

JEWISH SPORTS CLUBS IN KUTNO

by Wolf MANCZYK, Karkur

The activity of Jewish sports clubs in Kutno was a link in the chain of general social Jewish life in the city. Hundreds of young people had physical education in the clubs, with straightening their backs and raising their heads, competing in the various sports venues with Polish teams, often defeating them with high results. The various sections, such as gymnastics, athletics, and soccer – have given the Jewish youth of the poor homes the opportunity to "straighten their bones" and enjoy plenty of air, sun, water.

I have compiled the following description on the basis of my own diary, which now allows me to tell in detail about Jewish sports life in Kutno.

The Start

As I later learned, the Jewish Association for Sports and Gymnastics was founded in Kutno in 1924 (J.A.G.S.). It was a non-partisan and apolitical organization, which included Bundists, Zionists and ordinary Jews: Holcman Bernard, Kirszbaum Herman, Bromberg, Turbowicz, Buki Yosef, Kirszbaum Kopel, Blumenzon Aharon, Markiewicz and others.

The club has conducted a variety of activities in all areas of sports. In particular, it excelled in the gymnastics section with its gifted instructor Zajde. The section has often organized public demonstrations and showed its achievements. The J.A.G.S. also had its own orchestra.



Sports-club "HaGvura" ("Courage") (1926)



Soccer group "Bar-Kochba" (1923)

The following history of the club is unknown to me. It seems to me that, due to internal frictions, the club was later liquidated.

The year 1925 showed a great activity in the Jewish sports clubs, which were formed in that period: "*Hasmonean*", "*Bar-Kochba*", "*Jardenia*" and "*HaGvura*". They only got football teams and conducted among themselves friendly-matches. The strongest teams were from "*Bar-Kochba*" and "*Jardenia*". The composition of each team was as follows:

"*Hasmonean*": David Żychlinski (goalkeeper); Aharon Klar, Hersh Szczig (defender); Nachmush Ajzenman, Cheniek Kozak, Heniek Opoczinski (midfielder); Feivel Meller, Shimon Gurduk, Yehuda Sztajn, Alek Opoczinski and Mendelson (attackers).

"*Bar-Kochba*": Beirech Fajencki, Moshe Rosenblum, Yukl Łęczycki, M. A. Kowalski (2), Abraham Gąbinski, Kopel, Hersh Menche, Zalman Tymianko, Israel Frenkel, Yaakov Cymberknopf.

"*Jardenia*": Shimon Kac, Moshe Moszkowicz, Israel Goldsztajn, Shiya Fajber, Pinchas Marcus, Herman Celeminski, Abraham Sztajn, Chane Blum, Noah Teplicki, Kune Menche, Mordechai (Mondrik) Lifszic.

"*HaGvura*": Pinie Rak, L. Zakszewski, Felix Tajchner, Salek Walter, Abraham Łęczycki, Welcman, L. Wajnsztajn, Shiye Zandberg, G. Borkowski, Borowski, Peretz Walter, Eidek Majranc.

Unfortunately, even these clubs did not survive for long. If I am not mistaken, the football section of "*Jardenia*" merged in 1929 with the just emerging Workers' Society for Physical Education "*Morgensztern*"

and from the remaining three clubs, two new ones were formed: "*Maccabi*" and "*Sztern*" ("*Gwiazda*").

The new clubs already manifested a pronounced partisan character.

