

Mojsze Chaim Tiberg

The *Shtiebel* of the Stryków *Chassidim*

The Stryków *Chassidim* established their first *shtiebel* in Częstochowa back in 5670 [1910], on ul. Garncarska, at Reb Jankel Dawidowicz's house.



*Reb Mordche Menachem
Ha'Cohen Kromolowski z'I*



Reb Berisz Tiberg z'I

The founders and main activists in setting up the *shtiebel* were my father Reb Berisz Tiberg and Reb Mordche Mendel Kromolowski. They were called “Stryków *Chassidim*” after the town where the *Rebbe*, Reb Menachem Mendel Landau, lived. He was the son of the *Rebbe* Reb Dov Berisz – the “First *Rebbe*” of Biała, who was the son of the prodigy, the *Rebbe* Awrum Landau, the “*Tzadik* of Ciechanów”. His grandson, the *Rebbe* Reb Awrum Landau, who is among the Torah giants in Israel, lives in Tel-Aviv and continues leading the magnificent Stryków dynasty, which is famous within Polish Chassidism.

Many different people prayed at the Stryków *shtiebel* in Częstochowa, with prominent figures amongst them. Therefore, the *shtiebel* was crowded even on weekdays, and on *Shabbes* and holidays – even more so. The people gathered there not only for prayer. The Chassidic meetings at the *shtiebel* attracted people and charmed its visitors. Anyone who came to the *shtiebel* felt that he had before whom to pour his heart out and receive aid in time of need.

At the *shtiebel*, there was no difference between wealthy and poor. Inside it, the simple Jew and the scholar walked together, arm in arm. There were no “aristocrats” and they knew nothing of an “Eastern Wall¹”, for everyone could choose to sit wherever they liked, both during prayers and for studying.

Despite the fact that the number of poor people at the *shtiebel* was larger than that of the rich, they always helped others beyond their means. Those in need were given loans large enough to rebuild businesses and establish them. It sometimes even happened that the debtors pulled through and returned the loans.

On weekdays, following morning prayers, people sat at the tables and studied or recited Psalms, *ma'amudes*² and the like. They also recapitulated the *Rebbe's* Torah teachings, told Chassidic stories and had friendly conversations. This pastime was very spiritually fulfilling. Sometimes this happened after the evening service and many stayed for a chat and to study Torah long into the night.

The *shtiebel* members organised rosters for visiting the sick, even to stay overnight. The sick man's household were, of course, unable to do everything for him, and our *Chassidim* helped them by staying by his side overnight, as well as giving important aid to the family.

¹ [TN: The front pews at the synagogue, which are usually reserved for important people.]

² [TN: Also pronounced Ma'amadot; a collection of verses from the Hebrew Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud that are to be recited each day of the week.]

All the *shtiebel's* congregation wore long caftans and the special hats that ultraorthodox Jews use, and were very strict in their observance of all the Halachic laws and traditions. On *Shabbes* and holidays, they wore *Samet*³ hats, *shtreimels* and silken caftans. Thus the Chassidic garb itself instilled a spirit of sanctity and festivity all around. Both children and adults wore these clothes. It was the custom to also wear these *Shabbes* garments for religious festive events, such as circumcisions, engagements and weddings.

On *Shabbes*, the *shtiebel* took on a distinct festive and warm atmosphere. On Friday, nearing the afternoon service, clean white tablecloths were spread on the tables. The floor was also spotless. The lighting was at its fullest. The *gabay*, Reb Mordche Mendel Kromołowski, took care that everything should be in its place, and the *shtiebel* - with its two rooms - filled up. When the words "*O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever*"⁴ [Psalm 136] were heard, each and every one felt the spirit of *Shabbes* inside him.

During the interval between *Minche* and the Welcoming of *Shabbes*, some of the *Chassidim* studied, while others discussed Chassidic topics amongst friends.

They always endeavoured that the leader of the prayer should be a good singer, with a pleasant voice, and the young men assisted him in singing Chassidic melodies.

On *Shabbes*, in the morning, it was their custom to start prayers later, for all the worshippers had fixed Torah studies before the service, at home or at the *shtiebel*.

The *gabay*, Reb Mordche Mendel, also read from the Torah scroll, and led the *Mysef* service on the High Holidays.

It should be mentioned that, among the youth at the *shtiebel*, there were also a few from "*Tzeirei*" and "*Ha'Chalutz Ha'Mizrachi*", such as Chune Tatarka, Uszer Gotesman [and] Awrum Dancyger *hy''d* who, when called up to the Torah, promised donations⁵ to "*Keren Kayemeth Le'Israel*" too, which was normally not acceptable among *Chassidim*. But the Stryków *Chassidim* usually tolerated this, because they were not opposed to Zionism.

On *Shabbes* afternoon, they would again gather at the *shtiebel* for various studies and, after *Minche*, the "Third Meal" was held. After the first morsel and drinking "*le'chaim*", came the songs, which followed a predetermined order. They sang the songs with the old, traditional melodies of Vurke, Biała and Aleksander.

