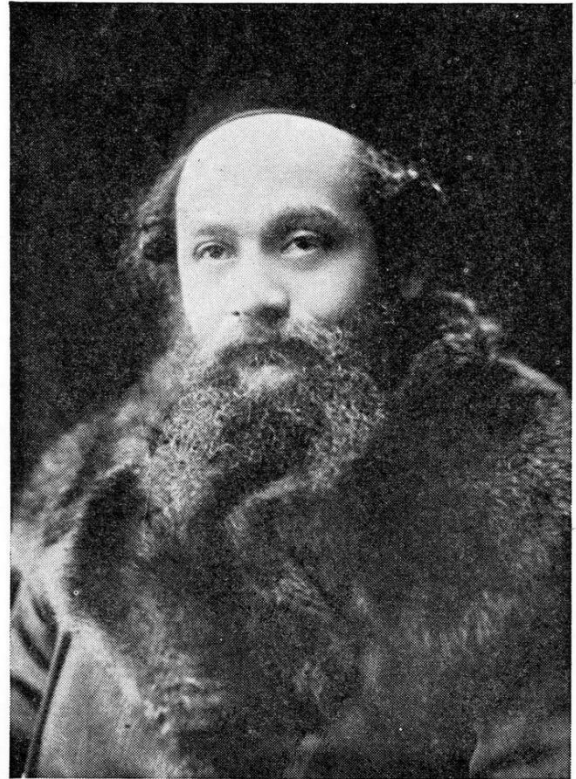


in appearance to R' Yehoshie'le). At the age of 18, he became the son-in-law of R' Shmuel Bornsztajn³, the son of Sochaczewer Rabbi R' Abrahamele, whose eldest daughter Frimet became his wife. There, in Sochaczew's courtyard where the Torah genius R' Abrahamele laid his seal and under his supervision and guidance, the Kutner prodigy reached a high level of Torah study.



Regarding this Sochaczewer period of his life, he writes in the introduction to the book *Yevin Daat* by R' Israel Yehoshua (Piotrków, 1932): "And there, I took care to purify and refine the end of the book... and also the words of the book *Avnei Nezer* of Honored Holiness the *Admor cho"z*⁴ Gaon of Israel and Saint from Sochaczew ztz"l, with whom I had the privilege of studying Torah and who considered me as one of his sons, may his virtue be with us...". In Sochaczew, he sat on the Torah and on the work for about seven years.

In 1905, the Jewish community in Lubraniec (a town not far from Włocławek) invited him to occupy the rabbinical chair there. He did not stay for a long time in this somewhat forgotten Kujawer place.

In 1907, when the post of rabbi in Ciechanów was vacated, following the death of the rabbi there, the Ciechanów community invited him to the post. He lived in Ciechanów for more than five years, until 1912 and became very popular with the Jewish population. In the "Book of Remembrance of the Ciechanów Jewish Community" (Tel Aviv, 1962) we read in the memoirs of a local resident, Sh. Rotsztajn, the following characteristics of the then Ciechanów Rabbi:

THE RABBI YITZHAK YEHUDA TRUNK (5639-5699, 1879-1939)

Rabbi Yitzhak Yehuda Trunk, a son of Rabbi Moshe Pinchas and a grandson of the well-known Rabbi Israel-Yehoshua (Rabbi Shie'le Kutner), was born in Adar 5639¹ in Kutno, when his great grandfather was the Rabbi of Kutno. Raised in the atmosphere of a cult for his grandfather, and under his spiritual supervision, he early on showed abilities. When R' Yehoshua died (on 25 Tammuz 5653²), he was already a year after *Bar Mitzvah*. Kutner scholars wanted to see in him a future successor of his famous grandfather (in his older years he was similar

¹ TN: February-March 1879. Other date mentioned: 13 December 1878.

² TN: July 9th, 1893.

³ TN: second Sochaczewer Rebbe (16 October 1855, Kock – 10 January 1926, Otwock).

⁴ TN: Hebrew abbreviation, "*chotan zaken*", the grandfather of his wife.

