

Tradesmen in Mezritsh in Earlier Generations

by Dr. Michael Hendel

Translated by Jerrold Landau

1. Introduction to the History of the Tailors Association in Mezritsh.

The city of Mezritsh was renowned as a city of workers and laborers. According to the facts that were collected by Meir Eidelbaum from editions of HaMelitz [1] from the year 1888, the Jews of Mezritsh worked in many trades and occupations (see his book *The Jews of the City of Mezritsh* pages 139-140). Approximately 350 people were employed in bristle manufacturing; shoemaking occupied no less than 130 others. Approximately 100 people were employed in building trades, including stonecutting. The needle trades employed a further 140 people in total (95 tailors, *30 furriers*, and 15 hat makers).

The number of bristle-makers grew, and ten years later the number had reached 1,200 – approximately one third of all those employed in this trade throughout all of Russia[2]. A further interesting detail emerges from the first half of the 19th century. Among the members of the Ner Tamid [Eternal Light] Organization, whose purpose was to care for the lighting of the synagogue, there were 14 tailors and furriers, five shoemakers, three glassblowers, three smiths, three carpenters, two boilermakers, two engravers, and one each from four other trades. It should be noted that the funding of this organization came from the efforts of the tradesmen, and therefore six permanent spots on the leadership committee were reserved for them. Tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, and woodcutters were also registered in the Chevrat ha-Lomedim [Society of Students], who studied books of moral lessons from the Middle Ages such as Menorat ha-Maor[3]. Thus was the situation during the 19th century. A further detail is also illustrative: in 1670, a Jewish smith named Leib Ber Izak lodged a judicial complaint against a gentile who was employed by him. The employee was accused of stealing a silver ingot and making a spoon out of it. This historic detail shows that a Jewish tradesman employed a gentile worker as early as the end of the 17th century.

As was the case in all cities of early Poland, the tradesmen of Mezritsh were organized into guilds. Since the majority [of tradesmen] in the early centuries were needle workers, they were considered the communal leaders in the trades. Tailoring was considered to be the most important Jewish trade for hundreds of years. The reason for this was based on religion to a large extent. Observance of the laws of shaatnez[4] required Jews to rely on their fellow Jews. Shoemaking did not develop among the Jews to the same extent in that early period. It was a later development, which points to the vitality and innovativeness of Jewish workers – by the end of the 19th century 130 Jews, a large number, had entered this relatively new profession.

We do not have any clear data as to when the Tailors Association was founded in Mezritsh. The first sign of its existence comes to us from the year 1720, when the tailors sought to form their own house of worship. We can surmise that, as in other communities, the community leadership of Mezritsh was reluctant to acknowledge this very public manifestation of the tailors' independence. The community leadership placed

[Page 34]

obstacles in the tailors' path, until the matter came to a compromise through the involvement of the poretz, the landowner of the city[5]. That year, the Tailors Association received the right to establish its own house of worship, on the condition that it provide the community with a quota of tallow for lights, and the sum of 20 groszy per week, at the rate of 30 groszy per zloty - which totals 34 zloty and 20 groszy annually. This payment was considered to be a contribution from the Tailors Association towards the salary of the maggid [itinerant preacher]. The community agreed to lower the aforementioned payments for a set time to 33 zloty and 10 groszy annually. However, after the concession there came a period of stringency, and in 1770, though the community raised the payment to 50 zloty a year, it apparently did not fulfill its obligation to maintain a maggid for the city in general or for the Tailors Synagogue in particular. At first, the tailors accepted this situation. However, difficult times came to Poland after the first partition of 1772, and the entire population bore the burden of high taxes to support the Russian Army, which ruled there de facto (even though Mezritsh remained within the bounds of Poland until 1795). The Tailors Association stopped paying their previous fee, and the community was forced to come to a new compromise: the tailors would pay 25 zloty a year, and if a maggid was appointed to serve the Association, the payment would rise to 50 zloty a year. The community was not pleased with this compromise, which caused conflict and disputes. The community even imposed a ban on the Association. Finally, the communal leadership turned to the poretz in 1786 to make a decision. This external intervention did not benefit the community, because the trustee of the poretz decided that the future payment should be in accordance with the prior compromise, and need not be paid every two weeks, but rather in two semi-annual payments (at Passover and Sukkot). This also caused damage to the Association, because the poretz exercised his a-priori right to scrutinize the organization's accounts, citing the clause stating that the gabbaim [trustees] of the Association were required to present a financial accounting to the poretz on an annual basis. In addition to these rules, the two sides also formulated several sections of internal protocols (Tishrei 5546, 1785) that stated that if the Tailors Association did not pay what it owed, their house of worship would be closed, and if anyone would be so brazen as to conduct prayer services, they would be excommunicated. Under this agreement, the community was obligated to provide a shamash [beadle] to the Association as well as an etrog [citron, used in the observance of sukkot], in return for payment. For its part, the Association was obligated to honor the head of the community with an aliya every Sabbath and festival.

This internal agreement incidentally introduces us to another internal problem: The furriers[6] belonged to the Tailors Association, and since there were disputes between the two trades about the boundaries of their work, the community was given the opportunity to intervene, and did so to its own advantage. A new condition was imposed: the furriers would be required to pay a special fee of 20 zloty annually to the communal coffers. If they did not pay, the tailors would be granted the right to work as furriers as well.

[Page 35]

This history of the years 1720 - 1786 teaches us several important details: The tailors appeared as a communal force interested in demonstrating their importance and independence. They were willing to struggle to attain the best conditions for themselves.

During this struggle, the tailors had to come to terms with the fact that the power was in the hands of the community, which was headed by “those who had knowledge and money”. This is why the tailors agreed to grant the leaders of the community the permanent privilege of an aliya to the Torah at the Tailors Synagogue.

Professional rivalry existed between the tailors and the furriers. This competition weakened the power and strength of both sides. The community took advantage of this internal weakness, just as the poretz, as the supreme authority, took advantage of the weakness of the community and the tailors when they could not come to an agreement among themselves.

We have no information about the period 1786 - 1834, when the charter of the Tailors Association was put into writing. However it would make sense that during this period, the organization would continue to occupy itself with two aforementioned matters: the preservation of their own house of worship, and the internal relationship between the allied trades. When the new main synagogue was built by virtue of the privilege of 1761, after the old synagogue had gone up in flames, the gabbai [trustee] of the “Association of Tradesmen” appeared before the community leader claiming the continued right to a shitbel [7]. They had their own shtibel in the old synagogue as well as in the old Beis Midrash, and argued that they should continue to have that right in the new synagogue. The community leader consented, but not without conditions: the tradesmen would have to make a substantial payment in two installments. We do not know if there was a connection between the dispute over the Tailors Synagogue as recorded in the communal ledgers, and the request for a shtibel in the main synagogue, mentioned here. We can assume that there was a natural connection between the two. The tailors and all the other tradesmen maintained their own houses of worship within the main synagogue during the 18th century, perhaps with branches in the Beis Midrash, and when the new synagogue was built during the beginning of the 1760s[8], they were given the right to maintain these areas in the new building. We do not know when the move [to the new synagogue] took place, for in 1779, “the worker, activist, and artist of the synagogue building”

died; words of blessing were spoken and prayers were offered, asking that the building “should be completed speedily in our days”.