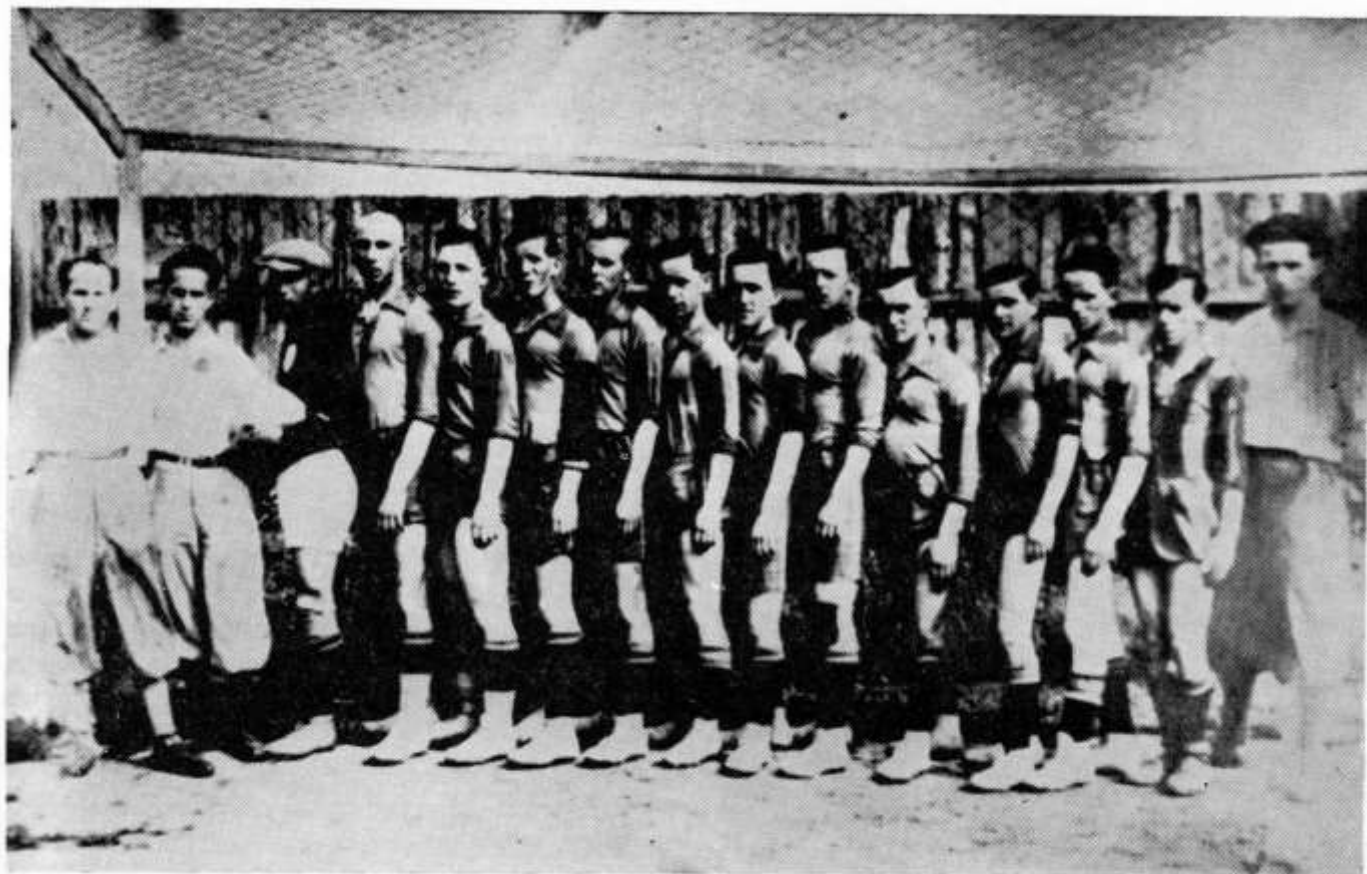
'*Morgensztern*' ('*Jutrznia*')

This club had several exemplary sports sections: gymnastics, football, ping-pong, and athletics. Its gymnastics section had unconditionally occupied the top position thanks to its favorite instructor Kopel Kirszbaum. The section was divided into several groups, a first group (Zaken Asz, Chaim Grinbaum, Noah Teplicki, Shlomo Kowalski and others), as well as the rhythmic group with the Frenkel girls, E. Fuks, L. Fuks, Kozak, Paula Manczyk and many others. The acrobatic group had also a name and fame, with athletes: Y. Grajder, Y. Ogurek, Szpilman, Y. Goldberg, M. L. Menche and others. Twice a year (summer – at the *Sokół* Stadium, winter – in the old theater), the group organized gymnastics shows.

All groups were rewarded with strong applause during their performances, had their adherents and supporters. Its own orchestra always accompanied the athletes during their performances.

It is worth noting that in 1931, Workers' Olympics were held in Vienna, in which a representation of the "*Morgensztern*" also took part. And among the representatives, three outstanding Jewish athletes from Kutno: Kopel Kirszbaum, Zaken Asz and Chaim Grinbaum.

Two years later, at the Workers' Olympics in Brussels (1933), the Kutner "*Morgensztern*" again sent to the Polish representation two of his athletes: Chaim



"*Jutrznia Morgensztern*" – 1928

Grinbaum and Leah Fuks, showing the high level of the club.

