

Wiesław Paszkowski, Museum of Częstochowa

From the Częstochowa Jewish Cemetery - Genealogical and Historical Sketches

A Stolen Plinth

In the oldest section of the cemetery, not far from the entrance gate, on the left side of the path lies an overturned obelisk with a distinct Polish-language inscription: *Here rests Karol Ginsberg, of blessed memory, born 1st November 1832, died 11th May 1893*¹.

There is no Hebrew-language plinth bearing the deceased's Hebrew name, the name of his father or the date of his death according to the Hebrew calendar. However, this should not present any inconvenience in order to clearly present the history of the Jewish community in Częstochowa, important to the history of Częstochowa industry and the cemetery in which Karol Ginsberg was buried.

This third-generation Ginsberg was active, during the second half of the 19th century, during an industrial boom in our city. On 21st August 1855, he got off to a strong and skillful start by marrying Rozalią Kohn² in Częstochowa. She was the daughter of Berek Kohn, the richest Częstochowa Jew of the time, who held a high social position and who was also respected by the city's Polish inhabitants. Kohn was the owner of a large mill. He was around forty seven years old and was quite powerful for a man of his age. In addition, two years earlier, the experienced entrepreneur from Kraków, Abram Markusfeld, had joined the family. He had married Estera Ernestyna, Rozalia's twin sister.

Despite this, the young Ginsberg dominated the family's businesses. He also distanced himself from his father-in-law – K. Ginsberg featured in the corporate name, with Kohn not being mentioned. There could have been two reasons for this. Karol Ginsberg could have invested a considerable amount of money into the enterprise. He was also a very energetic person. Perhaps he was the leading light in modernising the mill. In 1872, next to the mill, he builds another plant – a paper factory. In 1876, this plant utilises Częstochowa's first steam engine.

Karol Ginsberg was a modern individual who drew inspiration from Germany. The graves of his paternal uncles not only contained Hebrew language inscriptions, but also German inscriptions in beautiful Germanic calligraphy. These are the graves

¹ Grave 1325 II H. For commentary and a plan of the cemetery, see: W. Paszkowski, *Cmentarz Żydowski w Częstochowie. Przewodnik (A Guide to the Jewish Cemetery of Częstochowa)*, Vol. 1, Częstochowa 2012.

² Częstochowa State Archives (APCz), Częstochowa Regional Synagogue Records (AOB), Jewish Marriage Records 1855, No. 14.

of Majer and Ajzyk Ginsberg. So when Karol Ginsberg became a member of the synagogue board in Częstochowa, he set about reforming the Jewish community³.

In the years, 1888-1901, Karol Ginsberg headed the Jewish Community Council. He desired to modernise Jewish life in Częstochowa. He first wanted to change the way the faithful were called up to the *bimah* for the reading of a Torah portion. The traditional format was to be changed and the use of brass plates was to be introduced.

Students at the Talmud Torah, the Council's school for children from poor families, were to translate the *Chumash*, the first part of the Hebrew Bible, not like until then, into Yiddish, but into German according to Moses Mendelssohn's *Bi'Ur* (*Explanation*).

The third unwelcome order related to not only the living, but also the dead. It determined that burials at the Jewish cemetery in Kucelin would only continue for one more year. The *Chevra Kadisha*, together with the Jewish Community Council, would find a new location for a necropolis, with better accessibility. The proposals for these orders were initiated by Moszek Rubin Tendler, a former Chassid, who had become a *maskil* (a *Haskalah* scholar), and who was the highest authority for progressive Jews in Częstochowa.

Ginsberg purchased the necessary plates, but the traditionalists and Chassids decided to distance themselves and focus on not allowing the removal of the custom of calling up someone using the honoured person's name and the name of their father. On Shabbath, they went in droves to the city's synagogue. The city's cantor, Rafał Jakub Londyński, refused to call up people using the German fashion and so the task fell to Abi Pelc. However, the Chassids crowded around Kohn and prevented him from ascending the *bimah*.

The same thing happened at several other prayer services. An infuriated synagogue Board, led by Ginsberg, left the synagogue. Shortly thereafter, they rented an apartment at Aleja NMP 10 and, there, they organised a place of worship for progressive Jews.

The synagogue board's term of office ended and new elections were held. The traditionalists joined with the Chassids and triumphed over the reformers. Elected to the new board were Chassid Daniel Bem, Icchak Kruk representing the wealthy benefactors and Michał Herc who was supposedly neutral, but who continued to pray at the city's synagogue while progress was being made towards a rented synagogue.

At that time, 1893, Karol Ginsberg died, which did not bring about peace because, as it turned out, M.Herc also wanted to call up people to the Torah without using names, but by using the brass plates. Huge arguments erupted in the synagogue, especially between Herc and Bem.