The generation of elders still recalls the inauguration of the tailors' house of worship in the synagogue. Then in 1848, a great disaster took place in the city. A fire broke out, most of the houses were damaged, the Great Synagogue was damaged, and the house of worship of the tailors was destroyed completely. We hear echoes of the consequences of this disaster in the communal ledger: “Their honor and glory was lowered, all the bonds of their charter were severed, and they virtually became a disgrace in front of all of the organizations in the nearby towns.” The tailors approached the community to request a new space, which was given to them under the following condition: the Tailors Association would have to pay

[Page 36]

an annual fee of 25 zloty in bi-weekly installments. If they were delinquent in this payment for four weeks, the community had the right to close their house of worship. If they were delinquent for an entire year, the contract would become null and void. The space that was given to them was “two stories beneath the Great Beis Midrash”. If the Beis Midrash were to be enlarged, then the tailors would be given a better place. Two more conditions were stated. The first benefitted the tailors: the cantor of the Great Synagogue would conduct the Tal and Geshem services[9]. The second condition, for the benefit of the community, was that the Tailors Synagogue could be used by the community for any need “related to the wellbeing of the town”][10].

The final piece of information on this matter comes from 1874. In that year “the new Beis Midrash of the Tailors Association was founded and completed” and a sale of pews in the women's gallery was conducted with the authorization of the rabbi and communal leaders. We do not know if this refers to the aforementioned building of 1848 or to a new building completed after the expansion of the Beis Midrash, as was mentioned above. In any case, we see in the continuation of the history of the Tailors' house of worship (until 1874) the same tension between independence from the community on the one hand, and subordination to the community as the general Jewish authority on the other.

Now we will turn to the internal make-up of the Association of Tradesmen. There is no unifying thread in the various pieces of data that would enable one to establish unambiguously which particular trade is being referred to. In a response to the community's request to designate a special place in the house of worship during the 1760s or 1770s, the “Association of Tradesmen” is mentioned. In the internal agreement between the tailors and the community from Tishrei 5546 (1786), the “Association of Tradesmen” is again mentioned. In the ledger of 1834, based on which we will later study the Association of Tradesmen, it is called “The Tailors Association”, however the introduction mentions “all of the tradesmen of this place”. In the authorization from the rabbi and the community from that year, the “Tailors Association with those who joined with them, including furriers, comb-

makers, and carpenters” is mentioned. In an “important announcement” included after the introduction in its Ledger, it is stressed that the meaning of “all tradesmen” is to include those who earn their livelihood by the work of their hands by any means. The special house of worship, which was mentioned previously, was specifically named for the tailors. This was permanently etched in the communal consciousness – in contrast to the shoemakers' shtibel, the bristle-makers Beis Midrash, and the coachmen's Beis Midrash. The obvious conclusion from this, which applies not only to Mezritsh but also to other communities of early Poland, is that the tailors were the standard-bearers for all laborers in the city. They became the leaders of labor activism by virtue of their numbers, organizational prowess and an awareness of their own importance. They therefore had the power to represent all the tradesmen in external negotiations. Indeed, the concepts of “tradesman” and “tailor” became synonymous. This remained true in Mezritsh until the end of the 19th century, when the bristle-makers rose in importance. The shoemakers,

[Page 37]

whose numbers were quite large in 1888, did not succeed in attaining an important communal status due to their lack of professional and organizational tradition. The furriers, who are mentioned in the Charter of Authorization, had difficulty setting themselves apart from the larger community of tailors. We have already seen this in our earlier discussion, and we will return to this again as we analyze the content of the statutes. We do not know why the comb-makers and the carpenters merited special mention in the aforementioned charter.

2. The Ledger of the Association

The Ledger [Pinkas ha-Hevra] of the Tailors Association is the principal source for the analysis and descriptions which follow. The statutes which appear in the next chapter (from the years 1834 and 1859) are copied from this Ledger. We will also add some details that I copied from sources that I personally witnessed during the time that I worked in the city as a teacher in the gymnasjum [high school]. I also made use of a copy of the Ledger made in 1876. This copy was provided to me by my student, a native of Mezritsh, and now a teacher in Israel, Mr. Gershon Dolinski. The Ledger was written in the year 1834, but it is nothing more than a rearrangement and renewal of the statutes that “were from days of yore”; which simply means that it is a new edition of the statutes by which the Association had been operating since the time of its founding, perhaps from the beginning of the 18th century, approximately 120 years earlier. Why did the tailors of Mezritsh find it necessary to reorganize in that specific year? It is difficult to answer that question. It is an important question, for according to a law from the year 1816, all trade organizations were abolished in Congress Poland, and nine years later (1825) a government inquiry was opened against the tailors of Sokolow when their Ledger was found and the existence of their organization was verified during an audit. The incident in Sokolow shows us that the Jewish tradesmen there evaded the law, as they did in other places. According the law, an organization of

tradesmen, "czach", was allowed to exist (based on a new a different set of principles), but this was forbidden for Jews, who lacked civil rights. Only Christians had the right to vote and be elected to the leadership of such an organization. Indeed, in several places, organizations of tradesmen were established where the membership was mainly or wholly Jewish, but which were headed by a leadership committee consisting of two Christian tradesmen. Indeed, the situation in Sokolow was resolved in this manner. In other cases, the Jewish tradesmen from several cities banded together to form one organization, headed by two Christian "redeemers". The same situation existed with the hat makers and furriers from the community of Biala, who joined together with their fellow tradesman from Losice, Janów, Konstantynów, and Sarnaki. We do not know if something similar took place in Mezritsh. The tailors evaded the law, and renewed their organization in 1834. The authorities either did not know about this, or they knew but chose to ignore the situation, certainly not for free[11]].

The Ledger of the Tailors Association in Mezritsh that I possess is very shabby in appearance. It is a thin, 48-page book, the pages unnumbered except for the first two, and unbound. It is quarter size and on substandard paper, contributing to its poor appearance.