The football section of "*Morgensztern*" was a household name both inside and outside the city. After 1929, the section defeated Kutner "*Strzelec*" 3:2. The competition took place on the military sports field on the *Piaskes*¹ and had a very dramatic unfolding. In the first half-hour of play, *Strzelec* led 2:0. But at the break, "*Morgensztern*" managed to equalize – 2:2. At the very end of the second-half, Moszkowicz managed to score the third and decisive goal. The previous two goals were scored by Alter-Shaye Fuks and Chane Blum.

Later, the same team claimed a victory over Włocławek "*Maccabi*" – 2:1. The composition of the "*Morgensztern*" footballers was as follows: Mendel Żurawski, F. Marcus, M. Z. Blank, Zelig Dawicki, Ch. Rotsztajn, Gabriel Hirszbajn, Leib Nossal, Wolf Manczyk, Noah Teplicki, Chane Blum, Moshe Moszkowicz. The following were also defeated:

"*Maccabi*" Kutno (6:0 and 2:2), "*HaKoach*" Łęczyca (3:0), "*Parowóz*" Kutno (5:1), "*Kutnowianka*" (1:1) and "*Sokół*" (4:1). The athletes were then in good shape and the Jewish population enthusiastically greeted the players.

I remember the match against "*Tur*" on the *Piaskes*. When the Jewish athletes scored the first goal, a scuffle broke out, accompanied by antisemitic shouts and bullying. The game was interrupted, Dawicki and Abraham-Yitzhak Sztajn were injured.

In 1931 we achieved a draw result (0:0) with the famous Włocławek "*Maccabi*".

In 1932, the national championships began – and "*Morgensztern*" had to play with "*Maccabi*" and J.A.G.S. of the three Jewish clubs, "*Morgensztern*" took the upper hand, notwithstanding the fact that the antisemitic national association has assigned it to the "C" class. We were not disappointed, because in the same year, after twenty matches, we lost only 3 points and thus showed our ability. In 1933 we were transferred to the "B" class.

1933 was not to be noted. No special victories, except over the "*Kutnowianka*" (5:2), which was a prelude to the official match between the Warsaw "*Gwiazda-Sztern*" and "*Tim*" Kutno, which ended with the victory of the Jewish team (3:2).

The other two Jewish Kutner sports clubs – "*Maccabi*" and J.A.G.S. have played in class "C".

In 1934, a Workers' Sports holiday was organized in Łódź county, combined with an international football competition with Danzig Workers' representation. The Łódź team included three players from Kutner's "*Morgensztern*": Wolf Manczyk, Yurek Ogurek and Zelig Dawicki.

Among the athletes who excelled at the time, one must first mention: Mendel Żurawski, Noah Teplicki, Chane Blum and others.

The management of "*Morgensztern*" expressed great concern for the players and members of the club, but

at the same time also had in mind their political education. In 1935, differences of opinion erupted on these grounds and some valuable players left the club (Yukush Grajder, Wolf Manczyk, Itzik Tymianko, Hersh Kozak and Abram-Yitzhak Sztajn).

A second group of players, after leaving the "*Morgensztern*", joined "*Maccabi*".



"*Maccabi*" Jewish Association for Sports and Gymnastics (member card of Abraham Lustigman)

"*Maccabi*" – J.A.G.S.

"*Maccabi*" in Kutno was founded in 1930. As the organization incorporated many left-wing elements, with pronounced political goals, the sports club had no longevity. After a severe crisis, a new board of directors was elected in 1931, headed by Aharon Frankensztajn. At the request of the members, the name of the club was changed to Ż.T.G.S. ("*Żydowskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczno-Sportowe*" – "Jewish Association for Gymnastics and Sports") and included many Jewish youth from all circles, divided into the following sections: Gymnastics (led by an experienced instructor Krakowski), ping-pong, football.

In the gymnastics section excelled: Klar Aharon, Warszawczyk Moshe, Kozak Moshe, Tymianko Zalman, Wecler Moshe, Rozenberg Moshe, Klingbajl Chaim-David. For the women: Dora and Edrza Fuks, Metal, Malka Frenkel and others.

The ping-pong section soon won the Kutner Circle championship. The most important players were: Kenig Abraham, Kaliszer Itzik, Kurbicz Moshe, Bricman Abraham, Frankensztajn Aharon.

