

## The *Shtiebel* of the Radomsko *Chassidim*

The Radomsko *Chassidim* constituted an important part of the city's religious and Chassidic population. They had eight *shtieblech* and almost six hundred members. Among them were the Rabbis Reb Józef Prokosz and Reb Józef Klajnplac, the *shoichets* Reb Szlojme Fuks, Reb Isrulke Borowiecki and Reb Mojsze Zander, and Jews who were great in Torah and Chassidism, such as Rabbi Michal Leib Mindycz (the uncle of the *Rebbe* of Radomsko *hy''d*, who perished in Warsaw), the Rabbi Reb Jechiel Michal Szwarcbaum (a true disciple of the Rabbi and prodigy of Kłobuck, author of "*Emes Le'Yaakov*" [Truth to Jacob]), the brothers Reb Mojsze and Reb Srul Cząstochowski, Reb Chaim Berisz Sztencel, Reb Rubin Rechtman, Reb Awrum Isuchor Gotlib, Reb Jakób Grinbaum, Reb Chaim Srul Szthal and (still alive) the Rabbi Reb Ely Nysan Wajslar, as well as simple God-fearing Jews with Torah learning, extremely wealthy individuals and people who earned their livelihood from physical labour and who toiled arduously to make ends meet. All these, together, formed an important congregation – the Radomsko *Chassidim*.

The *shtieblech* were at the following locations:

- a) Stary Rynek 18 (*Cossack's shtiebel*);
- b) Stary Rynek (*Szydłówer shtiebel*)
- c) ul. Targowa 9;
- d) ul. Katedralna 1 (Szlojme Gold) and later at ul. Warszawska 5;
- e) ul. Katedralna 12 (young married men);
- f) Aleja 21 (Kalman Rajcher);
- g) ul. Warszawska 28 (tailors);
- h) ul. Warszawska 22 (Reb I. Borowiecki).

The first to be established was the one nicknamed the "*Cossack's shtiebel*". This was the first Chassidic prayer-house in Cząstochowa which had almost one hundred members, among them many who were versed in Torah. The owner was Reb Kalman Rajcher.

Regular lessons on Talmud with *Tosafot*, *Midrash*<sup>1</sup> and "*Ein Yaakov*"<sup>2</sup> were held in all these *shtieblech*, from early morning to late at night. The *shtiebel* was a place where anyone could have a friendly chat, general dealings and pour his heart out about all his concerns, and also the appropriate place to make clear the answer the *Rebbe* had given when people presented their worries and troubles before him; some concerning their livelihoods and some concerning the marriage proposals for their sons or daughters who had matured.

Every *shtiebel* set up a fund to grant loans without interest for business etc., to those in need. Special activities were carried out before the holidays and before *Pesach*, in particular, to provide the needy with their holiday necessities. These activities were conducted in adherence to the custom of the Radomsko *Rebbs*, humbly, guilelessly and discreetly.

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: "*Interpretations*"; biblical exegesis by ancient Judaic authorities.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: "*Eye of Jacob*"; compilation of all the Aggadic (tales; lore) material in the Talmud together with commentaries.]

The Radomsko *Chassidim* appeared on the ultra-orthodox list for the elections to the *Kehilla* council and they always managed to put through two of their own, who stood on guard to protect their religious interests. Reb Michal Mindycz, Reb Icze Piotrkowski, Reb Berl Gwircman and Reb Ajzyk Sztternzys all represented the Radomsko Chassidim in the *Kehilla* at different times and Reb Berl Gwircman was elected Vice-President of the *Kehilla*.

Due to the Radomsko *Rebbe's* lack of affiliation to any political party, his followers belonged to all the religious parties – “*Agudas Yisroel*”, “*Tzeirei Agudas Yisroel*”, “*Poalei Agudas Yisroel*”, “*Ha'Mizrachi*” and “*Ha'Poel Ha'Mizrachi*”, as well as to the religious faction of the Revisionist Movement. The Zionist ideal also pervaded the Radomsko *Chassidim* public, which they also carried out physically by purchasing property in the Land of Israel and there were also those who liquidated their businesses in Poland and made *Aliyah*, such as Reb Berisz Częstochowski and Reb Aron Kongrecki. Some also made *Aliyah* and later returned to Poland.

Reb Sruł Częstochowski read the Torah scroll and led the *Mysef* services at the “*Cossack's Shtiebel*”. Reb Rubin Soifer blew the *shoifar*. In 1916, Reb Kalman Rajcher set up a women's section in memory of his deceased wife.

The crowning glory of the Radomsko *Chassidim's* activities in the city was the foundation, in 5689 [1929], and maintenance of the “*Keser Torah*” *yeshivah* with its two classes, which was mostly funded by the *Rebbe*, with partial funding from the townspeople. About 150 pupils of our townsfolk and from other cities studied in these two classes. The latter received “eating days” with the local residents. The heads of the *yeshivah* were Reb Jechiel Michal Szwarcbaum, Reb Juda Leib Gerszonowicz, Reb Rubin Rechtman and, in the last years, Reb Awrum-Isuchor Gotlib from Wolbrom, who was renowned there as an orator and lecturer, who charmed his audience with his lectures on Torah and Chassidism, came to head the higher class. The rabbi Reb Wolwisz Borensztajn, Reb Henech Bryll, Reb Awrum Naftuli Horowicz and Reb Mojsze Wolbromer also participated in examining the pupils before the end of the semester. The rabbi Reb Mojsze Duwid Rabinowicz, the president of the “*Keser Torah*” *yeshivahs* [network], who amazed the listeners with his brilliant questions, also took part in the examinations and the pupils proved their proficiency and memory. Following the exams, “*mitzvah* banquets” were held at set tables. The singing and dancing continued for many hours, late into the night.

The board of management of the Częstochowa “*Keser Torah*” *yeshivah* comprised Reb Mojsze Szthal, Reb Kalman Rajcher, Reb Szlojme Ruzewicz, Reb Wolf Landau, Reb Lewi Wargon, Reb Isuchor Moszkowicz and Reb Awrum-Mordche Kohn.

(With the onset of the Second World War and the horrific Holocaust, an endless stream of refugees came to Częstochowa. They were housed in all the synagogues and prayer-houses, with the Radomsko *shtieblech* among them, except for the *shtiebel* at ul. Targowa 9, which continued functioning for a long time, with many youths continuing to study there despite the dangers involved. Despite [their own] difficult situation, the Radomsko *Chassidim* did not forsake their dear *Rebbe* and, well aware of his deplorable economic conditions in Warsaw, took it upon themselves to provide him with food and other essential commodities. A committee, which acted selflessly, was organised, which comprised Reb Duwid Kozak, Reb Awrum Gotlib, Reb Rubin Rechtman, Reb Motel Landau and (still alive) Lipman Rajcher and Icchok Zander. The delivery of the parcels to their intended destination presented a very great problem and more than half of the parcels never reached the *Rebbe*. Nevertheless, parcels were sent to him in Warsaw until his last day.

A correspondence with the *Rebbe* still existed, and we received letters and Torah innovations from his son-in-law, Rabbi Mojsze Duwid, who, even in troubled times, persevered in Torah study. In his

letters, he asked his disciples to study his words well and to keep them until the Redemption came. But the tree was cut down – the holy dynasty of the Radomsko *Rebbe*. The entire family was murdered in Warsaw, when they refused to leave their apartment during the deportation to Treblinka, where they died the death of martyrs from the murderers' bullets!).