[Page 38]

It is dirty, moldy, frayed, and most important, the letters are smudged. The following is the content of the booklet: Pages 1-2: An introduction regarding the nature of the organization ending with an "important announcement", relevant to all tradesmen. Page 3: Sections 1-3. Page 4: Sections 4-8. Page 5: Sections 9-12 with an addendum at the bottom, dated 1859 concerning the moneys of Bikur Cholim [Organization for Visiting the Sick]. Page 6: Sections 13-16. Page 7: Sections 18-21 (Section 17 is missing). Page 8: Sections 23-24 (Section 22 is missing.) Page 9: Sections 25-26. Page 10: Sections 27-30 (The writing in sections 29 and 30 is so smudged that it is impossible to decipher. I was assisted here by the aforementioned copy belonging to Mr. Dolinski.) Page 11: The first line is apparently a continuation of section 30. This is followed by the signatures of the members. Page 12: Two authorizations - one from 1834 with the signatures of Rabbi Charlap and the rabbinical judges Rabbi Eliahu the son of Rabbi Nachman, and Rabbi Yaakov Biderman. (Read about them in the aforementioned book by Meir Eidelbaum, pages 319-332, 141, 338.) The second authorization is from 1848, bearing the signatures of two men who served as leaders of the community - Reb Uri Goldman and Reb Avraham Fiszbajn. There is a space for a third signature, but it is missing. Page 13: An introduction, and Sections 1-3 of the regulations of the year 5619 (1859). Page 14: Section 4 of those regulations, and a list of members. Page 15: An authorization of the regulations signed by Rabbi Rafael Yom-Tov Lipman Heilprin. (Read about him in the aforementioned book by Eidelbaum, page 324). From the words: "We certify" it is clear that other signatures should exist, but they are missing. Page 16: Empty. Page 17: A list of the members of the leadership committee from of the year 5609 (1849). Pages 18-19: Registrations of eleven new members from the years 5609-5610 (1849-1850). Page 20: Blank. Page 21: A list of the members of the leadership

committee from the year 5609 (1850). Page 22: Blank. Page 23: Registrations of five members, two from 1848 and five from 1849[12]. Page 24: Five registrations from 1850. Page 25: A list of the members of the leadership committee from 1851. Pages 26-38: Blank. Page 39: Registrations of four members without a note of the year. Pages 40-48: Blank.

Obviously, this Ledger is not arranged according to accepted organizational principles. We can assume that there was additional material pertaining to the organization, such as accounting ledgers, minutes of important decisions from inception until 1834, and other such material. From the heading related to the registration of members from 1859, "Copied from the signatures of the signers in writing", we learned that various matters were written on special paper in order to be transcribed into the Ledger. These transcriptions, however, no longer exist. The Ledger is written entirely in pure Hebrew, with some technical expressions in Yiddish. The language is natural, interesting and straightforward, without any excess didactics or grammatical nitpicking, and generally without a great deal of commentary. We cannot know what the content of the two missing sections was. From the order of the material we can surmise that Section 17 may have dealt with matters of the acceptance of workers, and Section 22 with matters of visiting the sick. It is interesting to point out that the Ledger mentions 30 regulations both at the start of the listing of signatories, as well as in the introduction to the certification. The participants certainly did not count the number of regulations, but relied on the final notation "lamed" [thirty]. Below, we will provide a transcription of the Ledger almost in its entirety. I did not copy the material from Page 17 and onward. Next to every section

[Page 39]

I will summarize its contents (in parentheses), and at the end I will give various explanations that are necessary to understand the text. I only changed the text in minor ways, and I added the punctuation that is customary in our day.

3. The Ledger of the Tailors Association in Full

[What follows is a complete transcript of the Ledger (in italics), with the author's comments in bold typeface at the beginning of each section. The occasional smaller font bold typeface indicates a similar usage in the original Hebrew Yizkor Book, and signifies additional comments by the author. - ed.]

The Inscribed Letter of the Tailors Association, may G-d protect it
Our brethren, all tradesmen. It has been the custom for all time, in all the areas of the Diaspora with their various customs, that all tradesmen band together in one organization and establish a great charter by which they should all conduct themselves and walk in the good and upright path before G-d and man, grasping hold of proper deeds and choosing good over evil. They appoint 18 people from amongst themselves who have the power to judge and to fine anyone who breaches the statutes. They themselves will judge any small matter. Every large

matter will be brought before the rabbi and the rabbinical court that exists in that day. The leaders of each city will assist them in upholding justice, so that the Nation of Israel will have no breach with each person doing as he sees fit. Every person will turn their shoulders to listen to the voices of their forebears and clean their hands of wrongdoing. Therefore, we too, the tradesmen of this place, have gathered together and agreed to organize and renew all of the regulations that existed previously by virtue of custom and religion. We have taken it upon ourselves to walk in the paths of our father and act according to their proper custom.

We request from the worthy rabbi, the head of the rabbinical court, and from the honorable communal leaders of the local Jewish community to certify us and strengthen our stance with all due force, so that every person should have the Fear of Heaven, will follow the good and upright path, and will have his soul imbued with the desire for good. Our ears should not be deaf to the call to justice and good deeds, for justice calls out from the most honorable places: I am good and all things will be good in the end - on the day that 'it is good' is doubled [13], 7 Adar II, in the year "He performed the righteousness of the Lord and his statutes with Israel"[14], in our place.

Important Announcement: Even though the name of this organization is the Tailors Association, it was not only they who accepted these regulations, but rather all of the tradesman... The crafters of gold and of silver, of stone and wood, all skillful crafts[15] #133;All of them as one entered into the covenant of the statutes that are enumerated here. They accepted upon themselves and their children to uphold and keep all the regulations that are explained and set forth in this book. The conclusion of the matter: Fear G-d, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole man [16], so that he will follow the good path... he will go along the path...

[Translator's note: There is a note in the text here, extending to the top of page 40, which elucidates the abbreviations that are included in the text. I am not including the translation here, as these abbreviations have already been explained in the footnotes. This note also indicates two other facts i) an explanation of the year, as I explain in footnote 14, and ii) a comment about the typeface of the "Important Announcement": The important announcement is written in upper and lower case, as opposed to the text preceding it, which is in entirely in capital letters. However, it is from the same year, as identified by the Hebrew acrostic of the year "For this is the whole man", from Ecclesiastes 13:13.]

[Page 40]

(The rights to an aliya to the Torah for the heads of the community in the Tailors' Synagogue). On the High Holy Days and the festivals, the new gabbai of the Tailors' Synagogue is obligated to offer an aliya to the Torah during the morning service, on one of the days, to the local rabbi; this is not to be transgressed. The gabbai is also obligated to offer an aliya to the Parnas [communal functionary] and to the head of the community; this is not to be transgressed. If this rule is violated, he [the gabbai] will be penalized by being fired.

(Time limits placed on the arbitrators [berurim] to appoint the leadership.) The arbitrators, who are chosen by lot, may not delay more than eight days from the time that they are chosen in appointing the eighteen men. If they delay longer, the lottery [for the arbitrators] will become null and void, and the Association will conduct another lottery, without objection.

(The rights of the arbitrators). The gabbaim are obligated to give the arbitrators 12 zloty. The arbitrators have the right to accept [appoint as full members] two people into the Association, and register them in the ledgers. The registration fees can be spent on meals [for the gabbaim]. There shall not be more than two people [appointed in this manner].

(Who may not serve as an arbitrator or be accepted as a member of the Association.) Two relatives may not be appointed together to the group of 18, nor are they to serve as arbitrators together.

(Levels of leadership). A person who has never been a bookkeeper cannot be appointed as the gabbai of the organization.

(The rule of the arbitrators with respect to new members - lajiek). The arbitrators do not have the power to redeem new lajiek.[17]

Redeem 'oyskoyfn' - apparently means to promote a lajiek to the status of a member with full rights.

Lajiek - The usage is from the Christian Church, meaning a person who is not yet fully experienced, and is at the beginning of his tenure.

