

# On the First Steps of the Zionist Movement in Our City<sup>\*</sup>

(Excerpts From the Press)

In order to provide some concept of the first steps of the Zionist Movement in our city, we publish here several segments from articles printed in "*Ha'Tzfira*" [The Siren] in 5677 (1917), regarding Zionist activity in the city in those days.

Additionally, we also publish a list of the city's residents who, at that time, contributed to the fund for the settlement of the Land of Israel, who prayed in diverse synagogues and at the "*shtieblech*" [Chassidic prayer-houses].

This constitutes further proof that the Zionist ideal had, by then, already infiltrated different circles and strata and had sprouted deep roots amongst the Jewish population in our city.

## On Zionist Activity in Częstochowa

From the report read at the general assembly, held some weeks ago by the Częstochowa Zionist Union, we see that this union, which was founded eight months ago, has now two hundred members. The number of those buying *shekels* is over three hundred. In these eight months, 742 rubles have been collected for the "National Fund". The income for the local Zionist Organisation reached 667 rubles and its expenses were 695 rubles, including 168 rubles for the needs of the library and the reading room.

The library houses 700 volumes in Yiddish, 280 volumes in Hebrew and 180 volumes in other languages as well. The number of readers reaches up to eighty.

In the five Hebrew language study-groups, there are now 145 students.

The Zionists in this city are now engaged in the foundation of a Jewish high school as well. The general assembly decided to establish a commission for Zionistic propaganda, to establish a "*Daughters of Zion*" union, to hold debate-evenings on Hebrew literature and science, to open two tea-rooms for the local Jewish poor [and] also to establish, through the Zionist Council, a special "Relief Committee" which will engage in easing the material situation of poor Jewish residents.

Many young men and women have given a hand to the Zionist council to aid it in all these works.

"*Ha'Tzfira*" #4 (dated 23/03/1917)

## A Great Popular Assembly for the Acknowledgement of our National Rights in Poland and in the Land of Israel

During *chol hamoed Pesach* [weekdays of the Passover Festival], a great popular assembly was held in Częstochowa in which about six hundred people participated. Messrs. M. Mokraujer, A. Ickowicz, Ch. L. Librowicz, Sz. Horowicz, J. Gancwajg and J. Windman gave speeches. At the conclusion, Mr. Zandsztajn proposed two resolutions regarding the national rights of Jews in Poland and the future of [the people of] Israel in its ancestral land. Both resolutions were unanimously approved by all those gathered with great enthusiasm.

"*Ha'Tzfira*" #8 (dated 19/04/1917)

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\* Segments from the newspapers (from Y. Leslau's archive) that were gathered and copied verbatim by Ezriel Ben-Moshe.

### **The “Ha’Mizrachi” Union in Częstochowa**

In Częstochowa, too, a “Mizrachi” union was founded by Mr. I. L. Szczarański. Many important persons joined the union, including the local head of court, the Rabbi [and] prodigy Reb Nachum Asz. At the opening assembly, more than one hundred *shekels* were sold and [enough] money was collected to purchase one *dunam* [1000 m<sup>2</sup>; one-tenth of a hectare] in the Land of Israel as well. A committee was chosen, comprising Reb Józef Chaim Koblenz, Reb Sz. Goldsztajn, Reb A.H. Finkelsztajn, Reb I. Plocker, Reb I. M. Grinfeld, Reb G. Turner and Reb Ch. Weksler.

“Ha’Tzfira” #16 (dated 14/06/1917)

### **Shekel Days in Częstochowa**

On the week of *parshas Korach* [Numbers 16:1–18:32; usually read in June or July], “*shekel days*” were held here. Besides the proclamations issued by the Municipal Council to our city’s residents regarding the value of the *shekel*, a large popular assembly was held at the “*Harmonia*” hall as well. Excellent speeches were given by Messrs. N. Gerichter, M. Mokraujer, Messer, the “Mizrachi” Windman, Ickowicz and Zandsztajn. Those gathered unanimously accepted the resolution that was agreed upon at the *shekel* buyers’ assembly in Warsaw.

This great assembly was concluded by singing the “*Hatikvah*” [Zionistic hymn, later to become the Israeli National Anthem].

“HaTzfira” #15 [should say #19] (dated 07/05/1917)

### **Dr Yehoshua Gottlieb in Częstochowa**

Dr Yehoshua Gottlieb has, in the past few days, given two important speeches here, which made a great impression on the multitude of listeners, who filled the hall each time.