At the height of this discord, the city's rabbi, Gerszon Rawinzon, left Częstochowa. He was replaced by the inexperienced Rabbi Nachum Asz. For this reason, he began by treading carefully. He summoned several dozen communal representatives from all sides and heard everyone out. The aforementioned Mosze Rubin Tendler spoke on behalf of the progressives. He did not convince the Rabbi to

³ *Der czenstochower raw machtszołem* [Częstochowska Rabbi Brings About Peace], *Czenstochower Cajtung* 1938, No. 20; reprinted [in:] *Sefer Czenstochow*, Vol. 1, Jerusalem 1967, pp. 143-148.

use the brass plates. Nachum Asz explained that it was not appropriate to follow the western European example and that there was no reason to depart from past customs. With regard to teaching the Talmud in German, the Rabbi held the view that it would do no harm to the Yiddish language. He therefore proposed that lessons in German continue for one year and, if both sides were satisfied after that time, they would continue. Regarding the cemetery, he proposed the establishment of a committee comprising members of the Jewish Community Council, the board of the Chevra Kadisha and other interested parties, whose role would be to locate an appropriate location for a new Jewish cemetery. However, until that time, burials would continue at the old cemetery.

Both sides agreed to that proposal. Chassid representatives, Notł Natan Pankowski and Abraham Szolem Weksler declared that representatives of the progressives should be members of the committee, but that the Rabbi, exclusively, should decide all religious matters. Those successful at the next election of elders were lawyer Jan Glikson, Markus Henig and Markus Rotszyld. They would refer religious matters to the Rabbi.

With the aid of the Rabbi, the committee raised 20,000 rubles which was allocated towards the building of a road to the old cemetery and for the purchase of some additional land in order to enlarge it. The cemetery in Kucelin continued to be utilised.

However, Nachum Asz was unable to restore unity within the Jewish community. Amongst the *minyan* which gathered at Aleja NMP 10 were many moneyed *maskilim*, so that they could afford, firstly, to employ their own cantor, Abraham Ber Birnbaum, and then later, to build the wonderful New Synagogue, known by Jewish traditionalists, as the *Deutscher Schiel*.

It was a victory from the grave for Karol Ginsberg, but only in part. Throughout his entire adult life, he used the German form of his first name – Karl. He gave his son a typically German name – Herman. But on his grave, his family put an inscription in Polish. Teaching the German language and the German-language commentaries to the Bible were never completely accepted within Częstochowa. The Ginsberg family had lost the significance and influence that they had once enjoyed.

Let us return to the figure of Karol. He was born on 1st November 1833 in Częstochowa to Jakub and Salka (nee Dawidowicz) Ginsberg⁴. From graves in part of the cemetery and from documents, it is possible to assemble the building blocks of his genealogy.

The family progenitor was his grandfather, the merchant Berek, namely Dow Ber Ginsberg. He died in Częstochowa on 16th January 1827 as a 56 year old widower. He was survived by seven children – Klara, Majer, Dobra, Juda, Hajzyk, Markus and Abraham⁵. Jakub's name is missing, but we know that he was the son of Berek and Brandel. This is shown by his marriage certificate to Salomea Dawidowicz, aged 20, daughter of Berek and Szandel (document 1 of 1833). Berek Ginsberg's wife was Brandel (nee Majzel). There could have been a mistake on the

⁴ APCz, AOB, Jewish Births 1833, document 66.

⁵ APCz, AOB, Jewish deaths 1827, document 3.

death certificate regarding the number of children such that Jakub was omitted. However, that is hard to believe. Or was Jakub was the middle name of one of the sons? Three of them - Ajzyk, Majer and Markus are too well-known for there to be any doubts about them. So we are left with Juda and Abram. We find confirmation of what we suspect in his 1874 death certificate where both his first names are documented - Juda Jakub.

From the death certificates of Berek's sisters, we know that her maiden name sounded like Zendel⁶. Therefore, we cannot be certain of *Majzel*, since her brother's surname was Gradstein⁷. So we are still missing some elements in these genealogical and historical jigsaws.

Mina Werde

Until recently, the topographical name used universally in our city, *Mina Werde*, was given to the building at Ostatny Grosz, ulica Spadzista 13, now the headquarters of the Młodzieżowy Dom Kultury (Youth Cultural Centre).

The real Mina Werde was a beautiful and educated, the sole heiress to an industrial fortune. Her grandfather, Abraham Werde arrived in Częstochowa in the second half of the 1830's.

His first child, a son Lipman Eliezer, later known as Leopold, was born in 1838 probably in another city as there is no birth certificate in the Częstochowa archives, while a record does exist for his sister, Zyska Zysla, who was two years younger⁸. Abraham appears in records as a trader. He must have done not too badly since his son married Balbina Likiernik⁹ in Łódź and, in Częstochowa, Zysla married Jeruchem Hertz¹⁰. In this way, the first generation of the Werde had already ascended into the city's industrial-financial elite.