(Acceptance of new members). No tradesman may be accepted to the Association unless the 18 appointees of the Association agree to it. Only then he will become a member of the group. It is not... from the two men.

The sentence starting with "It is not" is added here in error, and was apparently copied from the end of regulation 3.

[Page 41]

(The regulation of the lajiek.) After a new member enters the Association, he is not permitted to hire a worker for three years. He is obligated to serve and obey the gabbaim in any business of the Association throughout those three years. This person is called a lajiek.

(The regulation of lads prior to their marriage). A lad prior to his marriage can under no circumstances be accepted to the Association. He is also not permitted to practice his trade on his own. Rather, he must be an employee of a tradesman.

(Induction of young men into the Association after their marriage). Any young man who is a tradesman, whether from our city or another city, is obligated, when he gets married, to pay an initiation fee into the Association's coffers at the discretion of the gabbaim.

(Membership dues). Anyone registered in the ledgers of the Association is required to donate ten large coins on every Chol Hamoed [intermediate days of Passover and Sukkot], twice a year. If the shamash [beadle] cannot collect the 10 large coins after three attempts, the gabbai is obligated to send for a pledge [of collateral]. The member's punishment will be that he will not be included in the lottery [for the arbitrators] when it is conducted.

Large coin (Gadol), is 1/30 of a zloty. In terms of the real value of the money, it should be noted that the mayor of Biala was paid a salary of 100 zloty per month in 1820.

(The fee for the Bikur Cholim [Visiting the Sick Society]). Every person registered in the ledgers of the Association is obligated to pay one large coin each week to the Bikur Cholim fund. To this end, an emissary will go around every Friday to collect the coin from everyone. The money will be given to the gabbaim of Bikur Cholim who are responsible for this, as will be mentioned later. Any person who does not pay for four weeks will be guilty of a late payment. His punishment will be that he will not be granted any nomination and will not be called for an aliya to the Torah. If he were to become ill, Heaven forbid, he will have no rights to the Bikur Cholim funds. He will not be given any money until he pays everything that he owes. The shamash [beadle] will be entrusted with this responsibility.

(Initiation fees to the organization). When someone is accepted to the group, the 18 men will charge no less than three reichstaler, which will be paid to the coffers of the Association.

A reichstaler is a German coin worth approximately 18 zloty.

(Prevention of competition). So that no person should encroach upon another, if a tradesman registers for a job with a householder, nobody else may accept that job without the approval of the first tradesman.

(A restriction of the tailors right to work with respect to the rights of the furriers and hat-makers). The tailors are not allowed to occupy themselves with krajnary, which is the sewing of fur linings. They are also not allowed to make hats. Anyone transgressing this will be fined three reichstaler, to be paid to the Bikur Cholim of the Association.

(Acceptance of workers). A tradesman is not permitted to try to convince his fellow tradesman's employee

[Page 42]

to join with him in his work. Even if the [prospective] worker leaves his employer of his own volition in the midst of the workday due to an agreement between them [that is, the employer and employee mutually agree to terminate their relationship - ed.], the tradesman is not permitted to take him on.

Missing. Certainly omitted in error at the time of the arranging of the Ledger.

(Further with regard to the acceptance of workers). When a tradesman hires a

worker and they make an agreement between them, if the agreement is written without the knowledge of the gabbaim, it is not valid.

(The acceptance of lads to learn a trade). A tradesman who accepts a lad as an apprentice must first give eight zloty to the coffers of the Association, and the regulation governing their agreement is to be the same as the aforementioned agreement with an employee.

(Payment by an employee to the coffers of the organization). An employee hired by a tradesman for a year must pay one large zloty to the coffers of the Association each Chol Hamoed, and the employer is required to withhold his salary so that this obligation is met. If the employer pays the worker his entire salary, and the worker does not discharge his obligation, then the sum will be requisitioned from the employer without recourse.

The writer of the Ledger apparently erred (on the second line) in using the expression "large zloty". The intention was "large coin", and the term "zloty" was added inadvertently.

(In the event of the death of a member). When a member's time comes, and he goes in the way of all humanity, the members of the organization are required to go to the house of mourning upon the command of the shamash in order to worship there with a minyan [quorum] of 10... throughout the entire thirty day [mourning period]. They are permitted to bring the Torah scroll of the Association there.

Missing. Certainly omitted in error at the time of the arranging of the Ledger.

(Management of the affairs of Bikur Cholim). The arbitrators will select and invite two of the 18 men to be responsible for the monies of the Bikur Cholim organization. Through them, all members of the Association who are ill in spirit or in body, who are not able to afford their healing, will be tended to. All of these people will be cared for by the two selected people. They will be given money from the aforementioned Bikur Cholim fund, each person according to his needs. This will only apply in the case of the illness of the registered members, Heaven forbid, but not to the sick of his household. The aforementioned gabbaim have no permission to give them anything from the aforementioned Bikur Cholim fund.

(The regulation regarding a tradesman who is not yet registered in the Association). A tradesman who is not yet registered in the Association, but occupies himself with his trade here on his own, is required to pay 15 large coins to the coffers of the Association each week. Furthermore, no member of the Association is permitted to work with him – neither as an employee, nor as a contractor, nor as a partner in his house or someone else's house.

(Regulation regarding adjudication). If members of the Association have a dispute about a matter of trade or an infringement of rights, they should first consult with the gabbaim of the Association. The matter will come to judgment before the

rabbi and the rabbinical court. Whatever the judges decide will stand. Heaven forbid that a member should go in a different direction, not accepting and upholding the verdict. Whoever goes in a different direction will have his name erased and blotted out from the Ledger of the Association, and his misdeed will be recorded in the Ledger.

[Page 43]

Part of the text [above] is based on Exodus 22:8.

(A regulation regarding those who sow discord in the house of worship). If a dispute should break out in the synagogue, the punishment for those participating in the dispute will be a 30 day suspension from the Association. If his anger is not assuaged and the fire of discord breaks out for a second time, his punishment will be a fine of eight zloty to be paid to the coffers of the Association. If this does not help, and his anger still burns so as to ignite the dispute in the house of worship for a third time, he will then be removed from the society due to his three transgressions, and will no longer have a portion or inheritance in the Association.

(The service of the lajjecks). Three of the servants of the Association who are known as lajjecks must always be in the synagogue during the times of services, and be prepared to go on any errand required by the gabbaim.

(Fees of representation for the gabbaim). If two of the gabbaim of the Association are present together at a party or celebration, neither individual has the right to spend more than five zloty of the Association's money. Only two gabbaim together may do this – not one.

(The registration of the children of tradesmen in the Association). If a tradesman wishes to register his children in the Association, a discount can be arranged for this purpose.

(Registration of children in the Association; the renting of the house of worship). Under no circumstances can the arbitrators register their children or the children of others into the Association. The house of worship of the Association is not allowed to be rented to any person for a long or brief period.

These are the regulations, thirty in number, which were agreed upon unanimously by the members of the organization. This was signed by all of the members of the organization.

