

## 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1917 in Żarki

Many memories come to mind regarding the life of the youth in our town of Żarki, and no small number of them will have found their expression in the words of those who have taken the initiative upon themselves to publish this compilation. I have no doubt that quite a lot has been written about our master and teacher, the father of Zionism in our *shtetl*, Kopel Minc z"l.

The date - 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1917 - the day upon which the Balfour Declaration was issued – was particularly etched upon my young heart. I must admit that I was young and I did not grasp the full significance of the event. But the heart of the masses was in the right place and all the townsfolk filled the *shtetl*'s houses of worship, their excitement and enthusiasm reaching such heights that they said the *Hallel*<sup>1</sup> prayer.

On one of those days, the local Zionist Organisation also held a mass meeting and I, too, was drawn there. I shall never forget the speech given on that day by Kopel Minc, who was a talented and fiery orator. He opened and closed his address with the same three words which were uttered with a stressed intonation, "*Am kam le'tchiya!*" [Heb., "A nation is resurrected!"]. This was an assembly day of sorts for all those who had decided to join the town's Zionist camp, and this day has therefore remained etched in my memory.



*Shomrim group*

Zionist and social activity in the *shtetl*, first of all, took the form of cultural activity, which was centred on the renowned library. In due course, the idea arose to establish a *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair* cell, which encompassed some twenty youngsters with their first counsellor, Mordche Rottenberg. This small nucleus was eventually to absorb the majority of Żarki youth in general. Only a few active members of this organisation were able to make it to the Land [of Israel]. The hand of the accursed

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: Special prayer of thanksgiving which is only said on occasions of monumental communal rejoicing.]

oppressor reached the vast majority of them and they were unable to fulfil their dream of joining the builders of the country.

May their memory be etched on our hearts ever more.

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