

⤵ [Chof/Kaf]

Chłopak, Sura-Ruchla¹



Daughter of Jakub-Dawid and Rywa-Laja [Laja-Rywka] Fiszman; born in 1871 in Częstochowa. Arrived in America in 1920. She lives together with her children.

Chłopak, Dawid



Son of Lajb and Sura[-Ruchla]; born on 9th July 1882 in Częstochowa. Married Malka Fridman in 1908 and came to America in 1913.

Chłopak, Lajb

Father of Dawid; son of Dawid and Rochma (née Frenkel). Died in 1906 in Częstochowa.

Chrobolovsky, Alkona² Our Family



Josef-Icek Chrobolowski



Alkona Chrobolovsky



Louie Chrablow

The grandfather was named Cwi-Hersz Chrobolowski, a surname which stems from a place of residence - a village named Chraślówki [?]. He worked in the fish trade and had a tavern. He later lived in Bielsk [Podlaski], in the Grodno gubernia. He had three sons and one daughter. The eldest was Josef-Icek (Alkona's father), [then came] Elkune, Szmuly and Małka. The educated one amongst them was Josef-Icek. The two others were blacksmiths.

Alkona's father - whom people called "Josłcze" for short - married Rywka (Alkona's mother) from Zambrów. Her maiden name was Akselrod. Her parents were chandlers (they made tallow candles for *Shabbes*) and had settled in a small *shtetl* - Janczewo, in the Łomża gubernia. All the [new couple's] children were born there, spent their childhood years there and, as soon as they stood on their own [two] feet, they flew away to all corners of the world, like fledglings from the nest.

Besides his [father's] main source of income - *melamdu* [viz. teaching at cheder] - Alkona's parents were also chandlers and cigarette-rollers. This would be done in the early morning and late at night, before and after *cheder*.

The family was made up of four

brothers and three sisters, besides two [others] who died in infancy. One of the sisters, Chawa - a grown girl - lies in the Białystok cemetery. Those who remain alive are, in order of age: Jankel, Fanny (Sława-Fajgla), Alkona, Annie (Chawa), Louis (Lejma) and Sam (Szmelke). All except Alkona live in Chicago.

Alkona, his Father and his Grandfather

The eldest brother, Jankel, was a study-hall lad. His father held Alkona close to him; he helped him teach the boys in *cheder* during the day and, at night, in the chamber³. Alkona taught the girls of Janczewo to write in Yiddish and to do sums. He was nine or ten years old at the time. He also helped the *cheder* boys learn to write in Yiddish and Russian. Alkona knew, by heart, almost the entire *Tanach* [Hebrew Bible], and - *lehavdil!* - [also the textbook] "*Русская речь*" [Russian Speech]. He dictated to the girls or gave them to write [at home] letters from Blosztajn's letter almanac.

Besides *melamdu* and other trades, Alkona's father was also a letter-writer. He composed letters for brides-to-be and grooms-to-be, and for the women whose husbands were in America. When his eldest brother Jankel became engaged to a girl from Ostrów [Wielkopolski] - their father wrote his love-letters to his betrothed for him.

When they took the right to own taverns away from Jews, a great poverty descended upon the *shtetl*, which drove Alkona's father to seek *melamdu* in other towns. At the age of twelve, Alkona moved with his father to Lapes [Łapy], near Białystok, where his uncle Szmuly had a *kuźnia* [smithy/forge]. The grandfather also came to Szmuly for some time. He and Alkona - grandfather and grandchild - slept together in the attic. The grandfather was then already in his seventies. He died at the age of 106, but his eyes had not dimmed and his hand had not trembled - his handwriting was just as rounded in his oldest years as in his youth.

By the age of eighteen, Alkona was already a rebel and combated his

¹ [TN: Wife of Lajb (or Lewek-Lejb) Chłopak and mother of the subsequent individual, Dawid Chłopak.]

² [TN: Although in Poland his name was spelt Elkune Chrobolowski, we have rendered it exactly as it appears in the English-language title page of the 1958 book "Czenstochov – A New Supplement to the Book Czenstochover Yidn".]

³ [TN: "Kammer" in the original; it is unclear whether this chamber was the same classroom used in the day by the boys or a separate room.]

⁴ [TN: Heb, lit. "to separate"; Jewish expression roughly meaning "different though they may otherwise be," used when mentioning two unequal or contrasting subjects, such as the sacred and the profane, in the same sentence.]

father's archaic *Yiddishkeit* [Judaism]. And, nevertheless, of his whole family, it was Alkona who was his father's and grandfather's [spiritual] heir. He was devoted to his new *Yiddishkeit*⁵ with the same ardour as his father had for his ancient beliefs. Of all his sisters and brothers, he was the one who remained the longest with their father in Częstochowa. A fortnight after Alkona, the last of the family, travelled away to America, their father died.

From Janczewo to Częstochowa

Alkona was about fifteen when his father took him to the Dzieczewo [?] train station and sent him almost all the way to Sonspow [?], to a forest near the Kraków border, where a kinsman of his - Juda-Lajb Landau - was a registrar of the woods⁷. This was Alkona's first railway journey on his own. The trip took about three days. He travelled without a ticket.

He spent around three years in the glorious mountain region surrounding Ojców, which is an offshoot of the Carpathian Mountains. Later, he was in Olkusz, Kromołów, Zawiercie and Kamińsk. In every location, he taught the Jewish children - *Ivri*⁸, *Chumash* with *Rashi*⁹, and writing in Yiddish and other languages.