“Ha’Tzfira” #19 (dated 07/05/1917)

### **The Election of Seven Delegates to the Zionist Council**

On the first day of *chol hamoed Pesach*, a general assembly of the *shekel* buyers was held at the “*Harmonia*” hall in our city, regarding the election of delegates for the coming Zionist Council. At the start of the assembly, the Chairman Mr. Mokraujer announced that our city could choose seven delegates. Mr. Zandsztajn, a member of the Central Council, delivered a short report on the activities of the Central Council in Zionist issues, Hebrew politics and culture and explained the importance of the coming Council. A few members of “*Tzeirei Zion*” [Youth of Zion] criticised the Central Council’s attitude towards Yiddish in the schools. One criticised the Council for no longer taking an interest in the “*Scouting*” Movement. Messrs. Horowicz and Zandsztajn responded to these critics’ words. Following debates, elections were held and, as delegates for the Council, these gentlemen were chosen: [Messrs.] Koblenz, Mokraujer, Gerichter, Finkelsztajn, Zandsztajn, Ickowicz and Szajewicz.

“Ha’Tzfira” #32 (dated 10/17/1917)

## Preparations for the Elections for the Community Management

On the second day of *chol hamoed Pesach*, a public assembly was called by the Municipal Zionist Council regarding the elections for the management of the community. The assembly was opened with a short speech by Mr. Gerichter, in which he explained that the goal of this assembly is to unite the scattered forces and to choose a national committee, which will be engaged energetically with these elections' affairs. Mr. Zandsztajn lectured on the new regulations concerning community arrangements and their value for the organisation of the communities in Poland and pointed out the main fault in the matter - that they regard us only as a "general religious" [group] when in reality we are a Nation with national needs like all live nations and he explained the situation in our city, that in the beginning, they wished to divide our residents too into two *curiae* [Lat. groupings of the citizenry] but the nationalists succeeded in averting this danger and here there will only be one *curia*. Mr. Librowicz delivered a historical overview of the development of the *kehilla* in Poland. Mr. Aronowicz expounded the workers' point of view, that the workers' attitude towards the new *kehilla* was positive because it was engaged not only in religious matters, but in national ones as well. Messrs. D. and Sz. Horowicz also spoke. The assembly decided not to elect an "Elections Committee", but to allow the Zionist Council to call a larger assembly on this subject.

"*Ha'Tzfira*" #33 (from 10/11/1917)

## Conference of Jewish Athletes

During two days, a conference of the "Scouts" in Poland was held in our city. Mr. Z. Wajcman from Warsaw gave a lecture entitled "*The World View of Jewish Scouts*" which provoked passionate debates. All the orators, almost all of whom spoke in Polish, share the opinion that the "Scouts" need to be nationalist Jews, but they disagree on the issues of political involvement, the attitude towards religion, culture and other principal matters.

The question as to whether this conference would elect a Central Council to stand at the head of the General Jewish Scouts Organisation in Poland or if, temporarily, just a Central Commission to manage the work until the next conference, provoked lengthy debates. It was decided to appoint a five-member commission to which were chosen Messrs. W. Wajcman and Nartenstein from Warsaw, Mr. Lewi from Łódź, Mr. Szajewicz from Częstochowa and Mr. Ellenchwajg from Kielce. It was proposed that the "Scouts" be named "*Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair*" [The Young Guard] and that the greeting between two members should be the word "*shmor*" [Heb. guard, IMP].

Mr. Wajcman delivered the closing address of the assembly in which he called the delegates and the youth to diligent national work and finished his emphatic speech with the acclamation "*Chazak Ve'ematz*"! [Be strong and of a good courage (Joshua 1:6)] - "*Shmor!*", answered all those gathered, very enthusiastically. Mr. Mirowski, from Kraków, gave a short speech in which he announced that he would send regards from the "Scouts" in Poland to those in Galicia and finished his words with the call: "*Long live the Hebrew people, long live the Hebrew guard!*" - "*Shmor!*", again the congregation's response reverberated. And while singing "*Hatikvah*", the assembled exited the conference hall.

This conference has laid the foundation for the General Jewish Scouts Organisation in Poland. At the forthcoming General Zionist Council, Mr. Wajcman will give a special lecture about this movement and organisation and, doubtlessly, regiments of "*Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair*" will arise everywhere and raise us strong-bodied and brave-spirited Hebrews.

"*Ha'Tzfira*" #33 (dated 10/11/1917)

### **“Ha’Mizrachi’s” Contributions to Buying a *Dunam* of Ground in the Land of Israel**

The “Ha’Mizrachi” Union has donated one *dunam* of ground to commemorate the Union’s foundation. The contributors: Reb Anczel Warszawski, Reb Szmul Goldsztajn, Reb A. Finkelsztajn, M. Wajnsztok, J. Sz. Koblenz, I. M. Grinfeld - each one 5 [marks]; M. Sudowicz 4 marks; Reb Nuta Turner, Reb Izrail Plocker - 3 marks each.