Following is the list of the 33 members, the names of 16 of whom are circled. We can surmise that these are the members who passed away as time went on. We have seen the 30 regulations which were created by the leaders of the Tailors Association along with the furriers, comb-makers and carpenters who joined with them. We, the heads of the community, together with the venerable rabbi and Gaon and rabbinical court of this place certify and authorize these regulations. They will remain in full force, as is the case with any holy covenant, without modification. They will be applied in full force at any time they are needed. As evidence, we have signed this on Sunday, 12 Adar II, 5584 [1824] here in the holy community of Mezritsh. Efraim Eliezer Tzvi Hirsch Charlap of Tyktin[18], signed by Eliahu the son of the Gaon Rabbi Nachman; Yaakov David Biderman.

We, the supervisors of this place join together to affix our signatures below, along with the Rabbi and Gaon, the aforementioned head of the rabbinical court, to certify and uphold all of the regulations listed in this book, so that they will be in full force, as in all other communities. We promise the gabbaim that we will apply all force during the time that they are in need of us, as the hand of the benevolent L-rd. As a testimony to this, we affix our signature on Sunday, the eve of the Rosh Chodesh Av, 5608 [1848], here in the community of Mezritsh. Signed by Uri Goldman, Avraham Fiszbajn, and (missing signature).

Beneath this certification there is a Polish inscription, as follows:
Powiat Radzynski, Dozor Boznicy, Okreg Miedzyrzecki. [Radzyn County, Dozor Synagogue, Miedzyrzec District]

[Page 44]

[The author provides the full text of the 1859 Rules of the Tailors Association below. Again, the original text is in italics, and the author's summaries are in bold print - ed.]

The Regulations of the Association, with the Help of the L-rd, from the year 5619 [1859]

In honor of the local Tailors Association, pursuers of righteousness and kindness, seekers of truth and peace. May G-d protect you, Selah, Amen.

These regulations which the organization has set forth, as is customary throughout the Jewish Diaspora, as outlined earlier in this Ledger; the late Gaon Rabbi Efraim Eliezer Tzvi Charlap of holy blessed memory, the head of the rabbinical court, and the local communal leader, have all agreed to the aforementioned regulations and have signed the Ledger above, so that we, the members of the organization, will follow the good and upright path of G-d. Several years have passed, and the aforementioned regulations have not been revised. Now several members of the organization have raised important concerns and have requested that we strengthen and uphold the aforementioned regulations, as these were established earlier with strength - so that the aforementioned Association might not be destroyed, Heaven forbid, because of any transgression of any of the aforementioned regulations. Therefore, we have approached the venerable Rabbi and Gaon, the head of the rabbinical court, to stand with them and to assist in this manner, to reaffirm the regulations with their full force. The Rabbi and Gaon, may he live long, and the rabbinical court, have affixed their signatures beneath the aforementioned regulations. After all this, we, the members of the Association, have taken it upon ourselves to re-affirm from this point onward all of the regulations that were previously set, as well as any that have been updated at this time by the members of the Association - whether or not they have signed this writ. We have all accepted upon ourselves, under all circumstances, the obligation not to not transgress, Heaven forbid, even a minute portion of these regulations or the new regulations that will be explained below.

Regulations of the Organization: These are the regulations that we have all agreed to anew on the date specified below.

(The order of aliyas of the gabbaim). As is explained in the Ledger, the gabbaim

have the right to receive an aliya on festivals and the High Holy Days. From now onward, four trustees will be restricted to four aliyas. On Passover, the first trustee will receive an aliya; on Shavuot, the second one; on Rosh Hashanah the third one; and on the first day of Sukkot the fourth one; there will be no more. The gabbaim shall cast lots among themselves to determine who will receive the aliya on the first festival, who on the second, who on the third, and who on the fourth.

“As is explained in the Ledger” – the Ledger makes no mention of this regulation.

(The order of being called up to the Torah). The gabbai whose function is to determine who is to be given an aliya during the reading of the Torah, must be one of the four gabbaim of that year. The gabbaim are to cast a lot amongst themselves. No other gabbai has permission to take for himself this responsibility without the knowledge of the gabbai who was chosen by lot.

(Regarding the fund in general and the Bikur Cholim fund in particular). All of the income from the members of the Association as well as income from our synagogue shall be placed in the hands of an appointed trustee[19]. The trustee is not permitted

[Page 45]

to take for himself or to give to any person any coin for the needs of the Association, even to the gabbai, even for a matter of a mitzvah, unless it is with the agreement of the 18 men or at least the majority of the 18 men of the Association. Even if a trustee should present a note of requisition from the gabbai or the 18 men, showing their agreement [to such a use of funds], no person has permission, and a ban will fall upon that person if he takes or agrees to take or remove one coin from the Bikur Cholim fund for use by the Association. The Bikur Cholim funds must be guarded for the sick, Heaven protect us, and through this, may G-d remove all illness from the midst of the Jewish people.

(Regulation of the trustee responsible for the Ledger). The trustee responsible for the Ledger is not allowed to inscribe a registration payment or to give the Ledger to the gabbaim to inscribe a registration payment without the knowledge of the 18 men. Likewise, this trustee is not permitted to issue a loan based on the Ledger of even one coin for any need. The Ledger must remain and be sealed with him throughout the year.

Everything stated above was enacted with the agreement of all the members of the group, whether they have signed here or have not yet signed here. Each person has accepted upon himself from this day and onward to uphold all of the regulations in the manner of our forbears, so that we may follow the good and upright path, the path of G-d. In this way, we will have peace, calm, and security forever. As confirmation we, the members of the Association, have affixed our signature on Sunday, the 40th day of the counting of the Omer[20] 5619 [1859] here in the community of Mezritsh. Copied from writing by the 18 signatories.

(Following is a list of 12 members, including three circles, and spaces for 34 additional signatories.)

These are the names of the signatories: Nachman Herinkranc, Tzvi Hersz Hecht,

Szimon Jehuda Fiszman, Szmuel Jehuda Prizand, Lejb Engelman, Avraham Abisz Adler, Eliezer Fajwel Szajd, Avraham the son of Izaak, Izrael Mosze Adler, Izrael Szraga Kasic, Eliezer the son of Reb Mosze, Jehuda the son of Tzvi Dov.

We also agree to all the regulations that were stated in truth and justice, to certify and establish all that they have taken upon themselves, as is the custom throughout the entire Jewish Diaspora, so that they will walk in the proper path. We are signing on Monday, the 34th day of the Omer, 5619, here. Rafael Yom Tov Lipman Heilprin of Mezritsh.

(Another regulation from the year 5619 (1859), recorded in the Ledger between sections 12 and 13). Before us, the signatories of the aforementioned holy Association accepted upon themselves to refrain from using the monies of the Bikur Cholim for any needs of the synagogue or any other matter. If any trustee does so, even with the agreement of the gabbaim, he is obligated to pay back to the Bikur Cholim fund, out of his own pocket, everything that was used for the Association's expenses. We have signed on Monday, the 34th day of the Omer, 5619, here in the community of Mezritsh. Signed by Rafael Yom Tov Lipman Heilprin, Eliahu the son of the late Gaon Rabbi Nachman of blessed memory, Berechia the son of Rabbi Izaak of blessed memory Cohen.