The *gabay* honoured one the boys with the singing of "*Shir Hama'alos*"⁶, following which the blessing after the meal was said and, after the *Ma'ariv* prayer and *Havdulah* were said, all went home.

On Saturday nights, "*Melave Malke*"⁷ parties were held. There were also banquets on the *yuhrzeits* of the *Rebbes* and, occasionally, on the first of the [Hebrew] month.

³ [TN: Velvet; the *Samet* hats were worn by the bachelors and the *shtreimels* by the married men.]

⁴ [TN: Beginning of the Friday afternoon service.]

⁵ [TN: It is the custom to "pay" for the privilege of being called up to the Torah by promising to give a donation to charity after the Sabbath.]

⁶ [TN: "A Song of Ascents", Psalm 126; this psalm is sung at the end of the meal, before the post-prandial blessing is recited.]

⁷ [TN: "Escorting the Queen"; the name of a meal that is held after the *Shabbes* has ended.]

They would travel to the *Rebbe* for *Shabbes* or holidays and were careful not to go without a *shtreimel*. Usually, a group of *Chassidim* would travel together. It was the custom of the *shtiebel's* well-to-do that they would pay for the journeys of the less fortunate. Those returning would describe to those who had remained all the details of the "tables" and the Torah addresses they had heard.

The *shtiebel* was also honoured with important visitors, who came on behalf of the *Rebbe*. The visit from the *Rebbe's* son, Reb Berisz Landau from Piotrków, made a great impression. He stayed with Reb Berisz Tiberg, and many came to see him and received him with respectful awe.

On the days preceding the High Holidays, prayers were started before sunrise. On the High Holidays, the prayers were always led by Reb Majer Pilcer, who read *Mysef*, and Reb Mordche Menachem Kromołowski, who led "*Kol Nidrei*" and, sometimes, also the "*Neile*"⁸. The *shoifar* was blown by Reb Duwid Majer Liberman and, after he left Częstochowa, Reb Mojsze Leib Birencwajg blew in his place.

At the close of *Yom Kippur*, after the evening prayer, all parted company with great happiness and with wishes for a good and prosperous year and, immediately after the meal, they began building the *sukkah*.

"*Hakufes*" were held three times - on the nights of *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simches Torah*, and on the next day. During the "*Hakufes*", the joy at the *shtiebel* reached its peak and the singing and dancing continued for a long time.



During the First World War, the *shtiebel* was temporarily moved to home of Reb Michal Bram at Nowy Rynek 11 and, six months later, to ul. Strażacka 8. After the end of the War, an apartment was rented at the house of Reb Mojsze Fajgenbaum and, there, they prayed for about ten years. When the merging with the Zawiercie *Chassidim* took place in 5687 [1927], they moved to Reb Awrum Granek's house at ul. Warszawska 17. The unified *shtiebel* was considered one of the largest in town and its custodians were Reb Berisz Tiberg and Reb Chaim Szajn.

Some of the *shtiebel's* members included Nuta Icchok Tiberg, Szmul Goldberg, Majer Zonszajn (Pilcer), Mordche Menachem Kromołowski, Berisz Tiberg, Szmul Mendel Borzykowski, the *shoichet* Zajnwel Borzykowski, Szmul Gotesman, Szmul Finkel, Szyja Karmazin, Jakób Kromołowski, Natan Chabinski and his brother Józef, Hercke Herckowicz, Herszel Bialik, Mojsze Aron Przepiórka, Duwid Rapaport, Mendel Lewi, Jechiel Józef Bandet, Srul Ćmielówer, Awrum Fisz, Berisz Zajdman, Judl Aronowicz, Uszer Gotesman, Srul Elio Krymolowski, Nuchem Bandet, Benyumin Karmazin (Yemini), Wolf Zonszajn, Berl Finkel, Mojsze Chaim Tiberg, [and] Srul and Jakób Tiberg.

Before and [sic] after merging with the *Chassidim* of the Zawiercie *shtiebel*: Chanoch Leslau, Awrum Granek, Kasriel Lewenhof, Berisz Goldrajch, Duwid Majer Granek, Duwid Józef Brokman, Jona Wajzman, Mendel Pinches Kaufman, Chaskel Samsonowicz, Szlojme Majer Granek, Chaim Szajn, Mojsze Szaja, Leibisz Gnieslaw, Majer Szajn, Wolf Orensztajn, Icyk Ze'ev [Wolf] Niemiec, Chaim Lewenhof, Duwid Fajgenbaum, Jakób Leslau, Awrum Dancyger, Herszel Granek, Jakób Mojsze Gnieslaw, Mojsze Frajlich, Gecel Szczupak, Duwid Weksler, Juda Birenbaum, Zundel Kaufman, [and] Jakób and Reb Icchok Goldrajch.

⁸ [TN: "*Kol Nidrei*", Aramaic "All Vows"; "*Neile*". Heb. "Closing"; the opening and closing liturgies of *Yom Kippur*.]