

Izaak Kac

On Religious Zionist Youth in Częstochowa

I wish to erect a memorial monument in "*Sefer Częstochowa*" to our dear, religious youth who were organised under the "*Tzeirei Mizrachi*" organisation in our city, in which I was [a member] and in which I was already active about forty years ago.

Following the establishment of Poland as an independent state, I moved from my little town to Częstochowa, which was then a city and a mother in Israel, with a population of above 30,000 Jews and, among them, a model youth which excelled in its national consciousness and many of whom - in their religious ideologies also.

Even among the students in the study-halls, there were those already then who desired to emigrate to the Land [of Israel] and who understood that they were to become accustomed to and prepare for a life of Torah and labour.

These youngsters envied their friends, who found courage in their souls to commence professional training at the local crafts school, which was called "*Szkoła Rzemieślnicza*", which was as a "corridor" leading to the yearned-for "hall" - a life of creative work and participation in the building of the Land [of Israel].

In the course of time, we grew in our numbers and importance in the life of the city. We succeeded in concentrating the best of youth around us, who dedicated time daily to Torah [study] and to public prayer and lessons in Talmud, with its commentators, as well as to discussions and lectures on matters of science and religious literature.

The driving force behind this work and the professional training activities and our preparation towards *Aliyah* to the Land of Israel, were Jakob Leslau and Sz. Z. Shragai, who were the first to make *Aliyah* and who, whilst still in Częstochowa, and also after their emigration, encouraged all the members to follow in their footsteps in this quest.

(To the sorrow of our hearts, only few of us answered their call and the inner voice of their hearts. The majority were annihilated in the death camps, together with all the members of our beloved community. May God avenge their blood!)