The signature of the members is on the 40th of the Omer, whereas the certification and the additional section are from the 34th day of the Omer. I tend to resolve the contradiction as follows: The regulations were accepted on the 34th day of the Omer, and the rabbinical court certified them that day. The members certainly also signed on that day on a special form which would have served as the minutes of the meeting. The minutes were transcribed into the ledger on the 40th of the Omer.

[Page 46]

In total, the Ledger includes the regulations of 1834, the certification from that year, the recertification of 1848, the regulations of 1859 and the certification of that year.

Addendum: In his aforementioned copy, Mr. Dolinski also included on the front page of the Ledger a note regarding the women's gallery of the tailors' house of worship from 1874. The text is as follows: We have also presented in the memorial book a list of the places that were sold in the women's gallery of the new Beis Midrash of the Tailors Association. The new Beis Midrash was founded and completed on Wednesday, 11 Sivan, 5634 (1874), and the gabbaim of that place sold places in the women's gallery with the knowledge of the rabbi and Gaon, the head of the rabbinical court, and with the knowledge of the honorable communal leaders of Mezritsh. Every person should come to his place in peace. We have copied into this ledger all of the deeds that were transacted in truth and justice from the old Ledger of the aforementioned Association. Everything that was transacted was done by the word of the rabbis who were the leaders of their generation, may they be remembered for a blessing, and by the heads of the Jewish community of this place.

4. Tradesmen in Mezritsh and their Organization

The Ledger, which enabled us to form a picture of the Tailors Association and the tradesmen in Mezritsh, was not written by a lawyer in legal jargon and with internal consistency. In our desire to present a summary of content, we have been forced to change the order of the sections in order to tie the matters together as they flow from one section to another. At the outset, we should note that the regulations of the tailors in Mezritsh are not very different from the regulations of other organizations in Poland that have been published to this point. There are regulations that expand on the issue of the prevention of competition. Others detail precisely the rules of the organization. However in general, the differences are not great. We can assume that when the regulations deal with this or another matter in brief, this was done with the understanding that the issue was known and clear, and did not require explanation. If there is anything characteristic about the regulations of Mezritsh, it is the brevity of discussion on religious issues: shaatnez [4], the obligation to attend communal prayer services, the obligation to attend classes and sermons, and the like. Since their special house of worship had an honorable position in Mezritsh, we can assume that the Tailors Association had its own ledger, where matters related religion were recorded.

We will divide the discussion into five sections: roles and groups within the organization, relations with the government and the community, leadership of the organization, finances, and conclusion.

Roles and Groups. Groups of craftsmen sprouted up amongst the Jewish people in Poland and in other lands due to two factors, one external, the other internal. The core of the external factor was the fact that Christian tradesmen fought with their Jewish comrades in order to restrict them, and if possible to completely eliminate them, from their field of work. They had the power, to do so, for they were organized by profession, and each guild (czach) had the power and sole authority over all matters related to that field of work, from a legal perspective as well as from a supervisory and executive perspective. For the most part, they also benefited from the support of the government,

[Page 47]

the civic authorities, the church and the state. The Jewish tradesmen fought with the guilds for their right to work. In order to conduct this battle, they also organized themselves into groups, in general with the support of the communal leadership. This battle was largely successful. In the wake of, and as a direct result of these achievements, Jewish trade in early Poland expanded greatly, and the tradesmen's organizations served as fortresses of strength in their peaceful dealings with the guilds, as well as in litigation with the government. We hear no echoes of those battles in Mezritsh. Although there were several Christian guilds in that city, apparently peace prevailed between them and the Jews. Furthermore, the Jewish tradesmen organized themselves around the tailors, and the Christians were not interested in that profession.

The second set of factors [contributing to the growth of Jewish guilds] was internal. Jewish tradesmen organized themselves into guilds in order to protect

their collective interests, and to establish practices that would assist and support all tradesmen. The primary intention of the economic and professional rules was to prevent competition. These rules were, for the most part, quite self-serving. They were intended to prevent the growth of the membership beyond a certain quota, for only then would there be a chance of ensuring that each member would have work and be able to earn a living according to his needs. In defense of the tradesmen, it should be noted that they were interested in protecting a certain degree of equality among the members, so that no one person would rise above the others and so that the democratic camaraderie would not be violated. In order to strengthen their influence, they wanted their group to encompass all of the tradesmen in the community. However, they imposed onerous duties on new members who joined the group. For example, in Mezritsh, a new member could not be accepted without the agreement of the leadership (regulation 7), and after being accepted, the new member would be of a lower class. For three years he would not be allowed to hire workers, lest he flood the marketplace with his merchandise. During that probation period he was given the status of a "lajiek" and was "obligated to serve and help the gabbaim" (regulation 8). A bachelor who did not yet have the burden of supporting a family, and therefore might permit himself to lower his prices, is explicitly forbidden to work as an independent tradesman, and must be satisfied with being an employee of others (regulation 9). However, the opportunity to be accepted as an employee was not given freely. Any contract with workers was required to meet with the approval the leadership (regulation 18 - without their agreement, the contract would have no force). The leadership could object to acceptance of an employee or to the conditions that the tradesman offered. The leadership would certainly not agree to conditions that were better than standard, in order to prevent the excessive success of a tradesman, for if [the tradesman's] workshop and merchandise were to grow with the help of his workers, his power would be stronger than that of his comrades. This regulation also applied to the acceptance of youths as apprentices (regulation 19). What about independent tradesman who did not wish to subordinate themselves to the various aforementioned restrictions and preferred to remain as unorganized tradesmen? The Association also concerned itself with them and established that, first of all, they were to pay a fee to the Association (26 zloty a year); and second, that they were to be treated as outsiders. That is, no tradesman from within the Association would be permitted to work with them (regulation 24 - neither as a hired worker, a contractor, nor in partnership). It is possible to surmise that these two severe restrictions were enough to force the independents to decide to join the Association. The purpose of these actions was to slow the growth of new members in the Association - whether they be

[Page 48]
independent tradesmen, youths, employees, apprentices, or members with restricted rights. The regulators were not content with this, and also established two important rules for members with full rights: if a tradesman put a cloth insignia on the house of his customer, that job would be his, and his comrades would not be not allowed to accept a job [on that premises] without the agreement of the first tradesman (regulation 14). An additional regulation is as follows: a worker who was employed by a tradesman under contract was to be dedicated to this tradesman throughout the period of hire. Another tradesman

would not be allowed to entice him to violate the contract (perhaps with easier terms). If the worker were to leave his employer of his own volition, other [employers] could not employ him. From what has been stated it is clear that internally, the Association functioned democratically, but was selective and exclusive in its dealings with "outsiders" who had not yet joined the organization. This exclusiveness was especially felt by the younger generation of tradesmen. A new tradesman who stumbled across difficulties was dependent on the mercy of his employer. It is interesting to note that this exclusiveness did not apply to the children of members. They could learn the trade freely from their parents. Leniency was also granted with regard to their registration in the Association, perhaps even before their marriage. The requirement to serve as a lajiek was also not strictly enforced. Indeed, the organization did not forget to include a regulation reducing registration fees for the children of its members.

