constitute an important contribution to its history. One document, about the Jews of Częstochowa, is a municipal tax [payers] list, which was compiled in 1856². This record provides a picture of the socio-economic composition of the communal taxpayers [in general] and, on a smaller scale, of the contemporary Jewish community.

According to that list, there were then, in Częstochowa, 438 families, of which only 340 were communal taxpayers. They were divided into 5 categories.

The first category paid 2 rubles and 50 kopeks a quarter (i.e. 10 rubles a year). There were four such payers: Eisik Ginsburg, Icchok Keller, Aba Landau and Józef Zand.

The second category paid only between 1 ruble and 25 kopeks to 1 ruble and 50 kopeks a quarter. In total, eleven payers belonged to this category. They were: Izaak (Icchok) Fajgenblat³, Majer Ginsburg, Dawid Goldman, Herc Kon⁴, Józef Kon, Ber Kon⁵, Szaja-Jonas Landau, M. B. Moszkowski, Szmul Najman, Izidor Posnanski and Iser Rus.

The third category comprised 57 payers who paid between 25 kopeks a quarter to 1 ruble and 12 and half kopeks. This group also contained [some] families who, in reality, should have been in the fourth category, who paid only 25 kopeks a quarter. But, because among them were important people whom it was not desired to belittle, they were put into the third category.

The fourth category comprised 81 payers, who paid between 15 kopeks a quarter to 37 and a half kopeks.

* We bring here the details from 1856 because it is the only accurate archival material which was found and which the author studied closely and we may receive from it a description of the Jewish community at that time. The footnotes are from the author. **The Editors**

¹ See Y. Shatzki's article "The Jews in Częstochowa up until WWI" in "Tshenstokhover Yidn" [Jews of Częstochowa], N.Y, 1947, p.16 (we've brought this article in our book too, in Hebrew).

² Elaborated based on an article in "Unser Weg" [Our Way] # 37 (dated 15th September 1933).

³ One of the four partners of Rotman, Ber [&] Kon (see Shatzki, there).

⁴ Leader of the community; see Shatzki, there, p.19.

⁵ Rotman, of the Częstochowa City council; Shatzki, there.

The fifth category had the greatest number of communal taxpayers - 187 families. They paid between 4 kopeks a quarter to 22 and a half kopeks.

These 340 communal taxpayers covered the entire budget of the Jewish community of the time, which totaled 445 rubles and 58 kopeks.

The Socio-Economic Composition of the Payers

Communal taxpayers were divided according to their professions as follows:

22 tailors, 12 tanners, 1 distributor¹, 4 journeymen, 2 *waciarze*^{6a}, 2 commissioners², 18 weavers, 11 bakers, 1 restorator, 13 goldsmiths, 6 cap makers, 2 cobblers, 37 shopkeepers, 3 butchers, 81 tradesmen, 3 plea writers, 1 porter³, 2 dyers, 1 *bakalarz*⁴, 1 suit maker, 7 brokers, 4 tinsmiths, 18 tradesmen-peddlers [forestallers], 2 joiners, 6 [other] brokers, 1 turner, 15 large merchants, 10 smaller merchants, 3 glaziers, 2 watchmakers, 25 speculators⁵, 1 saddle maker, 2 collectors⁶, 3 musicians, 2 barbers, 1 brass founder, 10 contractors⁷, 1 soap boiler, 2 sub-collectors, 1 teacher⁸, 1 scribe.

Ninety-eight people were exempt from the communal tax. Among them were the four judges [of the rabbinical court] - then, Reb Jakob Rozen, Reb Nachman Oderberg, Reb Szlojme Sztencel and Reb Nechemie Landau⁹. The two *schoichtim* [ritual slaughterers], Alexander Kaufman and Zeew Taub also paid no communal taxes. Besides these, the cantor, *shamoshim* [sacristans], *melamdin* [religious primary school teachers], the assistants to the *melamdin*, carriers, barbers¹⁰ and simple beggars were also exempt.

In addition to the residents of Częstochowa, the Jewish community council also imposed taxes on the following neighbouring settlements:

Mstów (a total of 8 rubles and 50 kopeks a year) and Kamieniec, Siewierz, Kamień, Kiedrzyn, Poczesna, Nowa Wieś, Kościelec, Radostków, Bychlew [?], Wyczerpy, Bleszno, Rędziny and Wrzosowa; the division between these settlements is not specified, only that in these settlements, 27 men paid the communal tax, which brought in a total of 23 rubles and 15 kopeks annually.

¹ The owner of a tobacco shop.

^{6a} Cotton manufacturers.

² People who took merchandise from merchants or manufacturers in order to sell it.

³ An attendant with a cap.

⁴ A *melamed*; see Raphael Mahler in "Jews in Former Poland in the Light of Statistics", Warsaw, 1958, p.143.

⁵ It is difficult to say exactly what "profession" was "speculators", unless we accept the conventional meaning of the word...

⁶ Those who had a concession on the sale of lottery-tickets.

⁷ People who received contracts as builders, *kanalizatoren* [sewer diggers (?)] and presumably also as manufacturers.

⁸ It seems this applied to Daniel Neufeld; see: Shatzki, there, p.22.

⁹ The fact that among the non-payers no rabbi is mentioned does not mean that Częstochowa had no rabbi at the time; according to Shatzki (there, p.29) there was such a rabbi. His name was Reb Icchok Rabinowicz; the interesting thing is that neither among the payers or non-payers do we find a single doctor.

¹⁰ It is hard to understand why barbers are listed with the non-payers, when it is explicitly annotated that among the payers there were indeed two barbers. Unless we assume that these non-payers were [simply] unable to pay or that they were covered by the public, but there is no basis for this hypothesis.

In this manner, the 340 payers from Częstochowa itself and the 27 from the surrounding settlements covered the entire budget of the Jewish community, of the time, in Częstochowa.