“Ha’Tzfira” #33 (dated 10/11/1917)

### **Opening Ceremony of the Hebrew High School**

Last Sunday, the opening ceremony for the Hebrew High School was celebrated here. The celebration was held at the Main Synagogue, with the attendance of a large crowd of men and women, the latter - in the women’s section.

The local Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Nachum Asz, gave an important Hebrew speech on the subject of “Torah and *Derech Eretz* [common decency]”. Following the Rabbi, the Inspector of Public Schools, *Herr* Mikula, spoke on behalf of the civil German government. The Zionist Mokraujer and the High School’s Director, Dr Berysz, also spoke. The cantor sang various melodies. The celebration made a very great impression on all the townspeople.

“Ha’Tzfira” #34 (dated 10/18/1917)

### **The Second Assembly Regarding Preparations for the Community Council Elections**

Last *Motzei Shabbes* [the evening immediately following *Shabbes*, i.e., Saturday night], the second assembly of the Zionist Council, regarding elections to the management of our Jewish community, was held. Mr. Mokraujer opened the assembly and the floor was given to Mr. Zandsztajn, who lectured on the state of this issue in our city. After various debates, a committee of thirty persons was chosen to manage the elections in our city. Among the members of the committee are the leaders of the Zionists.

“Ha’Tzfira” #35 (dated 10/25/1917)

### **Rabbi Y.L. Zlotnik’s visit in Częstochowa**

These forthcoming days, the Rabbi [and] prodigy, Reb Y.L. Zlotnik, head of court at Gąbin, will deliver a lecture on “*Our Task in This Hour*”, which was arranged by “*HaMizrachi*”.

“HaTzfira” #35 (from 10/25/1917)

### **The General Assembly of “Tzeirei Zion”**

On Cheshvan 12<sup>th</sup> [October 28<sup>th</sup>], the first General Assembly of the “*Tzeirei Zion*” Union, which was founded not long ago in our city, was held on the Zionist Union’s premises.

Mr. Dawid Kon opened the assembly with a short speech and suggested nominating Mr. Izaak Mordka Finkelsztajn as chairman of the conference. Mr. Finkelsztajn thanked the assembled for the honour they had given him and invited the members Abram Niemiec and Michał Ajdelman to the Presidential Board and member Szlojme Fiszman as Secretary.

Member Izrail Gancwajch was given the floor. He lectured on the Zionist movement in general and in particular about the attitude of youth towards it.

Member Luzor Plocker read a report, from which it is seen that the Union already has around seventy members, has held two lectures for its members and has sent a special delegate to the Zionist Council.

Afterwards, Member Plocker read the regulations, which were approved unanimously after heated debates and then they went on to members' suggestions.

Member Gancwajch demanded that members, who know the Hebrew language, be nominated to the Council of Members to manage the Union's activities in its spirit.

Member Messer spoke about democracy in Zionism and ended with a plea to the members to work together for the Zionist cause.

Member Plocker spoke about Zionism in the past century and its present status, on the changes Zionism went through in favour of working in the present, on the Zionist ideal coming close to the masses and, at the end, he noted the spirit of democracy that has permeated Zionism lately and voiced his opinion that one the main activities of the "*Tzeirei Zion*" Union must be learning the Hebrew and Yiddish languages and their literature [and to] strengthen and propagate the Zionist cause through idealisation of Zionism and Nationalism amongst youth, in general, and among the Union's members in particular.

A few members were opposed to Member Plocker's plan. Member Wierzbicki noted that he considers Yiddish a "jargon".

Member Gancwajch recommended protesting against Member Plocker, who wished to turn our Union into a new type "proletariat".

Member Markowicz voiced his opinion in favour of the Hebrew language as the teaching language.

At the end, Member Plocker responded to the debaters and they proceeded to the elections. To the Committee were chosen the Members Luzor Plocker, Jakob Turner, Zelig Rapoport, Izaak Mordka Finkelsztajn, Michał Ajdelman, Abram Niemiec, Abram Wierzbicki, Abram Szczekacz [and] Izrail Gancwajch. As deputies, Members Henoeh Lewenhof, Chaim Jakob Messer and Szlojme Fiszman were chosen. The Supervising Commission will be members Jonatan Krakowski, Mojsze Rozenwajg and Henoeh Laks.