The football section had in its ranks: Rozenblum Pinchas, Goldberg Itzik, Sztajn Abraham-Yitzhak, Łęczycki Y., Kurbicz Moshe, Grinbaum Chaim, Lifszic Z., Menche Hersh, Tymianko Zalman, Krenig A., Szajnberg Yankel, Goldberg Yankel and Moszkowicz Gecel.

This section did not play a major role among the Jewish clubs, but its merit was to bring to Kutno foreign clubs and clubs from other cities, in order to popularize the idea of sports among the Jewish youth. Thanks to this

¹ TN: haymarket.

came to Kutno in 1931: the famous Viennese "*HaKoach*", which played with the local "*Sokół*" a match, winning with a very high result – 8: 0; The Łódźer "*Maccabi*" and "*HaKoach*", the Warsawer "*Gwiazda*" and "*Maccabi*" and other recognized Jewish clubs.

J.A.G.S. had its own orchestra, led by Benjamin Witkowski. The orchestra also gave concerts and was popular in Kutno and surroundings.

Later, due to lack of funds, J.A.G.S. was dissolved, in order to re-establish the "*Maccabi*".

"Gwiazda" – "Sztern"

And now, a few words about the Jewish Workers' Sports Club "*Sztern*" ("*Gwiazda*"): this was an exclusive workers' club, affiliated with the left-Zionist Workers' Party "*Poalei-Zion*". The club had only one football section, which played friendly matches with weak teams. I remember only one match very much with the unofficial representative of "*Morgensztern*" on the *Piaszkes*, ending with victory of the last, 3:1. The young players of "*Sztern*" have played with a lot of ambition against stronger footballers. To the players of "*Sztern*" have belonged: Woronowski Tuvia, Blank M., Blank M. L., Ossowski Yosef, Pietrkowski Wolf, Pasirsztajn Shmuelik, Nosol Leib, Menche Kune, Zajdenward Shlomo, Sztajn Abrahamshe, Hirszbajn Gabriel.

The following were elected to the board: Osowski Lozer, Kowalski Yosef, Lustigman Abraham'le, Kenig Meir, Blank Berish.

"*Gwiazda – Sztern*" did not exist for a long time. Some of its players went to "*Morgensztern*" (Blank Moshe-Lozer, Nosol Leib, Hirszbajn Gabriel) and some to

"*Maccabi*" (Woronowski Tuvia, Zajdenwar Shlomo, Domanowicz Shmuel).

The Sports Club of Beitar

At that time there was another Jewish sports club in Kutno, *Beitar*, which had a weak football team and a ping-pong section. Of the footballers, I remember the following names: Osowski (a redhead), Bennett Abraham, Klingbajl Eliezer, Gajst Shmuelik, Mroz Simcha, Koloszinski Moshe-Ozer, Buksztajn Shimon, Jakubowicz H., Gnot Salek, Kinstler Heniek, Koloszinski Leibel.

On the other hand, the ping-pong section was very active and took part in the Kutno Championship. Most important players: Kohn Hersh, Łeczycki Godel, Fast Israel, Gajst Shmuelik, Braun Leib, Gnot Falek.

The name of the club made it clear: it was politically and organizationally under the responsibility of the Revisionist youth organization *Beitar*.

The Renewed "Maccabi"

Regarding the new "*Maccabi*", which was formed again after the dissolution of the J.A.G.S., the following members were selected to the board: Bromberg, Turbowicz, Korn Menachem, Markewicz Israel.

The new management worked tirelessly for the club, recruiting coaches and instructors who prepared new cadres for the club. On both days of Shavuot 1936, the "*Maccabi*" athletes went to Koło to compete with the local "*Maccabi*" in football, volleyball and basketball. In football, the Kutners won by 3:1. The goals were scored by: Zakszewski Lolek, Szpajer Motek and Albert Kain.



Soccer players of "*Maccabi*" (1932)

After that, a match was played with Kutno's representatives, in which such "stars" as Dadek Ludwikowski, Reclaw Antosz, Żabicki St., Gąsiorowski St., Truszczyński Yosef and other outstanding players took part. Nevertheless, "Maccabi" was not weaker on the field than the opposing team with its famous names. It was added that "Maccabi" even led a certain moment 1:0 (after the first 15 minutes). Unfortunately, at the break, it was 2:4 in favor of the opponents due to the weakness of the "Maccabi" goalkeeper Kuszmira Shlamek. After the break, the ambitious game completely changed the result 3:4 in favor of the opponents. An incident broke out here and the game was abandoned. The small difference (1 goal) showed the great achievement of club.