This is the place to comment on the children of the members of the Association. For various social reasons and to encourage the feeling of familial interdependence, the trade organizations in Poland registered their children in the ledgers. This was not only done by tradesmen's organizations. For example, no less than 45 children were registered in the Ner Tamid Society of Mezritsh. In the ledger examined above, the conditions for registering children were not specified. Only the negative was expressed - the arbitrators were not allowed to do this on their own. With respect to economic agreements, it is clear that the tailors granted significant protectionism toward their comrades - the furriers and hat makers. The latter preserved for themselves the sole right to work in their trade. The regulations went so far as to impose great fines on any tailor who might encroach on their territory by making hats (regulation 15). There are not many other examples of this degree of protectionism.

This ends the discussion of economic protocols. Like all other Jewish organizations (the student organizations and the social aid organizations) the Association's mission was to develop an educational and cooperative spirit, both as a community of G-d fearing Jews, and as a community supportive of its members during times of difficulty. Maintaining its own house of worship was an expression of this dual mission. Its founding policies were directed solely toward the spirit, whereas the economic protocols were based on material factors. The spiritual-educational aspect stood out as a primary mission of the organization. When reading the introduction to the Ledger, one could be left with the impression that education was the sole reason for the founding of the Association, as there is no mention of economic factors. The introduction notes that, when the tradesmen banded into one organization, their intention was to establish principles "by which they should all conduct themselves and walk in the good and upright path before G-d and man, grasping hold of proper deeds and choosing good over evil" The expression "grasping hold of proper deeds" is indeed an economic term, but [Page 49]

since it is surrounded with expressions from the spiritual realm, it implies that professional conduct is a traditional obligation. The principle of mutual assistance found its expression in the regulations regarding visiting the sick and performing last rites for deceased members (ensuring a minyan in the home of the deceased

- regulation 21). The Association lays out the matter of visiting the sick immediately in the first regulations of the ledger. Rule 12 discusses the special fund for this purpose, with income from a set weekly fee, backed by the sanction that anyone derelict in payment invalidates himself from a leadership role, from rights to receive an aliya to the Torah, and of course from being able to receive assistance from the Bikur Cholim fund. We do not know why the Association saw it necessary to restrict family members from the right to receive assistance "each person according to his value and according to his needs" during their times of illness. The Association further deemed it necessary to specify that the Bikur Cholim funds were not to be used for any other purpose (Rule 3 of the 1859 regulations). From communal documents, we are given the impression that at the beginning, the tailors did not have a special fund for Bikur Cholim, and made use of the general fund for this purpose, falling under the auspices of the "Bikur Cholim and Talmud Torah" - on the basis of charity, and without imposition of a set fee. The regulations specified that the tailors were permitted to use one third of the income from the general fund for this purpose.

Since the Association was an all-encompassing body [taking care of all aspects of its business without the need to rely on any external body - ed.], it needed to establish a means of adjudicating disputes among its members. In this it followed the example of the larger community, which regarded itself as the authorized judicial body both for internal and external relations. The Association clearly wished its members to behave in a peaceful manner, without instigating controversy in the house of worship (regulation 26). A person who caused continuous disputes was liable to lose his rights as a member for one month after the first incident, and to pay a fine of eight zloty after the second incident. If the member did not mend his ways at that point, he would be expelled and his name erased from the roster of members, and "would have no portion and inheritance in the Association". In disputes relating to professional matters, the members were obligated to bring the matter to the leadership of the Association. If they could not resolve the dispute, they were to turn to the rabbi and rabbinical judges. They were forbidden to deviate from this protocol. In particular, it was forbidden to turn to "another place", that is, to the civil or government court. Such an appeal to "another place" would be punished with utmost severity, which was expulsion from the group (regulation 25).

Relationship to the Communal Government. The leadership body that was authorized to represent the Jewish community in every place was the communal leadership ("the Kahal"). Its authority was recognized by the Jews as well as by the civil government. The rabbi and the rabbinical judges served as delegates to the community government. The reins of communal leadership were held by the wealthy class, and in general there was no role for the tradesmen. The authority of the leadership was felt throughout the community, and the leadership was not prepared to forego or restrict this. In this environment, a long history of disputes is recorded in the annals of the communities and in tradesmen's organizations of Poland, wherein the tradesmen appear to be demanding more rights, especially with regard to the tax burden and fund auditing. One section of these larger disputes concerns the right of the tradesmen to maintain their own house of worship. Some echoes of this struggle in Mezritsh are evident in the first chapter

[of the regulations]. In the ledger we are examining here, we get the impression that the Association recognized the authority of the community leadership without restriction and had made its peace with this state of dependence. This view is expressed in the introduction to the Ledger,

[Page 50]

where it is unambiguously stated that the community leadership had the right of enforcement within the community. We also find three certifications of the regulations issued by the community. What is more interesting is that the rights of the rabbi and communal leaders are discussed immediately in the first section of the regulations, as if this were a matter of top priority. Evidence of this is in the discussion of the rights to an aliya to the Torah: the leaders of the Association were duty-bound to bear this clearly in mind, for if they did not, they could be removed from office. The prominence of this matter and the severe punishment for its violation speaks for itself, and requires no commentary. See above regarding the authority of the rabbi and the rabbinical judges.

The Leadership of the Association. A committee of eighteen people stood at the helm of the Association (their honorary title was "aluf")[21]. From the listing of members of the leadership committee over the course of three years, it apparently included four gabbaim, four deputy gabbaim, four accountants, four supervisors, and one trustee of Bikur Cholim. Two additional men were added to this group. One was the "guardian of regulations" whose job apparently was to serve as the advisor in all matters of the interpretation and implementation of the regulations. The second was the job of "g-t", and to my dismay, I have not been able to figure out what this means, or what his task was. One year, the job of "trustee of the Association" was mentioned. These eighteen men formed the large committee. The de facto executive committee included the four gabbaim, who apparently carried out their duties in rotation, with each one serving for one month (the "monthly gabbai", similar to the "monthly parnas" in the communal leadership). The tasks of the mashgichim [overseers] are not clarified sufficiently. Apparently, when a trustee of the Association is not mentioned specifically (such as the director of accounts), one of the accountants (the audit committee) also served as the cashier. The leadership committee held office for one year, and its composition was changed after each year. This is not stated explicitly here, but we cannot assume that the situation in Mezritsh was any different from the practice in all other organizations.