Lipman became the owner of the Częstochowa needle factory on ul.Fabryczna (next to ul.Mielczarska).

Werde was a short Jew with a sense of humour and a sound mind. He loved good music, especially Mendelssohn. He was an amateur philosopher and smoked a pipe. He was not very well liked in the city as he didn't go to pray¹¹.

Amongst those who were assimilated, Werde stood out due to his open indifference to religion. For *maskilim*, the Jewish religion was often an additional field for reform. In other instances, they changed religion in order to relieve themselves of those religious restrictions which affected Jews. Werde was a fan of enlightenment and of modernising Jewish life. For this reason, he became one of the leading founders of the market gardens, the Jewish Charitable Society, the Jewish hospital, etc.

Mina was his only child, coming into the world on 16th November 1867 in Częstochow (Document No.149).

⁶ APCz, St. Zygmunt Parish, Certificate from 1824, documents 55 and 70.

⁷ It certifies, for instance, the marriage of an Ejzyk Ginsberg to Anna nee Majzel on 4th December 1830. APCz, AOB, Marriage registry 1830, Certificate No.18.

⁸ APCz, AOB, Jewish births 1838, Certificate No. 45.

⁹ 1866 Certificate No. 38.

¹⁰ 1863, Certificate No. 53.

¹¹ *Czenstochower Jidn*, ed. R. Mahler, New York 1947, pp. 32, 33.

Let us now look for mentions of this family:

The wealthy assimilated Werde family lived in the Komacher building at ulica Garncarska 26, on the corner of ulica Prosta (Mirowska). Their daughter was called Mina. On *Yom Kippur* eve, when Jews went to their prayerhouses and synagogues for *Kol Nidrei*, Mina sat at the piano and played. The sound from the grand piano reached those standing next to the synagogue (The Old Synagogue). This angered the Jews who were praying and they cursed her. Shortly afterwards, Mina died unexpectedly¹².

Mindla died on 30th March 1887 in Częstochowa¹³. The prejudice against her and her family was so acute that a partner, Benjamin Orenstein anonymously wrote a book published shortly after the end of World War II, after the Jewish people's terrible tragedy. Even this publication could not erase the dislike for the family.

The credibility of the story can be readily undermined. The recitation of the *Kol Nidrei* prayers on the eve of *Yom Kippur* takes place on the tenth day of the month of *Tishrei*. In the year Mindla died, namely 5647 (corresponding to 1886/1887), *Yom Kippur* fell on 9th October 1886. For this reason, we should treat further revelations with reservation – that her parents wished to atone for their daughter's sin by funding a communal organisation in her name.

Other communal workers of the time attested to the Werdes' righteousness:

The aged care home and the orphanage were established thanks to the efforts of the Werde family, in memory of their daughter Mina Werde. The family devoted their entire wealth to the institution. The home accommodated 30 elderly, men and women, plus 80-90 orphans. Workshops were set up there in which children, over the age of 16, were trained for practical work¹⁴.

Leopold Werde died on 20th March 1912 in Częstochowa and his wife died on 24th November 1927. The founders handed the orphanage and the home for the aged over to the *Towarzystwu Dobroczynności dla Żydów* (*Charitable Association for Jews*), on the board of which both Leopold Werde and his wife had served. After Leopold's death, or shortly after his passing, the institution was entrusted to Salomei Sztarke. This proved to be an exceptionally good decision.

The Mina Werde home for the aged and orphanage was one of the most popular institutions in Częstochowa, and Mrs Salomea Sztarke, with rare energy, almost solely carried the burden of running these institutions for around twenty years. She managed to obtain a certain subsidy from the municipality, 2,000 zł from the Jewish Community Council and interest from the *Charitable Association for Jews*. This enabled the running of a kitchen for the residents and, in 1928, a separate floor for the aged was constructed. The number of aged and orphans began to increase. Teaching personnel were engaged for the children¹⁵.

The orphanage and aged care home also operated into World War II. When, on 9th April 1941, the Germans ordered the establishment of the Częstochowa ghetto, all those under care were transferred to premises on ulica Garncarska. When transportations to Treblinka began, the institution was shut down. Its residents were killed on the spot or sent to an extermination camp. During the entire period of

¹² *Czenstochower Jidn*, p. 28.

¹³ APCz, AOB, Jewish Deaths 1887, certificate No.30.

¹⁴ Dr S. Kon-Kolin, P. Szmulewicz, *Dobroczynność* (*Charity*), [w:] *Czenstochower Jidn*, pp. 106, 107.

¹⁵ *Czenstochower Jidn*, p. CXLIV.

deportations, members of the auxiliary police, who participated in the murder of Jews, were quartered in the *Mina Werde* building.