The club then received a training site on Sienkiewicza St 21 (Majzel's site) and also achieved the coveted advance, moving to class "B". Moreover, in 1937, "Maccabi" was admitted to the competition for the cup of sub-districts Kutno-Włocławek. Among the 12 clubs in the competition, "Maccabi" took the fourth place (after "Sokół", KPW and "Boruta"). Out of 22 games, it scored 24 points.

The culmination of all these achievements was allowing Kutno's *Maccabi* to enter the "A" class, with the champion of Włocławek sub-district, L.K.S. Lipno. "Maccabi" lost the match with a small difference (1:2), due to the fact that some of its good players were away in

military service (Albert Kain, Praszker Yitzhak, Welcman Moshe, Manczyk Wolf – who later played in "Maccabi" Płock) and Falc Abraham, who had immigrated to *Eretz Israel*.

The return-match in Lipno did not take place, because "Maccabi" Kutno forfeited it, knowing about the antisemitic moods and hooliganism in that city.

In the cup competition of 1937, our "Maccabi" marked some significant achievements, such as: with "Mazowia" Płock 2:1 (the goals were scored by Albert and Tymianko) and then 3:0 (a "walkover");

With D.K.S. Dobrzelin 4:3 and 5:1. In the first competition the goals were scored by Albert – 2, Zakszewski – 2. In the second, Albert – 3, Grajder – 2;

With R.Z. Żychlin – 4:4 and 4:3 (Falc Samek – 2 goals, Albert – 1, Kurbiacz – 1; Welcman – 2, Albert – 1, Zakszewski – 1).

With K.P.W. Kutno – 7:4 and 2:6 (Zakszewski – 3, Albert – 2, Falc Felek – 2; Grajder and Falc Felek – 1 each).

With "Jutrznia" Kutno – 4:2 and 0:0 (Albert – 2; Falc Samek – 1, Tymianko – 1).

With "HaPoel" Płock – 3:0 and 1:0 (Kurbiacz – 1, Albert – 1, Lidoer – 1; Albert – 1).

With K.P.W. Skierniewice – 2:3 and 5:2 (Zakszewski – 2; Welcman – 2, Grajder – 2, Grinbaum Shlamek – 1).



"Gwiazda-Sztern" (1930)

With "Strzelec" Kutno, champion club – 5:3 and 2:2 (Zakszewski – 2, Falc Samek – 2, Welcman – 1; Grader – 1, Albert – 1).

With W.K.S. ("Boruta") Kutno – 0:8 and 3:5 (the goals scored in the second match: Grader, Falc and Manczyk).



Felek Falc z'I

According to the "goal-scoring" classification, "Maccabi" had the best of all clubs: Albert Kain, who scored 15 goals. Next, the following players of "Maccabi": Falc Samek – 10, Grajder Yukush – 9, Zakszewski Lolek – 8, Welcman Moshe – 5, Tymianko Itzik – 8, Manczyk Wolf, Kurbicz Moshe and Falc Felek – 2 each, Grinbaum Shlamek – 1.

Thanks to its success, *Maccabi* Kutno was allowed to move up to the top tier.

In March 1938, we went out to see our comrade Albert Kain, who was going for military service. Around the covered tables, with the singing of "Sto Lat"² ("One Hundred Years") and "HaTikva", after the heartfelt farewell words of colleague Bromberg, we parted ways with our good friend Albert, talented instructor and skilled footballer. On the outbreak of war, he went off to the front and later returned from captivity. He perished in the Kutno ghetto. Honor his memory!

The contests "Maccabi" – "Morgensztern"

The matches between the two Jewish sports clubs have always evoked interest, excitement, attraction. Although "Maccabi" was a more consolidated and disciplined club, most of the matches were won by "Jutrznia–Morgensztern", due to their ambition and willingness to sacrifice. In the year of the outbreak of war, both clubs had the following players:

"Maccabi": Braun Leib, Lidoer Yechiel, Manczyk Wolf, Tymianko Itzik, Zylber Leib, Kozak Hersh, Zakszewski L., Grajder Y., Grinbaum Shlamek, Albert Kain, Falc Samek. Reservists: Welcman Moshe, Jakubowicz Shlamek, Kurbicz Moshe, Sztajn Abraham, Praszker Itzik, Łeczycki Godel, Sochaczewski Abraham,

Wajnsztajn Fredek, Baum Mietek. Kaplan Yukush, Pukacz and Szwarc Melech.