The 18 men did not attain their jobs through elections, but rather by appointment. This task of appointment was conducted by "arbitrators" whose names were drawn by lot from amongst all the members, except for those who had lost their right to enter the drawing by any of the means mentioned above. The Association did not set the number of arbitrators or define when change of leadership should take place. Evidence in the Ledger leads us to surmise that this was after Passover. The Association kept to the dates strictly and demanded that the work of the arbitrators should be conducted within eight days (regulation 2). The work of the arbitrators was paid for with a fee of 12 zloty. The job of the arbitrators was considered to be of high value, and the organization granted them a special right - the right to bring two new members into the Association. The registration fees of these new members were given to the arbitrators as a gift, so

that they could arrange a [celebratory] meal (regulation 3). It was explicitly stated that the intent was to add full new members and not lajiek who would only attain the status of members with full rights after three years (regulation 6). In order to prevent collusion [among the arbitrators], based on family preferences or other reasons, relatives or business associates were forbidden by regulation from serving together as arbitrators. This same restriction was also placed on the arbitrators in the selection of the eighteen men. There was an additional regulation regarding the selection of a gabbai - a person selected to serve as gabbai must have first served as an accountant (regulation 5). The four gabbaim [Page 51]

were accorded special honors and received an aliya on holidays according to a rotation (regulation 1 from 1859). One of the gabbaim served as the distributor of aliyas to the Torah for the entire year (ibid, regulation 2). If two gabbaim were present at a festive celebration (two or more, but not one), they were allowed to take five zloty from the coffers of the Association. This would be some form of remuneration for representation.

Finances. The financial matters were complex. There was a weekly collection of payments (this was still the practice in the various organizations at the beginning of the 20th century). Payments were made with two types of coins: zloty and reichstaler. There were two funds: the Bikur Cholim fund and the general fund. The latter apparently supported the financial affairs of the house of worship. Since there is no data, we do not know how these things were actually handled. In any case, matters were conducted with strictness. It was forbidden to take money from the Bikur Cholim fund for any need [other than the illness of a member]. Expenditures had to be approved by the entire leadership, or at least the majority. The listing of registration fees had to be done only by the Committee of Eighteen. Loans [from the Bikur Cholim fund] were forbidden. Bikur Cholim affairs were conducted within a closed loop: a special account that was funded by set sources of income, and from which money was drawn only for specified needs. In the addendum to the regulations of 1859, which was listed in error between regulations 12 and 13 in the founding charter of 1834, the trustee was obligated to make up, from his own pocket, any expenditure made from the Bikur Cholim fund that was not in accordance with regulations, even if the expenditure was made with the agreement of the gabbaim.

The annual balance sheet of the general fund (which included the house of worship), showed income from various sources: registration fees in general, and registration fees of young men after their marriage in particular, semi-annual fees, fees for the promotion from the status of lajiek to full membership, proceeds from the acceptance of youths as apprentices, payments by employees, payments by independent tradesmen who did not wish to join the organization, fines of various sorts, and above all - income from the sale of seats in the synagogue and aliyas to the Torah. From the details, we cannot learn much about the types of expenditures. Only two types of payment are noted: a payment to the arbitrators and representative payment for the gabbaim. There would obviously have been other expenditures, over and above the expenditures for the maintenance of the house of worship.

Summary. In our study, we have drawn all that can be learned about the circle of life of the tailors of Mezritsh from the little information that we have. We have also attempted to understand the matter from a general societal perspective. The picture we have painted is not particularly rich in detail, but nevertheless, it is clear enough. The impression is that this was a segment of the community that gave of its energies for the elevation of the human dignity of its members as well as for the improvement of the way of life of the city in general. Indeed, both darkness and light are merged in this picture. The guilds and the closed attitude, examples of the economic life of times gone by, tell of the narrow horizons that prevented the progress of economic and societal life. The development of trades in backward Poland, and of Jewish trades in particular, were the result of these historical phenomena. However, life changed and moved along, as new influences forced their way into the arena. These influences increased to the point where, at the beginning of the 20th century, they produced the modern form of

[Page 52]

professional unions and political parties. There was a differentiation between employers and employees. Despite this fact employers, who were independent tradesman and could be considered to be among the burgher class and owned their own work tools, did not rise from poverty and social and economic lowliness. As we evaluate the scale of light and shadows in the social stratum with which we have dealt on these pages, we cannot hide from the positive and encouraging nature of human dedication to society through tangible acts of mutual assistance and constant emphasis on the desire to follow "the good and upright path". This social foundation, with the house of worship serving as the focal point for social and communal unity, is of utmost importance.

Translator and Editor's Footnotes

HaMelitz - A Hebrew newspaper edited and published by Alexander Zederbaum. First published in Odessa in 1860, then moved to St. Petersburg in 1971. Its objective was to "mediate between the Jews and the Government and between faith and enlightenment". It was the most prominent newspaper published in the Russian empire for several decades, and was a forum for the nationalistic ideas of modern Eastern European Jews . Source: The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881 by Israel Bartal , translated by Chaya Naor, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. return

Poland was part of Russia from 1862-1918. return

Menorat ha-Maor - Refers to Isaac Aboab who lived in Spain during the 1300's , and authored a book of rabbinic lore of that name, which was translated into Yiddish in Vilnius in 1880. return

The law of shaatnez forbids the intermixing of wool and linen in a garment. See Leviticus 19:19. This law would of course be of significance for tailors. return

A footnote in the original text notes: "In those days, Mezritsh was the property of Prince Czartoryski." return

There is a footnote marker in the text here, but no footnote. return

Shtibel - literally "little house" or "little room" which served as a house of prayer. It could be located inside a synagogue, in a private home or in a place of business return

A footnote in the original text notes: "As is known, the village peddlers joined and after some time (we do not know exactly when), the butchers also joined." return Tal is the prayer for dew recited at Musaf on the first day of Passover, and Geshem is the prayer for rain recited at Musaf on Shemini Atzeret. Both are considered to be among the cantorial highlights of the liturgical year. return

There is a footnote in the original text at the bottom of page 36, however the specific location on the page is not noted. The footnote reads: "See Meir Eidelbaum, The Jewish City of Mezritsh, page 98, which states that the building was finished in the year 1170." return

There is a footnote in the original text at the bottom of page 37, however the specific location on the page is not noted. The footnote reads: "Here refers to a synagogue - their own mansion that was called the Tailors Shtibel - which stood opposite the synagogue." return

Evidently there is a typographical error in this line; it should either say "Seven registrations", or "two from 1848 and three from 1849". return

This is a reference to Tuesday, where the phrase "and G-d saw that it was good" is included twice during the creation story in Genesis (Gen1:10-12). return

In formal writing, years are often referred to as an acrostic based on a biblical verse. A note appears later (on page 40) indicating that this is the year 1834. The verse is from Deuteronomy 33:21. return

A rough paraphrasing of Exodus 35:32-33 return

Ecclesiastes 13:13. return

The reason for this ruling seems to be to prevent arbitrators from overstepping their bounds by promoting new members before their appointed time. return

Tyktin, also known as Tykocin, located at 53°12' N 22°47' E, about 84 miles due north of Mezritsh. return

There are two words in Hebrew, gabbai and ne'eman, both of which translate to "trustee", but apparently refer to different tasks. When the word "ne'eman" appears in the original, we have used "trustee" as a translation. Elsewhere, where the author used "gabbai" or the plural "gabbaim", we have retained the Hebrew. return

25th of Iyar. return

Aluf - (Hebrew) - chief, General return

« [Previous Page](#) [Table of Contents](#) [Next Page](#) »

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Yizkor Book Project Manager, Lance Ackerfeld
This web page created by Max Heffler

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