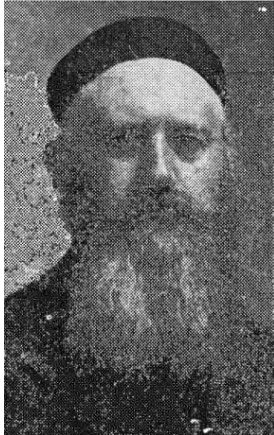


The Book Committee

Rabbi Józef Szymon Koblenz z"l



He was born in White Russia [Belarus]. In his early childhood, it was already apparent that he was destined for greatness, for his teachers marvelled at his sharp perception and exemplary studiousness. He literally never stopped studying and put great might into Torah study.

Additionally, he was also handsome and well favoured, and many regarded him as blessed and foretold a brilliant future for him.

When his time came to be drafted into the army, his father, the rabbi and *maggid* Rabbi Mordechai z"l, feared that his fruitful son would be enlisted and be forced to discontinue his study of the Talmud and its interpreters. Following the advice of the local rabbi, who instructed him in the ways of the Torah and the fear of God, he changed his surname from "Kagan" and turned

into a different person, becoming Józef Szymon Koblenz!

At that same period, he married Rywka Poloniecki and, together with his elderly father, the rabbi and *maggid* Reb Mordechai, they wandered to Poland and settled, at first, in Piotrków Trybunalski, where he dealt in dairy products. However, he was unsuccessful in his business and moved to Częstochowa.

Having been endowed with great talents as a public speaker, he was asked to travel to the cities of Russia to make souls for the Zionist cause and for settlement in the Land of Israel, on behalf of the Odessa-based "*Hovevei Zion*" [Lovers of Z.] council, whose official name was ""The Society for the Support of Jewish Farmers and Artisans in Syria and the Land of Israel!".

Very soon, he became famous throughout the country and was invited everywhere to preach for Zion.

Then, when he arrived in Humań [Uman], Ukraine, multitudes thronged to the synagogue to hear his speech. This swarming of the masses aroused the suspicion of the local Chief of Police, who thought that he was going to agitate against the government.

Although he saw before him a rabbi with a fine beard, wrapped in his prayer-shawl, and not a revolutionary, he arrested him nevertheless and only released him after community leaders had paid a large bail.

Following this incident, the *Maggid* (thus all referred to him) stopped wandering far afield and became the Life-force behind all religious-nationalist activities in Częstochowa and was, first and foremost, in all public endeavours.

He was one of the founders of the "*Machzikei Hadas*" *cheder*, a member of the Jewish Hospital council, the Hebrew high school and a *gabay* for the "*Chevra Kadisha*". All the city's public institutions also sought his advice and guidance, for he was very insightful and weighed each matter with wisdom and knowledge.

He also established his own synagogue, in which he taught lessons and held lectures, to which all seekers of Torah and wisdom in our city swarmed. He was elected as a representative of "*Ha'Mizrachi*" on the *Kehilla* Council and as a member of "*Ha'Mizrachi's*" central council. He made a respectable livelihood from his dairy products business and was one of the most generous philanthropists in all matters of charity.

He was dear to God and mankind as well and was among the designers of the correct character of Jews who are both religious and true lovers of Zion as well, who acted personally and urged others to action for the National Funds.

He passed away in Kislev 5698 [November 1937] and, although he was already old and had lived a long life - over eighty years of age - great was the bereavement for the loss of such an active man, and thousands attended his funeral. All his eulogisers stressed the great loss to Częstochowa, for which he had done so much!