"Morgensztern–Jutrznia": Żurawski Mendel, Goldman Lozer, Moszkowicz Berel, Rotsztajn Israel, Ogurek Y., Dowicki Zelik, Żurawski Yoel, Goldberg Yosef, Manczyk Abraham, Blum Chane, Kochin Rafael. Reservists: Menche M. L., Pakulski Motek, Gajer Yechiel, Moszkowicz Shlomo, Fuks Nachum, Gonszor.

*

The German aggression on Poland on September 1, 1939, put an end to the fruitful sports activities of the Jewish clubs in Kutno, just as the whole of Jewish-social life was stopped. The clubs were closed, the athletes disbanded – and only a few members of the Jewish clubs, the footballers, the athletes, the gymnasts, the countless sympathizers and the visitors were left alive. Those who fled to Russia and immigrated to the Jewish state after the war escaped.

About the surviving athletes, I know the following names:

In Israel – Falc Samek and Abraham, Manczyk Wolf, Grajder Yukush, Żurawski Mendel, Grinbaum Chaim, Tajchner Felek, Sochaczewski Abraham, Blank Moshe-Lozer, Sztajn Abraham-Yitzhak, Klingbajl Eliezer, Osowski Lozer, Koloszinski Moshe. Among those who came to *Eretz Israel* after the war were: Walter Salek, Rak Pinie, Wajnsztajn Lolek, Zandberg Shiye and Motek.

In Poland remained: Praszker Yitzhak, Moszkowicz Moshe, Monczyk Abraham.

In Canada: Szpajer Motek, Marcus Pinchas, Rotsztajn Israel, Goldberg Yosel, Moszkowicz Gecel, Liwszak Abraham.



Dramatic circle with theater director Yaakov Wajslc z'I (1919?)

Yiddish Theater and Dramatic Circle

To conclude my memoirs about the Jewish sports clubs in Kutno, I would like to share a few memories about the activity of a Jewish theater and a dramatic circle in our city. True, it has no direct relation to sport, but given how often the orchestra of "Morgensztern" took part in the performances and how certain sportsmen were also

² TN: Polish birthday song.

occupied and loved the stage activity – there is still a connection between the two forms of Jewish-social life in our town.

The first dramatic circle, led by Israel-Yaakov Lisner, was formed at the Craftsmen's Union. In a later period, it became independent. The artist-amateurs have



"Maccabi" orchestra (1916)

exhibited numerous activities on the field. The plays which they performed: "The Wild Man"³, "Yidl's Bar-Mitzvah", "The Romanian Wedding"⁴ and others.

Among the amateur artists of the circle, I have heard:

Yosef Grajder (Pakulski), Elbaum Michael, Epsztajn Israel, Lichtensztajn Israel, Frenkel Nissan, Abramowicz Leah, Rozenberg Rachel, Prync Chava.

Kutner Jews have prided themselves on their dramatic circles and artists. The excellent orchestra of "*Jutrznia-Morgensztern*" often accompanied the performances. The orchestra was conducted by Benjamin Witkowski. Miss Poliakewicz often accompanied them on the piano.

The *Bund's* youth organization "*Zukunft*" had an amateur troupe named "Revue", led by Glowinski Hersh-Meir. Some plays were performed by our famous singer Kupfer, by profession a printer-worker. The "Revue" included:

Bloom Chana, Grinbaum Chaim, Blum Feivish, Asz Zaken, Menche Moshe-Lemel, Fuks Leah, Czarne Manie, Pitel Roize, Frenkel Esther.

The ensemble was beloved in town and also in the surroundings, where it used to perform on tour.

Of all the artists listed, only Fuks Leah and Grinbaum survived (now in Israel). The others, like most athletes, were killed in *Kiddush HaShem*.

Let these memories be an anniversary light on their unknown graves...

³ TN: play by Jacob Gordin, 1893.

⁴ TN: operetta by Moyshe Shor's, music by Perec Sandler (1915).