Salomea Sura Sztarke (nee Engel) was born in Bełchatówek on 8th November 1876, the daughter of Mojżesz and Fajga (nee Monic). Her husband was the merchant Józef Sztarke, the son of Adam and Anna (nee Monic), born 23rd July 1869 in Sieradz. Two of their children were born in Częstochowa: Leontyna (27th August 1903) and Adam Mieczysław (6th August 1907). The entire family perished in Treblinka in 1942. There remains only one grave at the Częstochowa cemetery relating to the Sztarke family – that of Salomei's mother-in-law, Anna Chaia (nee Monic), 1843-1932¹⁶.

Mina's damaged grave remains and one of its elements, with a Hebrew inscription, lays bare.¹⁷ Despite that, two Israeli inventory teams, led by Benjamin Yaarie and Gidonim Project participants, missed it. It was as if the dislike for this poor, tormented girl still continued.

Ten years after his granddaughter's death, Abram Werde died in Częstochowa on 12th June 1896. He was buried not far from Mindel¹⁸. During the War, when the Germans ordered the destruction of the graves, the obelisk in his memory was pushed off its plinth. In 1997, the obelisk was moved back in such a way as to make the inscription legible.

Ruins of the *Ohel*

Today, almost no one knows that the cemetery contains a ruined and forgotten *ohel*. The Częstochowa *tzadik*, Awigdor Szpiro, was buried there in 1928. He rested there for over forty years, until the cemetery was closed in 1970. At that time, his daughter, fearful that his grave would be desecrated (moving all remains to another location was being planned), took her father's remains and reburied him in a cemetery in New Jersey.

The author of an article about the *tzadik* Awigdor, Dr Zvi Kohn, introduced him as the descendant of Dawid of Lelow. The genealogy presented there was straightforward. Dawid, who died on 7th Shevat 5574 (28th January 1814)¹⁹, was survived by three sons - Moszek, Nechemia and Awigdor. The first son was, already by then, the son-in-law of the Holy Jew of Przysucha, and became his successor. At the age of seventy, he left for the Holy Land and the Israeli branch of the Lelow dynasty descends from him. Nechemia also became a Chassidic rabbi and had many followers. However, the most beloved was Rabbi Awigdor. His son carried the name of Dawid, and his descendant was Awigdor who became the Częstochowa *tzadik*.

Documents, however, contradict this. Awigdor Szpiro (also known as Wigdor Sapiro/Sapira) was born in Przytyk in 1881. This information comes from the register of Częstochowa permanent residents and from the death certificate. Only ten years after his birth did his parents obtain a birth certificate for him at the Przytyk registry

¹⁶ Grave 1123 II H, Gidonim No.: 4204.

¹⁷ Grave 1239 II H.

¹⁸ Grave 1342 II H.

¹⁹ According to the Jewish calendar, the 200th anniversary of his death fell on 8th January 2014.

office. At that time, they registered all their six children: Salomon (Certificate No. 73), Chaim (Certificate No. 74), Wigdor (Certificate No. 75), Jakub Icek (Certificate No. 76), Laja Zysła (Certificate No. 77) and Sura Brucha (Certificate No. 78). It was then five years later that they registered their own marriage (Certificate No. 21 of 1896). The father was Szulim Sapira a Chassidic rabbi in Przytyk²⁰, while the mother was Nechuma (nee Halbersztam). She was the daughter of Rabbi Dawid Halbersztam (1821-1894), the well-known *Chrzanower Rav*, and grandddaughter of Chaim ben Lejbusz Halbersztam (1793-1876), the founder of a Chassidic dynasty in western Galicia and a *tzadik* in Nowy Sącz²¹.

In Przytyk in 1898, Awigdor married Gitel Ber, daughter of Kalman and Chaya (nee Welfrajd, born 20th July 1879 in Przedbórz). He settled in Przedbórz where, a year later, their son Józef Boruch was born. At the beginning of the 20th century, they moved to Częstochowa. One of the reasons could have been that his father-in-law was no longer required to maintain his son-in-law's family – the so-called *kest*. The other reason could have been that Awigdor had been called by the Częstochowa Chassidim to the post of a private rabbi.

We do not know anything about his education – about where, when and from whom he obtained his *smicha*. However, he did emerge from two conservative currents and, additionally, the Halbersztams were known to be in dispute with the *tzadiks* of Sadogóra, opposing the extravagant lifestyle of those *tzadiks*. This was received well by the Częstochowa Chassidim. Awigdor established his own Talmud Torah, a free religious school for Jewish children of modest means. He always had his pockets full of sweets for these children. The *tzadik* accepted *pidnoim* (payments) only when he was convinced that the faithful could afford it. Otherwise, he was able to support other Jews.