*"Ha'Tzfira"* #41 (dated 12/06/1917)

### **On the Hebrew High School**

The Jewish High School, which opened here at the beginning of the scholastic year, for adolescent boys and girls in two special buildings, is developing in a very desirable manner. For the time being, [two sets of] four preparatory classes and [two sets of] three elementary classes have been opened and there are also parallel preparatory classes and grades. The number of male and female pupils already reaches 360, the number of teachers is twenty and of those, for Hebrew studies - five. The majority of the students are sons of Orthodox Jews and those in the fourth grade have already

studied the Talmud and have good knowledge, especially of Rashi\* on the Pentateuch, with all the *midrashim* [ancient commentaries] that he quotes. The school is fitted out with all the most appropriate learning equipment and also already has a wealthy library of different languages. This school has quite a good future in our city, as long as its directors and teachers, with the honourable Director Dr Berysz at the head, pay proper attention to the pupils' parents' valid demands, the majority of whom, as mentioned, are Orthodox Jews and their children were and are being educated in their homes in the spirit of Jewish tradition.

*"Ha'Tzfira"* #43 (dated 20/12/1917)

### **Zionist Activities**

- The Zionist idea is increasingly securing adherents in all social strata of our people; *"Ha'Mizrachi"* has rented a large complex and is proceeding towards fruitful work. It has founded the *"Tzeirei Ha'Mizrachi"* Union, which has established Talmud and Judaism lessons and a Hebrew library. The *"Tzeirei Zion"* organisation was founded and a new community council will soon be elected and attempts are made that proponents of all the Zionist tendencies be admitted to this council, so that it will serve as a "central committee" for all the work in the city.

- Last week, *"Ha'Mizrachi"* organised two lectures by Mr. I. Nisenbaum from Warsaw on *"Zionism and Orthodoxy"* and *"The People and the Land"*. On both evenings, the hall was full of listeners, who paid special attention to the orator's words, and *"Ha'Mizrachi"* acquired many sympathisers.

### **County Zionist Conference**

- In the forthcoming days, a conference of Zionists from the county cities will be held here.

*"Tzfira"* #43 (dated 20/12/1917)

### **On the Collection of Funds, in Częstochowa, for the Settlement of the Land of Israel**

In *"HaTzfira"*, dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 1917, a general list was published of the funds raised, in different cities with Częstochowa among them, for the settlement of the Land of Israel.

We have found it necessary to list the names of the prayer-houses in our city, and they are:

The *"Maggid's"* synagogue; Czortków *Chassidim*; *"Agudas Achim"* [Union of Brothers]; *"Ohel Yaakov"* [Tent of Jacob]; Krumlov *Chassidim*; *"Kruk's"* synagogue; The New Synagogue; Aleksander *Chassidim*; *"Machzikei HaDas"* [Upholders of Religion]; *"Radomsker shtiebel"* [prayer-house of the Radomsko (in Łódź) *Chassidim*]; the Pilica *Chassidim's* synagogue and others.

This list proves how much the Zionist ideal had been propagated among our city's Jews that at prayer-houses of the *Chassidim*, such as Czortków, Radomsko, Aleksander, Pilica and even *"Machzikei HaDas"*, it was possible to collect funds for the settlement of the Land of Israel, which was unfeasible in most Jewish towns in Poland.

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\* [Translator's note: Rashi is an acronym for Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, a medieval French rabbi who wrote the most widely spread commentary on the Pentateuch, the Talmud and many other books]

### Częstochowa's Participation in an Action for "Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael" in 5677 (1917)

In "Ha'Tzfira" #19 from 15<sup>th</sup> Tamuz [5<sup>th</sup> July] 5677, the proceedings for "Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael" between 13<sup>th</sup> Elul 5676 [11<sup>th</sup> September 1916] and 1<sup>st</sup> Nisan 5677 [24<sup>th</sup> March 1917] are published as follows [n German marks]:

For Herzl's Forest	<i>M</i> 90
From the "Blue Box"	<i>M</i> 4.16
For war victims	<i>M</i> 272.66
For "diverse donations"	<i>M</i> 103.40
<b>Total :</b>	<b><i>M</i> 470.22</b>

In "Ha'Tzfira" #38 from 30<sup>th</sup> Cheshvan 5678 (15/11/1917), the proceedings for "Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael" between 1<sup>st</sup> Nisan 5677 [24<sup>th</sup> March 1917] and 1<sup>st</sup> Tishrei 5678 [17<sup>th</sup> September 1917] are published as follows [n German marks]:

For the redemption of the land	<i>M</i> 303
Vouchers and telegrams	<i>M</i> 32
War victims	<i>M</i> 311.21
Herzl's forest	<i>M</i> 31.70
From the Blue Box	<i>M</i> 58.27
Diverse donations	<i>M</i> 204.96
<b>Total:</b>	<b><i>M</i>941.14</b>