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Josef¹ never knew his grandfathers. He only knew his maternal grandmother, Rywka. Her maiden name was Rudnik². For many years, she lived together with Josef's parents and helped in the work to earn a livelihood.

Josef's father, Duwid Szalit, was an employee in a liquor warehouse, which was located on ul. Tylna [later Strażacka]. Josef's father dressed in long [Chassidic] garb, but also wore a stiff collar and trimmed his beard³. He prayed at the *Rozprzer*⁴ *shtiebel*, and travelled to the *Rozprzer Rebbe* to seek his advice when he found himself in a critical situation. Josef's mother, Gucia, ran a tavern on ul. Garncarska.

Josef was born in the town of Warta, in the building where the tavern was situated. The correct birth dates of him and all his brothers and sisters, even marking the exact hour of their births, were listed in a Jewish religious book. That little book no longer exists but, according to his official Russian passport and from his subsequent Polish one, Josef was born on 24th March 1892. As it turns out, he was incorrectly registered, because his father later mentioned that he had done this so that his older brother Zalman should not be too far removed in years from Josef, so as to be granted certain concessions when he was called up for military service.

When the law, forbidding Jews to run taverns with liquor, was passed, Josef's family moved to the other end of ul. Garncarska, near the Old Market [Stary Rynek], next to the Old Synagogue and Study-Hall. As a consequence of the monopoly on liquor that had been implemented, their father lost his long-standing position with Kruk (Dr Josef Kruk's father). But, to make amends, he exerted his influence and was issued a licence to open a beer tavern [without hard liquor].

It was a difficult struggle to make a living. His mother, the eldest sister Hinda and even Granny Rywka, worked hard to squeeze out a livelihood for the whole household. Josef's eldest brother Szaja studied at the Study-Hall. His older brother Zalman was already going to school and preparing to enter the *progimnazjum* [middle school] and he, Josef, was attending *cheder*.

When Josef went to *cheder*, which consisted of just a few pupils, he became friends with a boy, Lajzer. Their friendship lasted until the most mature years of their youth. The *cheder* was on ul. Nadrzeczna, not far from the *Kastens* [Crates⁵] by the Warta. In the winter, Josef would

¹ [TN: We have retained the original illuminated letters at the head of each chapter, even though they are in Hebrew characters.]

² [TN: According to R. Federman's memoirs "From My Life", in "Czenstochover Yidn", Rywka Rudnik was the real name of his maternal grandmother. Throughout the translation of this book, we have added certain details from those memoirs in brackets.]

³ [TN: A stiff collar would have been considered vain and modern by Chassidim, while trimming one's beard is a Kabbalistic prohibition which is strictly observed by all Chassidim.]

⁴ [TN: The *Rozprza* Chassidic group was part of the Przedbórz Chassidic dynasty.]

⁵ [TN: As explained in the introduction to *Sefer Częstochowa*, Vol. I, the "Kastens" were "the crates put in this location by the fishermen and in which they kept the fish they caught in the river Warta.]

go to *cheder* very early, while it was still dark outside. Little Josef carried a burning lantern in his hand.

As a child, Josef was extremely obedient and pious. When his mother had no time to make the *bruche*⁶ with him, he would run round to their neighbour Reb Isumor [Joskowicz] – a Jew with a broad beard and large spectacles on his nose, who looked like a rabbi, he would make the *bruches* along with him. Otherwise, Josef refused to taste anything. Reb Isumor was very fond of Josef and had great influence upon him.

With his father, Josef went to pray at the *Rozprzer shtiebel* and, more than once, tagged along on a journey to the *Rebbe* in Rozprza. The people from the *shtiebel*, who remained in Josef's memory, are those who led the prayers on holidays - Reb Kasriel⁷, Reb Icze-Majer [Frank] and [Reb] Mojsze-Szabse. The one whom Josef remembers most intensely is Reb Icze-Majer [Frank] - a tall Jew, always with a pipe in his mouth. He traded in furs and was the leader of the prayer services at the *shtiebel*, which had been set up inside his own building. On *Rosh Hashune*⁸, Reb Icze-Majer led the *Mysef*⁹ service and blew the *shoifer*¹⁰ himself. His sons Josl and Szmul were his supporting singers.

Josef recalls one instance when Icze-Majer's eldest son Josl - a lad with a fine, long face and curled *payes* [sidelocks] - disobeyed his father in something and received from him such a blow, that one of his teeth fell out¹¹. From then onwards, Josef became very frightened of his father.