Such an attitude did not support the accumulation of wealth. On his marriage certificate, he is described as a worker. Only later, did he act as a merchant. Did he really engage in physical work? We do not know. Certainly, he gained popularity amongst the simpler, poorer Jews. During the period of World War I, he already acted as leader of the majority of Chassidim in Częstochowa. We see him in this role during a dispute with the city's rabbi, Nachum Asz. This related to a boycott on the buying of potatoes on Shabbat. The occupation authorities had designated this day and, as a result, people almost starved. Despite this, Szpiro proposed abstaining from shopping on the holy day. Rabin Asz consented to this violation of the Sabbath. The outraged *tzadik* got up and left (the discussion took place in the city's synagogue). To the end of his life, he never again spoke to Rabbi Asz.

Wigdor Szpiro died on 10th March 1928 in Częstochowa at his home at ulica Senatorska 15 (Certificate No.55).

²⁰ Majer Szpira, *Cadyk Izrael Szapira*, [w:] *Sefer Pszitik* [Księga Przytyku], red. Dawid Sztokfisz, Tel Aviv 1973, p. 339. Shulim Szapiro successor as Rabbi of Przytyk was his son-in-law, Izrael Szapiro, husband of his daughter Sara Brucha.

²¹ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Ed. Fred Skolnik, 2nd edition, Vol. 8, Detroit, New York, San Francisco, London 2007, p. 264.

Tzadik David's Descendants

Dr Zi Kohn was not mistaken when it came to the sons of the *tzadik* Dawid Lelower (the surname of Biderman was used only by his sons, at least the author supposes so in his work). There were three of them. Their first names are also correct. Dawid Lelower also had a daughter Laja, born in 1772 in Lelów. She married Majer Krakower/Krakowski. Dawid, a resident of the district city of Lelow, visited Częstochowa on more than one occasion. He was, after all, the founder and promoter of chassidism in that part of Poland. However, his family connection with our city only came about with the third generation.

His son Nechemia married Rywka, daughter of Mordechaj Horowicz. They had three children - Chana Biderman, Ruchla Gotlib and Jakub Biderman. Ruchla came into the world in 1804, perhaps in Opatów, where he had a manor property which he left to his son Jakub Jankiel Biderman (1806-1858). Ruchla married Częstochowa stallholder Lewi Gotlib.

Let us not be misled by the fact that Lewi was a stallholder. This was merely a source of income for him. The Gotlib family, and the Wargoń family related to them, belonged to the oldest and most worthy of Częstochowa Jews. They were regarded as amongst the most learned of Talmudists, serving in popularising Chassidism.

Isachar Berisz was the oldest of the Częstochowa Gotlib family. His brother, Abraham Elchanan, wrote the work *Błogosławieństwa Abrahama (Abraham's Blessing)*. It was influenced by his contact with "the righteous lover of Israel, Reb Icchak of Berdyczów", as *tzadik* Jakub Icchak Horowicz, the Clairvoyant of Lublin, wrote in the foreword to the book²².

Isachar Berisz was probably one and the same person as Berek Gotlieb, who died on 11th August 1828, in Częstochowa, at the age of seventy. "He left a wife, Haja Sora, one daughter and sons, Eliaszk Kolher, a stone-carver aged 48, and Natan Rubinsztein, a stallholder aged 42"²³. A characteristic, short-lived phenomenon appears in this certificate – the sons of one father having different surnames. The certificate does not show the surname of the youngest son, Lewi Gotlib. Frequently, these documents were not complete.

The widow, Haja Sora Gotlib, died in Częstochowa on 29th December 1841 at the age of 65. Her surviving children were Lewka aged 38, Gitla aged 30 and Estera aged 24²⁴.

According to tradition, Lewi became the head of the family. He married Rochla Biderman. Their daughter, Hanka, was born on 26th November 1829 in Częstochowa. Rochla Gotlib died in Częstochowa on 1st January 1842. The death certificate lists "the widower Icek Lewi, stallholder, and children Huna, Majer, Gitla, Dawid, Marek, Szaja"²⁵.

²² *Sefer Czenstochow*, Vol. 1, szp. 750.

²³ APCz, AOB, Death certificate 1828, Certificate No. 47.

²⁴ APCz, AOB, Death certificate 1841, Certificate No. 42.

²⁵ APCz, AOB, Death certificate 1842, Certificate No. 2.

Let us try to find information about the children. The registry of permanent Częstochowa residents reveals that Hanka actually had two first names - Gitla Hana. In 1849, in Częstochowa, she married the widower Majer Hersz Sztahl (Certificate No.20). On 23rd September 1867, their son Szlama Sztahl was born (Certificate No.123).

