

Naftali Grebowski

A Bunch of Flowers

(in commemoration of “*Keren Hayesod*” Public Figures in Częstochowa)

During ten uninterrupted years, I visited Częstochowa as the representative of “*Keren Hayesod’s*” central bureau in Warsaw.

Every year, I met there with many people to conduct the annual collection for “*Keren Hayesod*”.

There, I became friends with many public figures dedicated to this holy enterprise and I wish to take note of some among them, whom I particularly loved and esteemed, and they are:

Jechiel Jochimowicz - a wealthy Jewish brick factory owner, who read and studied; well-versed in literature, he also wrote in excellent Hebrew.

He was the chairman of “*Keren Hayesod*” in Częstochowa and this appointment was, for him, not a crown with which to adorn himself, but a task with which he engaged daily with commitment, as if he were doing it in order to receive payment in this world.

His entire focus was always on “*Keren Hayesod’s*” affairs. He paid special attention that the bills given to it be cashed on time and, if someone among the donors fell behind in his payments, Jochimowicz did not waste time, but went to him to demand what was due and continued demanding until he collected the “debt”.

When the time for the annual collection for “*Keren Hayesod*” came, he became literally “*swift as a gazelle*” [Pirkei Avot 5, M.20]. From dawn till dusk, he acted personally and made others act as well.

But Jochimowicz also had a “dangerous rival” in this work and he was the famous Zionist public figure, - Abram Gerszonowicz who, upon hearing that on one of the “collection” days Jochimowicz had found more donors than had he, he became “*brave as a lion*” [also there, same *mishna*], working relentlessly to continue and receive “first place” in the practical results of the fundraising.



*Szmul Horowicz, may God
avenge his blood*

This contest, in the city of commerce and industry Częstochowa, was given the title customary in the world of commerce - “*konkurentn*” [competitors]. But this “competition” was in heaven’s name, which increases its doers’ honour!

There was another “perfect pair” in the city. They were:

Szmul Horowicz - the son of a renowned industrialist in Częstochowa, an engineer by trade, who was the permanent Secretary for “*Keren Hayesod*” in his city.

Once “*Keren Hayesod’s*” fundraiser had been announced in Częstochowa, the management of “Horowicz and Partners Factory” already knew that its “control” over this young engineer had ceased and that, from

then on, he would dedicate himself entirely to his service as representative of “*Keren Hayesod*”. He fulfilled its “orders” to the letter (the pain and sorrow are very great when mentioning that this young public figure was shot by the Nazis in his parents’ factory yard, back in 1942).

A positive mention should also be made of Reb Juda Engel, the Chairman of “*Ha’Mizrachi*” in Częstochowa, who despite being already in old age and a debilitated man, spared no effort and did not even consider the heart condition from which he suffered and would scramble up the stairs of the top floors to find supporters for the enterprise of building the Land of Israel!

There were, in this city, two other Zionist public workers, who were nicknamed “the happy couple” and who were really a kind of “match from heaven”.

When collection days for “*Keren Hayesod*” arrived, they joined forces and worked as a team for fundraising success.

Although all year round they both had different views in their public lives, for “*Keren Hayesod*” they became one entity and did much for the collection’s success.

The first, Reb Józef Blechszajn, one of “*Ha’Mizrachi’s*” public figures, was a pious Jew, adorned with a well-groomed beard and dressed with long vestments, in the Chassidic manner. His “other half” was Dr Rozen, a scholar in the European style and also with Jewish learning. For the fundraising cause, these two became literally “one flesh”. They would run about together from house to house, from the afternoon hours until late at night, making souls for “*Keren Hayesod*”.

Nothing deterred them from going. They did not heed the great cold, the snow and even the torrential rains that sometimes fell when they “went out to work”.

(All those who I’ve mentioned and, with them, dozens of trusted public workers, who always dreamed of their personal emigration to the Land of Israel, did not have that privilege. They were burned alive together with the millions of our martyrs in Poland.

May these few words, which I have dedicated to their memory, serve as a modest bunch of flowers on their non-existent “graves”, to their holy dust that ascended to heaven!

Glory and honour to their good deeds and holy memory!)

Naftali Grebowski was one of the first activists for “Keren Hayesod” in Poland, first as manager of its bureau for the Wilna region and, later, as counsellor-organiser of the national bureau in Warsaw.

Częstochowa was one of the important cities that he visited annually. He was saved together with his family, immigrated to Palestine in 1940 and settled in Tel-Aviv. When news came of the annihilation of Polish Jewry, he was struck by serious heart disease that put an end to his magnificent and very active life.

The deceased wrote this article in May 1944 in Yiddish and was first published in the book “Tshenstokhover Yidn”.

The Editors



Seated (first row) from right to left: Mrs. Kremski, Mrs. Cygler, Mrs. Weksler, Dr Mering, N. Grebowski, L. Joffe, J. Jochimowicz, Dr A. Bram, Felix Szapira, Ch. Weksler, L. Kopinski, M. Horowicz and N. Dawid Berliner