The other prayer leader, Reb Kasriel, was a Jew of ample build, and a merry, singing and good-natured one. Josef remembers him best at his *Simchas Torah* dances - Reb Kasriel's enthusiasm really swept along the little Josef. Incidentally, as a boy, Josef was also famed for dancing a Cossack [dance] on *Simchas Torah*. Year in and year out, the finale of the Chassidic dancing at the *shtiebel* was - "Josef is going to dance a Cossack!"

As a result of Josef's dancing prowess, all the boys in the *shtiebel* became his friends, including Szmul, Icze-Majer's younger son. Although Szmul was better at his studies than Josef, Szmul nevertheless bonded with Josef. Everyone knew Josef, because it was from his father that the barrels of beer for all the *Melave Malkes*¹² [at the *shtiebel*] were bought, and more than once, the boys hauled the barrels of beer down the street from the tavern to the *shtiebel* together with Josef.

There were two other little sisters after Josef – Cirla and Rajzla. Josef does not exactly remember their birth. He only has a dim recollection of his mother laying in convalescence

⁶ [TN: Heb., "blessing" (ברכה); brief prayer made before ingesting any food or drink, akin to Christian "grace", without which Halacha forbids even tasting the food. When a child is still too young to say the blessing by himself, he is encouraged to seek out an older individual to say it with him before tasting the food or drink.]

⁷ [TN: In "From My Life", the memoirs of R. Federman published in "Czenstochover Yidn", this individual appears as Reb Jankiel Kielczyglowski.]

⁸ [TN: In keeping with this work's historical context, we have rendered all the Hebrew words in it as pronounced by the Polish Jews at the time, regardless of their pronunciation in modern Israeli/Sephardic Hebrew.]

⁹ [TN: Heb., "additional"; the second part of morning prayer service, which is only "added" on Shabbes or holidays.]

¹⁰ [TN: Heb., ritual ram's horn blown on Rosh Hashune.]

¹¹ [TN: This same story – although not verbatim – and many other details regarding the Frank family may be found in the book "Czenstochov" (1958), in the article "Szmul Frank and His Family" (pp. 147-151), also by R. Federman.]

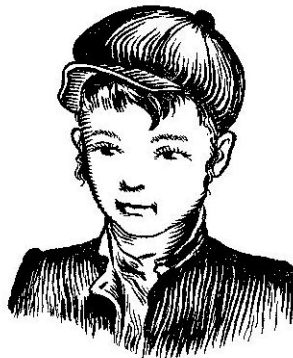
¹² [TN: Heb., "Seeing off the Queen"; festive meal held on Saturday night to see the Shabbes off, usually held not long after the night has fallen.]

with the youngest, Rajzla. But what he does remember very well is when Rajzla, a gloriously beautiful little girl four or five years of age, suddenly contracted scarlet fever and soon afterwards died. This was a great misfortune at home. The mother and father were not allowed to attend the funeral¹³. He remembers how, for long years, his father, and especially his mother, would not lay down to sleep before having thoroughly wept over the great tragedy. He remembers how he would go to the Old Cemetery and gaze for hours on end at the little tombstone upon which [the words] “Here lies Rajzla Szalit” and the dates of her birth and death were inscribed. As a result, he became even more attached to his youngest sister, Cirla.

The financial situation in Josef’s home was far from brilliant. Even though his parents owned a tavern, a small piece of herring was quite a lucky find for the children! Their mother would only give them the leftover head or tail of the herring. They had to eat buns without butter.

The constant fear of the *smoczykes*¹⁴ (*revisoren*) was great. In the tavern, they also sold [hard] liquor in a clandestine manner. Their mother, or Josef’s older sister Frajdla, would carry the bottle of liquor under their aprons, and they only sold it to Jews or to Christians whom they knew very well. More than once, the *smoczykes* sniffed the glasses to determine whether liquor had been served in them. Once caught, it took a considerable *tapówka* (bribe) for the “transgression” to be wiped clean.

Josef’s father grew weary of this business and the constant frights, and he began to seek some new source of income.



¹³ [TN: Although very rare, there are precedents in Judaism of parents not being allowed to attend their children’s funerals due to excessive grief.]

¹⁴ [TN: “Smoczek” was the nickname given in Poland to a Russian governmental official in charge of investigating businesses, who was officially called “nadsmotrszczyk” (надсмотрщик). The German/Polish word used to translate it, “revisor” or “rewizor”, means “auditor/investigator”.]