Others named are Dawid, born on 15th July 1833 in Częstochowa (Certificate No.45), Marek Markus born in 1835 in Częstochowa (Certificate No.28) and Szaja Michał, born in 1840 in Częstochowa (Certificate No.16).

Majer manages to elude us. We know that he died in Częstochowa on 4th December 1904²⁶. If his age as shown on the death certificate is in fact accurate, 74, then he would have been born in 1830. The Częstochowa registry contains no birth certificate for him, so that he was probably born in another city.

The eldest of the children was Jakub Elchanan. He was named after one of his relatives in the Gotlib family (after a great-uncle) and in the Biderman family (after an uncle, a *tzadik* in Opatów). His youth was probably spent in Opatów or Szydłowiec, where the *tzadik* was Jakub's son, Majer Mordechaj Dawid Biderman (?-1873).

Elchanan, called Chuna for short, was one of the founders of the Szydłowiec *shtiebl* in Częstochowa, a Chassidic prayer grouping of followers of this type of daily prayer. Chuna was regarded as one of the most outstanding Chassids. He died in Częstochowa on 24th September 1899 (Certificate No.150).

Jakub Elchanan's sons were Dawid Isachar, Częstochowa's senior *shochet* and a veteran Radomsk Chassid, Mosze Nechemia and Szlama Majer z Czeladź. Josef Szaja Wargoń became his son-in-law.

Dawid was born in 1849 in Częstochowa. His mother was Chawa (nee Gotschalk). His wife was Gitla (nee Kaufman), the daughter of Mordka and Chaia Sura (nee Gaczynger), born in 1851 in Częstochowa. They married in Częstochowa in 1867 (Certificate No.35).

Their children were:

- Szlama Mendel, born 14th February 1870 in Częstochowa (he married Perla Berkowicz, daughter of Chaim Hersz and Dobra, nee Danielewicz, born 13th August 1865 in Częstochowa)
- Mordka Chemia, born 27th June 1876 in Częstochowa, stonemason, (his wife Bajla Rachel, nee Fajerman, daughter of Juda Lejba and Fajgel, nee Brener, born 24th January 1871 in Będzin).
- Blima Rajzla, born 27th May 1879 in Częstochowa (married Jakub Kornberg, son of Manela and Genendl, nee Gnendelman, born in 1868 in Częstochowa).
- Hana Estera, born 12th July 1883 in Częstochowa.
- Aleksander, born 5th September 1887 in Częstochowie.
- Chawa Sura, born 1st May 1899 in Częstochowa.

²⁶ APCz, AOB, Death Certificate 1904, Certificate No.277.

- Juda Majer, born 27th May 1890 in Częstochowa.
- Chaim Mejlich born 20th December 1892 in Częstochowa.
- Abram Hersz, born 9th September 1895 in Częstochowa (married Hena Blima Szancer, daughter of Szymon and Złota, nee Penczak).

The oldest known grave is that of Berek Gotlib's widower, Chaia Sora (Gotlib) (1776-1841), daughter of Jaku ha-Kohn. She died, in Częstochowa, on 29th December 1841, aged 65, (Death certificate No. 42)²⁷.

A few of graves bear the Hebrew inscription: grandson or granddaughter of the *Tzadik David of Lelów*. An example of this is the tombstone of Hercek Gotlib (1854-1935), son of Majer and Dobra (nee Diamant)²⁸.

The 1919 Tragedy

On 27th May 1919, a crowd, angry because of an assault on a Polish soldier, attacks residents of the Jewish district. As the result of these extremely brutal incidents, five Częstochowa Jews died, many were injured and material losses were enormous. These events have been described many times, but here they only related to the Gotlib family.

Among those five fatalities was the *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) Nechemia (Mordka Chemia) Gotlib, son of Dawid and Gitel (nee Kaufman), born on 27th June 1876 in Częstochowa. On 27th May, together with other *shochetim* Chaskiel Bergman and Moszek Działowski, he found himself in the slaughterhouse, in the yard of the Old Synagogue. Hearing the approaching crowd, they endeavoured to shelter in the synagogue's Christian caretaker's flat. However, the mob entered the home, dragged Gotlib back into the yard and brutally attacked him with rods and stones. Gotlib was also robbed. He had 1,200 marks and his slaughterer's knife stolen. He was left lying on the ground, showing no signs of life. He was taken to the Jewish Hospital in Zawodzie where he died the following morning. He left a wife and six children²⁹.

The others killed were Juda Lejb Brokman (1895-1919), son of Szlama and Rajzel (nee Kagan), bakery worker Anszel Cymerman (1899-1919), son of Lewek and Fajgel (nee Bornsztejn) and, dairyman Herszl Działoszyński (1871-1919), son of Moszek and Cyrla (nee Hirszon).

Their common funeral became a huge procession of the Jewish community. They were buried in adjacent graves. At the gravesides, there were no speeches or crying. All were buried in complete silence.

