

Noach Edelist

The “*Machzikei Hadas*” Cheder

In the years 5662-3 (1902-3), the “*cheder*” was founded. It was the first school of its type and size and was for children whose parents could not pay tuition fees.

A saying of the Sages, “*Be careful with regard to the education of the sons of paupers, as it is from them that the Torah will issue forth [Talmud Bavli, Nedarim 81a]*” is well-known. It was precisely from amongst paupers that, sometimes, famous Torah scholars and prodigies emerged who, without this primal and basic opportunity, would have remained without Torah and without civility.

A few activists in Częstochowa, headed by Reb Dawid Icyk Edelist, J.Sz. Koblenz (the *Maggid*), Reb Nachman Kryman (as secretary), Reb Izrail Częstochowski and Reb Józef Silman, decided to establish a “*cheder*” for all children unable to pay tuition fees and to provide them with education and Torah free of charge.

They rented an apartment and began teaching a small number of children. Every semester their number grew until, in 5667-8 [1907-8], it reached four hundred. They then rented a larger locale, at the house of Reb Jakób Dawidowicz (*Kohlenhandler*¹). Additional good *melamdim* and teachers for secular subjects were brought in.

My father, Reb Dawid Icyk Edelist, neglected his own affairs and dedicated himself, with his entire soul, to the maintenance of the institution. He was particular regarding order and cleanliness and saw to the provision of funds. He also took care that the more talented children should be able to continue their studies at *yeshivot* upon completing the school.

Besides the financial difficulties, he also had to overcome the resistance on part of the *melamdim* in the city, who feared for their livelihoods, seeing hundreds of children flocking to the *cheder*. He was, therefore, forced to register the school with the authorities in Piotrków Trybunalski as an official and authorised school, under the name “*Machzikei Hadas*”.

Each quarter of the year, when the rent was due, the entire operation was faced with closure due to a lack of funds for the teachers’ fees and for other expenses. Due to the lack of space and money, it was impossible to increase the number of pupils.

On *Shemini Atzeres*² 5668 [Sep.30, 1907], my father called a board meeting and presented a stringent demand - to construct a building for the school. He announced that, if his request was not approved, he would relinquish his position as head of the committee. He proposed that the three committee members, Reb Chaskel Fiszel, Reb Szmul Goldsztajn and Reb Józef Szymon Koblenz, should donate 1,000 roubles each, with the rest of the committee members 300 roubles each. He also promised to procure a plot for free, a donation to the institution from a townsman, and he proposed that construction begin and that further funding be collected according to the project’s needs. The committee approved his proposal.

¹ [TN: Lit. “Coal Merchant” in Ger. and Yid. This article is in Hebrew and it is unclear whether this was Mr Dawidowicz’s second surname or his nickname.]

² [TN: “Eighth [day of] Assembly”; holiday immediately following the festival of Sukkos.]



The "Machzikei Hadas" Society cheder's building in Częstochowa (5671-5683 [1911-1923]), the Society's administration, the melamdim and the teachers with all the pupils. In the picture are seen, among others, the Society's activists. Józef Silman, Szmul Goldsztajn, Dawid Icyk Edelist, Nachman Kryman, Manasza Margulis, Jakób Hersz Furman, Jakób Leslau and Majer Baum.

My father z"l turned to Reb Berl Brener (Prentki), an old tailor who lived in a wooden house at ul. Nadrzeczna 68, and asked him to give the plot as a gift to the *cheder*. The tailor and his wife willingly gave the plot over for this sacred cause.

In 5670 [1910], the building's cornerstone was laid, in presence of the rabbi Reb Nuchem Asz and with the attendance of multitudes of the city's Jews. A fine building was constructed, with two storeys - for the school and the study-hall. Reb Icze Ferfer was appointed as custodian of the study-hall. Thousands of children, who later grew up to become good and loyal Jews, received their education at the *cheder*. Over the course of time, additional individuals and activists joined the committee: Reb Wolwisz Borensztajn, Reb Jakób Fajerman, [and] Reb Menachem Kopinski.

A few years before the War, following the death of Reb Dawid Icyk, his son Noach Edelist and Reb Jechiel Landau joined the committee. Among the *melamdim*, the most renowned was Reb Aron Hersz Aronowicz.

Income and Expenditure Statement of the "Machzikei Hadas" Society
(from 1st April 1925 to 1st April 1926)

Income Type	[Amount]	Expenditure Type	[Amount]
Membership fees	8,886.61	Debts from previous balance paid	442.55
<i>Kehilla</i> subsidy	3,361.60	Headmaster, <i>melamdim</i> , supervisor and teachers' staff	22,757.86
Pledges and contributions	3,663.71	Administration	1,167.03
Weddings and circumcisions	612.83	Collector's commission	2,655.45
Tuition fees	9,288.00	Lighting and heating	623.20
Municipal subsidy	2,000.00	Miscellaneous repairs and expenses of the building, study-hall, <i>chedes</i>	1,460.72
<i>Rosh Hashanah</i> and <i>Purim</i> cards	1,315.28	Expenditures on quills	208.50
Men's and women's pews at the study-hall	1,032.05	Writing materials	311.37
% from <i>Keren-Kayemeth</i>	424.00	Insurance	50.00
Fowls' quills from the abattoir	615.90	Printing material and announcements	222.30
[Donations for?] rent	242.36	Taxes	68.63
Writing materials	43.65	Interests	8.90
From Reb Mordka Grylak <i>z''l</i> , via mbrs. Horonczyk and Diament	452.00	Uncashed <i>Kehilla</i> subsidies, [promissory] notes and vouchers	1,028.53
From Wolf Leib Zysser <i>z''l</i> – 50 dollars	257.05	-	-
From the Gajsler brothers.	200.00	-	-
From Mrs Landau	200.00	-	-
From Jochanan Openhajm (for coal)	84.00	-	-
From the heirs of the deceased Reb Dawid Ickowicz <i>z''l</i>	60.00	-	-
From Mr Krzeminski	60.00	-	-
From Mr Nuta Apelsztajn	50.00	-	-
From Mr Rapaport	36.00	-	-
From the heirs of the deceased Reb Izrail Izaak Baran <i>z''l</i>	30.00	-	-
From Mr Tempel	25.00	-	-
From Mr Mendel Horowicz (for coal)	20.00	-	-
From Mr Chaskel Apelsztajn	20.00	-	-
[Total*]	32,980.04	-	31,005.04

Remarks: 1) The *melamdim* and the teachers' staff owe me 1,748.00 *złoty*ch.
2) Of the subsidies from the *Kehilla* and the municipality, 500 *złoty*ch from each were given for the year 1926, but since our yearly balance ends on 01/04, these sums were included in the balance for 1925.

* There is a serious mistake in the "balance", which was not corrected at the time - It shows income of 32,980.04 *złoty*ch and expenditure of 31,005.04 *złoty*ch. Unfortunately, we are unable to clear this up and it must remain "unsolved".