

The Book Committee

The Judaic Institute

Among the institutions which brought prestige to our city and made it famous in the Jewish world, even outside the borders of Poland, the Judaic Institute must be mentioned. It was founded by the rabbi of the New Synagogue, Dr Ch.Z. Hirszberg shortly after his arrival to Częstochowa. (He is now a professor at the university named after Rabbi Meir Berlin - Bar-Ilan).

Dr Hirszberg, himself one of the most important sages and a great expert on Judaic Studies [*Wissenschaft des Judentums*], understood that the foundation of a Jewish Judaic Institute, and setting it on a high academic level, would greatly attract youth, who strove to enrich their knowledge of Judaic Studies from its original sources.

Dr Hirszberg was someone who acted on his word and immediately, after publicising his plan, dozens of young men enrolled - students in the higher grades at high school, study-hall lads and even young married men who were boarding with their in-laws – [and] not only from Częstochowa, but also from other cities in Poland.

Dr Hirszberg opened the institute at the New Synagogue.

The very fact that Dr Hirszberg had allowed himself to set it up at this so-called “German” synagogue, which was a nest of assimilationist circles, produced enthusiasm throughout the city and generated great respect, even amongst the most hard-bitten assimilationist worshippers of the New Synagogue.

Over time, Dr Hirszberg made an effort and succeeded in bringing about that [the idea] that “new winds” should blow here also. The Nationalist spirit prevailed in these circles as well and Zionism was also reinforced there.

A large library was created at the synagogue, where Hebrew and Yiddish books were at the forefront.

Mr Turner was appointed librarian. He always endeavoured to continuously enlarge it with the best books, including those on Judaic Studies.

The institute’s festive inauguration, held on 14th January 1937, was attended by Warsaw rabbi, Senator Prof Mojżesz Schorr who, in his lecture on “*The Origins of Judaism*”, denoted the main foundations of Judaism, according to the Talmudic sources. In the subsequent part of his brilliant lecture, Prof Schorr elaborated on the foundations of Judaic Studies in old and new Hebrew literature during the different eras, since its blossoming in Spain to the period of the Renaissance.

Kehilla Prezes, Mr Rozenberg, in his congratulatory speech, pointed out the great significance of the institute being created precisely at a time when our enemies desired to obliterate everything Jewish - both materially and spiritually. Here was being opened an institute of Jewish wisdom, which for all generations had been the armour that protected the Jewish People from downfall.

Dr Hirszberg spoke of his plans and about the pledges from various Men of Academia - among them, the former senator Dr M. Brojda, Prof Tauber, Director of the Teachers' Seminary in Warsaw, and Assoc. Prof Sztajn, who had promised him their aid by coming, from time to time, to lecture at the institute on current Judaic Studies topics.

The Judaic Institute developed very nicely, until Dr Hirszberg's departure from Częstochowa (at the beginning of Hitler's invasion).