That grave had immense significance for Częstochowa Jews and that was the reason the Germans destroyed it. After the War, there was probably no attempt at restoring it. Despite that, locating it was relatively easy. Firstly, its appearance was known. Photographs of the adjacent tombstones survived and were reproduced in the first volume of *Sefer Czenstochow*³⁰. Beniamin Orenstein also provided information

²⁷ Grave 1216G II H, Beniamin Yaari: 0510.

²⁸ Grave 793 I H, Beniamin. Yaari: 3107.

²⁹ H. Fajwlowicz, E. Chrobołowski, *Cwajterpogrom*, [w:] *Czenstochower Jidn*, p. 172.

³⁰ *Sefer Czenstochow*, Vol. 1, szp. 766.

on their location. "The graves of these innocent Jewish victims are located near the entrance to the Jewish cemetery. In 1944, the cemetery was destroyed by the Nazis. Headstones were collected and taken away to be used in the building of air-raid shelters. The graves of the five victims were also destroyed"³¹.

This indicates that it was the large gravesite, clearly visible on the left side of the main pathway. Today, it is almost completely destroyed. Only the concrete frame remains and some traces of the headstones. On the 1970 cemetery plans, they are designated as plots 2,469 to 2,471, wrongly assuming that only three people were buried there³².

Mother and Daughter

Right next to the pathway stands a cement grave with the following almost illegible inscription:

*Bronisława Markowicz, nee Niemirowski, born 28th May 1918 died saving her mother from the hands of the Teutonic thugs in 1943 (Sara Niemirowska, nee Willinger, born 23rd November 1893, shared her daughter's fate in 1943.) Rest in peace*³³.

Both women perished on 4th January 1943 on the grounds of the forced labour camp for Jews, the so-called *Small Ghetto* in Częstochowa. That day, after all the day-shift work groups had left, the Germans surrounded the camp grounds and began a search. The search was aimed at finding people who were avoiding work, as well as at finding hidden Jewish children and elderly. During the operation, two fighters of the Częstochowa Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Combat Organisation), Mendel Fiszel and Izio Fajner, attacked the commanders of the *Schutzpolizei* unit. Both heroes died on the spot and, in retaliation, the Germans killed another 25 men³⁴.

Both women, mother and daughter, found themselves in the very centre of these events. Sara Niemirowska (nee Willinger) was from Częstochowa, daughter of the goldsmith Lajzer and Brandl (nee Szefer). Her husband, Szmul Niemirowski, was a Russian Jew, a *Litvak*. He came to Częstochowa as the representative of a Russian company and, after falling in love with Sara, stayed in the city. At first, he ran a millinery workshop and, after World War I, together with Abram Baum and H. Winer, a large hardware store. From the very beginning, he was active in communal life and was soon one of the most outstanding workers.

He was President of the Craftmen's Union, President of the Traders' Union, a member of the board of the Union of Industry and Trade, Chairman of the Jewish Gymnastic-Sports Association, a member of the board of the New Synagogue and also President of the Revisionist Organisation in Częstochowa. He was also active in the field of philanthropy. In 1922, he established the *Bejs-Lechem* organisation [...] He added something positive to each institution within which he was active. As President of the

³¹ B. Orenstein, *Churban Czenstochow*, [b.m.w.] 1948, s. 18. In the original, Orenstein provides a false, inflated number – 7 fatal victims.

³² *W Guide*, this are grave Nos. 2469-2471 I H.

³³ W. Paszkowski, *Cmentarz Żydowski w Częstochowie*. Przewodnik The Jewish Cemetery of Częstochowa: A Guide, cz. 1, Częstochowa 2012, p. 277. Grave No. 1159 II H, and in the Gidonim project No. 4113.

³⁴ I wrote extensively on this in *Groby-pomniki na cmentarzu żydowskim w Częstochowie (Grave-Monuments in the Częstochowa Jewish Cemetery)*, "Rocznik Muzeum Częstochowskiego" 2011, p. 209.

Craftsmen's Union, he established a bank from which low-interest or no-interest loans could be obtained. In 1929, as President of the Jewish Gymnastic-Sports Association, together with the former President, Szmariahu Chajutin, he established a fund for a brass band. In 1935, on the twentieth anniversary of the Association, he created a splendid blue-white banner. As President of the Traders' Union, he did not sit on his hands either. He constantly intervened with the taxation authorities to cut or lower taxes on the poorer craftsmen who were unable to pay the high taxes levied by the treasury. Niemirowski was active in all areas of community life. He managed to bring back the Zigman, Markowicz, Helman families, and any others, who had drifted away from the Jewish community. He was Master of Ceremonies at all balls and banquets, displaying an outstanding oratory ability³⁵.

