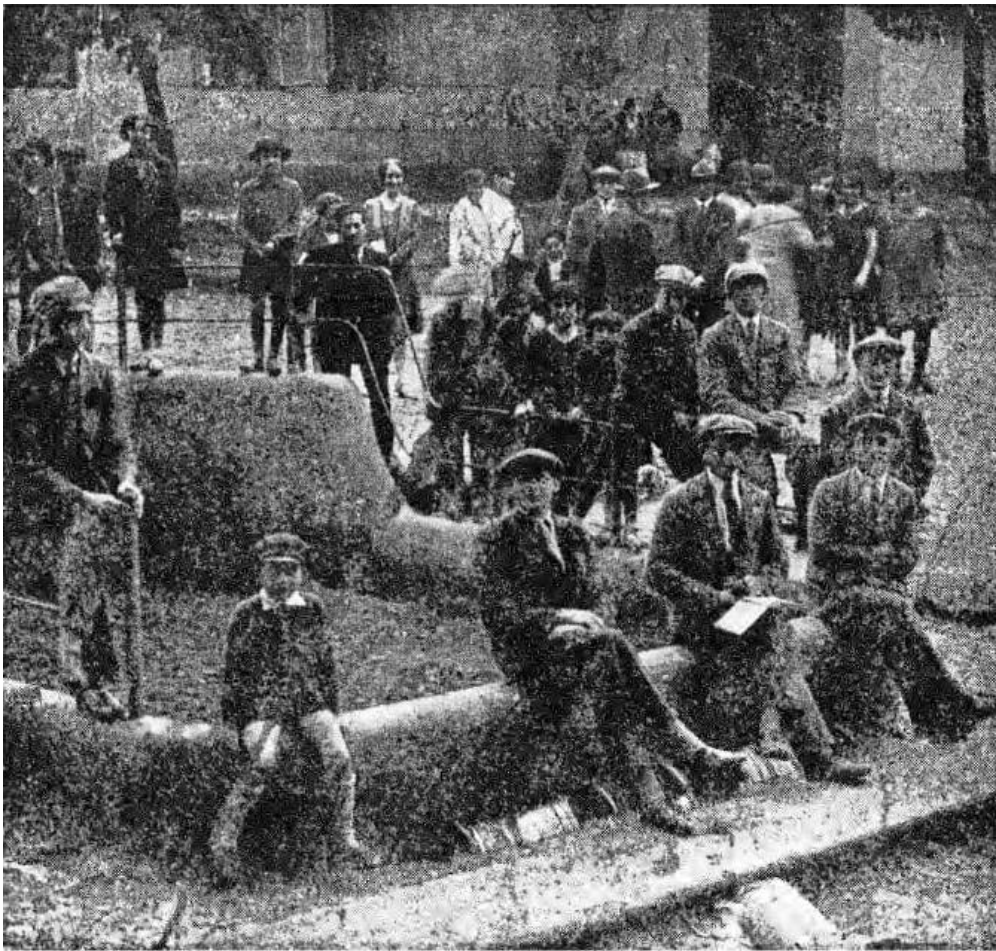


The Spring in Leśniów (*Der Stuk*) [The ?¹]

*In memory of my father Cwi Siwek z''l,
who was called "Herszl Blacharz" [Tinsmith].*

Who among us, natives of Żarki, does not recall the famous spring in Leśniów, which was distinguished for its beauty and its crystalline waters and with which so many pleasant memories from the days of our childhood and adolescence are connected?



The famous spring in Leśniów

How we loved, not only spending time there [and] not only drinking of its water, but also crouching down and watching how its waters incessantly burst out and surged forth, as if an invisible hand were directing their course.

The spring was the source of the stream - "*Die Rzeka*" - which literally passed through the heart of the *shtetl*, with the *Mikvah*, the Study-hall and the Synagogue on one bank and the tanneries on the other. And [even] if, as children, we dared not approach the spring itself for fear little *shkutzim*

¹ [TN: "*Stuk*," in Russian, Polish, and Yiddish, means "knock/rap/patter," but we have as yet been unable to ascertain the word's definition within this context; perhaps it was used in ref. to the sound made by the gurgling water.]

might fall upon us (the spring was in a Gentile area), inside the town itself, next to the Synagogue, we knew no fear and we enjoyed both playing in the sand of its beaches and in its pure water. Right next to the spring stood a huge Christian church which, year after year, drew to it thousands of Christian pilgrims from many towns and villages, all of whom congregated by the spring, carrying with them numerous banners and icons - including those of the Holy Mary.

My father z"l - who was a tinsmith by trade - worked many times in this church, mending the roof and the tall steeple and he would have conversations with the church's priest. He told me that, once in one of his talks with the priest, he asked him why the place was considered so sacred by the Christians. And this is what the priest said, "Many years ago - even before the town of Żarki was established and before the area was surrounded by woods - a cart passed through this place, carrying an icon of the Holy Mary and this cart was tethered to two oxen. When the cart reached the spot where the church now stands, the oxen refused to go on, as they were thirsty. And there was no water all around. To the amazement of those accompanying the icon of the Holy Mary, the Earth opened up its mouth and water surged forth from a spring. Once the oxen had drunk their fill, they went on towards Częstochowa and, since then, the location of the spring has become hallowed among all Christian believers".

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