This happened very much against his own will - in his heart, he hated it. His wish had been to teach at a crafts school in Białystok, but his father was afraid that he would stray from the straight path. In the summer, he was an employee in a business in Warsaw. During this entire period, he lived without a passport - which was impossible for him to receive until after [completing] military service.

Later, Alkona's father arrived in Zawiercie, where he continued working as a *melamed*. The whole family gathered in Zawiercie. From there, in the summer of 1905, they moved to Częstochowa. The parents were left in

the cemetery there, and all the children wandered off to America.

Sister Fanny - Mother's Representative

The first to leave Częstochowa, in 1908, for America, was Fanny. Then Annie, Louie and Sam travelled to her and, afterwards, Alkona. After the family grouped together in Zawiercie, Fanny was the representative of their perpetually ailing mother. In America, her house was, for a long time, the family home. Besides the worries and joys of peacetime, she also had two wars to endure. In the First World War, two brothers - Louie and Sam - served in the American army, while Alkona was in the Russian army. During the Second World War, all three of Annie's sons were in Uncle Sam's army and Fanny had enough worries and enough work to bake "cookies" and send "packages"¹⁰.



Sam Chrablow

It would seem that the father lay great hopes in Alkona and Fanny - he would wake them up at the break of dawn to learn with them.

Fanny - now Fanny Szwarz - was also active in the aid work for Częstochowa. She was in the first group, following the First World War, which supported the kindergartens.

Reunion of the Family in America

Alkona travelled to America twice. The first time was in 1923, and he returned after spending a year in Chicago. The second time was in 1926, and he then remained in New York - the great Jewish "gathering of the exiles". The large *Częstochower* family is here - his friends and comrades from 1905, from 1911, and his younger friends and comrades from after the First World War; friends and comrades from Białystok, from Warsaw and from Nowo Radomsko. Here are his *cheder* mates from Janczewo, with whom Alkona played "little horses"¹¹ on summer evenings. Here are also his "distant" relatives - his uncle Elkune and auntie Malka's children from Wysokie [Mazowieckie], whom at home he had not even known.

His uncle Elkune, who, due to [Russian] military service, had changed his surname to Kaplan, brought to this world fourteen offspring, [both] sons and daughters. Five of them are in New York and one in South America. Auntie Malka's three daughters - Etlá, Frajdka and Chaja [sic Chawa] - are also in America: two of them in New York and the third, Chawa, in Los Angeles.

Who knows if there is anyone left of Grandfather Cwi-Hersz's "*pokolenie*" [Rus., brood] there [in Poland]? But here, in New York and Chicago, his family is - *keinehora* - growing, multiplying, and celebrating weddings, *brises* and *bar-mitzvahs*.

On these festive occasions, the entire family comes together. They sit around the tables laden with everything good, drink *lechaim*, and the music plays *The Star-Spangled Banner* and *Ha'Tikvah*; *Barbarett* [?] and other jazz is played for the young generation, after which

⁵ [TN: The term "*Yiddishkeit*" used in the original means both "*Judaism*" in its religious sense, as above, and "*Jewishness*", viz. the essence of being Jewish (even if irreligious), as used here.]

⁶ [TN: The names of these two localities in the original Yiddish are *סשיזשעווע* and *סאָנספּאָו* respectively, neither of which we have been able to locate; we have rendered the former as "*Dieczewo*", which is 140 km SSW of Łomża, but this implies that the Samech (ס) with which the name begins is a misprint and should be a Daled (ד).]

⁷ [TN: "*Waldschreiber*" in the original; Ger. lit. "forest writer", viz. one who registers the amount of tress felled, etc. The only other Yiddish source that we have been able to find which mentions this occupation and gives some details on it, is the Hebrew *yizkor* book "*Sefer Rypin*" (1962); see article "*The Dawidowicz Family*", there, cols. 431-432.]

⁸ [TN: Not to be confused with modern-day *Ivrit* (Hebrew), the term "*Ivri*" was used in Yiddish in ref. to the study of reading correctly the Hebrew in the prayer-book, which the Rebbe (teacher) would translate to Yiddish.]

⁹ [TN: Hebrew Pentateuch with the basic commentary by the medieval French sage, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki.]

¹⁰ [TN: Both "cookies" and "packages" are in English in the original, thus the quotation marks.]

¹¹ [TN: The book "*Kinder-yurn*" (Childhood) by I.D. Berkowitz (Tel-Aviv, 1970) describes this game: two boys would disguise themselves, one as a horse and the other as the driver. The "horse" would hold a rope in his mouth, which the "driver" held in both hands like reins, standing behind him, and both would run all over the courtyard - the driver shouting "*Hyah! Hyah!*" and the horse whinnying and stomping his hoofs.]

comes a little *Mitzvah-Tantz*¹², the *Sher* and the *Hopke*. Then the Jews - the men and women of Wysokie, Białystok, Zambrów and Zaręby [Kościelne] - get up from the tables and dance a *Karahod*¹³, putting hands on shoulders, raising a leg, clapping their hands, forgetting their broken English and becoming, once again, Jews like their fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers had been. The children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are drawn into the *Karahod*, all of them in one merry romp.

That is not bad - Cwi-Hersz's great-grandchildren in America may not know any Yiddish, but they will dance a Jewish *Karahod* or a little *Mitzvah-Tantz* for a long, long time to come.

¹² [TN: "Mitzvah Dance"; Chassidic custom of the men, usually the older and more important ones, dancing one by one before the bride on the wedding night, after the wedding feast.]

¹³ [TN: Traditional Eastern European Jewish dances; the "Sher" is based on square and longways dances performed with partners, while the "Hopke" and "Karahod" are vigorous circle dances done by men.]