Niemirowski was also a leader of the Zionist Revisionist Party in Częstochowa, which was active in combatting the British mandate in Palestine and the Palestinian Arabs. To this purpose, Betar was formed which, sometimes in Częstochowa, bore the name *Harcerstwa Mieszczańskiego im. Trumpeldora* (*The Trumpeldor Bourgeois Scouts*).

The Niemirowski couple had three children – two sons and a daughter, Bronia, who was regarded as very beautiful. One of the sons left for France to study medicine. On 8th January 1939, their daughter married Bolesław Markowicz, son of the Jewish industrialist. Her father was required to consent to the wedding as Bronia was still a minor.

The family's tragedy began when the Germans entered Częstochowa.

In September 1939, Szmul Niemirowski was arrested by the Gestapo, together with eight other hostages – members of the Jewish Community Council and the rabbinate. He remained in custody until November 1939. He was sick and beaten (maltreated). A little later, he was freed but, shortly thereafter, he was sent to Dachau where he was tormented to death³⁶.

The son, who had remained in Częstochowa, was arrested many times by the Gestapo. Each time, he was beaten and tortured. He died as the result his treatment.

Mother and daughter hid from the Gestapo officers and, under assumed names, survived the entire period of the ghetto and its liquidation. They stayed in the Small Ghetto. After the executions of the 4th January 1943, they still felt that they were in danger because the Germans continued searching houses in the area, so:

... they left their own flat in order to sneak over to the "Aryan side". They took money and valuables with them. But a military policeman noticed them. He chased after them, ordering them to stop. He shot at them, but missed. The women stopped and the thug ordered them to hand over everything which they had taken with them. After taking everything from them, he told them to move on. But as soon as they took their first step, he shot both of them twice. They fell to the ground dead³⁷.

Just then, worker groups began returning from their work places, a few thousand people. Many of them could not find the family and friends who had been taken to

³⁵ B. Orenstein, *Churban Czeŝtochowy*, [b.m.w.] 1948, pp. 364-366.

³⁶ D. K[onieczny], *Szmul Niemirowski*, [w:] *Sefer Czeŝtochowy*, Vol. 1, s. 694, 695.

³⁷ S. Waga, *Churban Czeŝtochowy*, Buenos Aires 1949, p. 201.

the station of the Polish police. The next day, they were to be transported to Radomsko and, from there, to the Treblinka death camp.

Wives who could not find their husbands at home went to the execution site and searched amongst the corpses. A few women found their husbands and were overcome with grief. Behind the wire fence, the entire labour camp was filled with crying and screams.

That evening, the twenty nine people, who had tragically died, were buried. In the dark and frost, by candlelight, twenty seven men were placed into one large grave, while mother and daughter were buried in a grave adjacent to it. The funeral took some time. Relatives of those killed stood by the fresh graves and could not bring themselves to leave. They stood there until ordered to leave³⁸.

Despite the difficulty of digging into the frozen ground, two graves were dug and the women were buried separately. Funeral tradition was adhered to – men and women rested separately unless there were from the one family. But the division of graves was also a separation of one tragic fate. The twenty seven men were recognised as martyrs and heroes. Both women were denied that honour.

With great ceremony, the remains of the twenty seven men were exhumed at the beginning of January 1946. A crowd assisted in the process and then formed a cortege to the Jewish cemetery. In 1949, a monument was erected to commemorate not only the events of that 4th January, but also the activities of the Częstochowa ŻOB.

Both women were completely denied this form of funeral. Perhaps, it took place earlier. A witness, Dawid Koniecpoler wrote, "In the spring of 1945, following liberation, I helped the young Markowicz, who had survived, to transport the bones of his wife and mother-in-law for burial in the Jewish cemetery."

Yet one more grave at our cemetery is linked to this tragedy. It is probably only a symbolic grave. Marian Wiener, a victim of German revenge, lies there. He was the son of Abram Adam and Lewia Ludwika (nee Dawidowicz). He was born in Częstochowa on 9th September 1920. In 1938, he graduated from the Traugutt Senior High School in Częstochowa and probably served in the army because, next to his name on the grave, is the abbreviation for the rank of *porucznik* (lieutenant).

This same grave also commemorates his brother-in-law, the lawyer Kałma Wygnański, who died or was killed on 10th November 1944 in Częstochowa.

Marian's mother, Ludwika Wiener, and his sister Konstancja, Kałma's widow, had the following written on the grave: *We could not die with you and we do not know how to live without you.*

The remains of Marian Wiener rest together with the other victims of the 4th January execution. A monument was erected on this grave and, today, it is the centre of an annual commemoration ceremony. The family, however, has neglected to remember their nearest relatives³⁹.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 202.

³⁹ Grave No. 820 II H. In Benjamin Yaari's system: No.2039.

