

## Cantor Reb Zyskind [Ber] Rozental



Besides A.B. Birenbaum, there were other great cantor-artists in Częstochowa.

One of the first cantors in Częstochowa was Reb Zyskind Rozental, who had earlier served as City Cantor in Konin (Kalisz district) and in Płock. He arrived in Częstochowa at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with his four sons and a choir of sixteen singers. He was of noble features, scholarly and with had a musical education. He played both the violin and the piano, composed many melodies, and enriched artistic singing in the cantor world. He began his audition with the [liturgical poem] "*Yigdal*" ["May He Be Magnified"] and he had a distinct tune for each [of the thirteen] verses. Immediately following the audition, he was appointed City Cantor.

His compositions were numerous. Every year, he composed new tunes for the prayers in the traditional style and, in a short time, he became popular within all the city's circles.

He lived on Stary Rynek 9. At the close of every *Shabbes*, he held a concert in his home, together with his daughter and the choir. He played the violin, his daughter the piano and the choir sang. The entire street was full of people who listened to these concerts.

Also the renowned prayer-leaders, who prayed with the *Rebbe* of Pilica, such as Szyja *Błaszker*<sup>1</sup> (Srebrnik), Herszel Wolhendler and Mordche Wajnsztok listened to Rozental's new tunes and he gained fame in our city.

Cantor Rozental sometimes appeared in public concerts. He was the conductor and also played his violin.

The characteristic features of his prayers, for which Rozental was noted, were many. Particularly well-known were his melodies for "*Ki Hinei Kachomer*", "*Omnan Ken*" and "*Ya'ale*"<sup>2</sup>, which became folk tunes and were also sung by many music aficionados.

He served as City Cantor for thirty three years, a tenure which was considered a testimony of honour by the local Jews. Cantor Rozental led the prayer for the last time at the age of 73 and it is said that this prayer was particularly thunderous. He probably felt that this would be the last *Yom Kippur* on which he would perform his duties. On *Shemini Atzeres*, he did not attend the *Hakufes* and his last wish was that, during his obituary at the synagogue where he worshipped, his composition for "*Enosh Kechatzir Yamav*"<sup>3</sup> should be sung. This request was carried out when he died, at the age of 93 [?].

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: From the locality of Błaszkowa (probably).]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: "For as Material (in the Hands of the Craftsman)", "Indeed It Is So" and "Ascend"; all three prayers are from the High Holidays liturgy.]

<sup>3</sup> [TN: "As for man, his days are as grass", Psalm 103:15.]