"With his knowledge of the Torah, scholarship, wisdom and love for people, he made many friends. His house was open to everyone. Especially to young men who wanted to learn. During his tenure in Ciechanów, Rabbi Trunk did many good deeds for the local community. Through his initiative, the new synagogue was built (the old synagogue was burnt down before), and he made sure that around the cemetery should be built a cement wall... In the year 1912, when his father died in Kutno, Rabbi Yitzhak Yehuda Trunk was called by the Kutno community to be his successor. The Ciechanów Jewish community found it difficult to separate from their dear rabbi, but they realized that this was how it should be: Rabbi Yitzhak Yehuda Trunk must take the place of his great ancestors." (pp. 39-40).

After the death of his father, Rabbi Moshe Pinchas, a delegation from the Kutner community came to Ciechanów to offer him the Kutner rabbinate. The leaders of the Ciechanów, with a heavy heart, had agreed to distance themselves from their young and beloved rabbi. They realized from the start that every attempt at resistance was vain. Forces had decided, against which they were powerless: a family tradition and the name of R' Yehoshie'le, whose successful grandson was the most suitable successor to the vacant rabbinical chair.

When World War I broke out, Rabbi Trunk found himself in Germany and was interned in a civilian prison camp as a Russian citizen. Thanks to the efforts of the rabbi in Kissingen, he was released from the camp and allowed to return to Poland. During the Sukkot period, he arrived in Łódź, where he spent time with his family until the German occupation of congressional Poland stabilized. Before Pesach, he returned to Kutno, where he was rabbi until his death in Warsaw, on the evening of Saturday, March 11, 1939. Here, too, he gained popularity among the Jewish and even Christian population, but because of his political activities in the "*Mizrachi*", he provoked opposition from the local "*Agudah*"⁵.

He was popular and beloved by the masses, who cared about her material and spiritual condition, and by the Jewish city's intelligentsia. He was a thoroughly democratic nature (at Simchat Torah, on *Kiddush*, he used to invite all worshipers who were in the synagogue without exception, making no distinction between "Eastern Wall" Jews⁶ and ordinary Jews, much closer to the door). He possessed a deep sense of humor, was a shrewd narrator of chassidic stories that have survived in his phenomenal memory.

As Kutner rabbi, he paid much attention to the improvement of the state of the community. Thanks to his

initiative, a thorough overhaul of the synagogue was completed in 1932, which was already greatly needed (the synagogue was built in 1799). A better order has been established in all community institutions, such as the construction of a new slaughterhouse, the modernization of the interior of the *mikveh*, and the raising of the level of the *Talmud Torah*, etc. He also gave much energy to the activities of the local charity fund and collaborated with the economic office of the American "*Joint*" in finding new jobs for the impoverished and persecuted Jewish population.

He devoted much of his time to Jewish education, and was the Jewish representative on Kutner district's Board of Education, where he repeatedly sought to defend the interests of Jewish education against the attacks of the antisemitic Polish government. He paid special attention to the teaching of religion in the general schools for Jewish children and more than once taught classes in the classrooms.

In 1937, the community council celebrated the 25th anniversary of Rabbi Trunk's rabbinate, with a special large assembly in the community building. A special article was published in the Włocławeker Yiddish weekly about this event.

Rabbi Yitzhak Yehuda Trunk was a colorful figure in the rabbinical world. He united the basic elements of the traditional Polish rabbinate with a deeper understanding of the new processes in Jewish social life, in which he took an active part. In 1918, he joined the religious wing of the Zionist movement, "*Mizrachi*", where he soon rose to the top of the group of *Mizrachi* rabbis, together with Rabbi Y. L. Kowalski of Włocławek, Rabbi. Y. L. Złotnik of Gąbin, Rabbi Shmuel HaLevi Brod of Lipno and others. Rabbi Trunk participated as a delegate of the Polish "*Mizrachi*" in the Amsterdam Conference, which held its deliberations in the last days of Tevet 5680⁷. He was also a member of the *Mizrachi* delegation at the Zionist London Conference (Tammuz, 5680)⁸. At the Second Conference of Polish "*Mizrachi*" in Warsaw (You are right, he read a detailed paper on the community, which, with its proficiency and deepening of the question, aroused great and general interest and recognition)⁹ (printed in "*Mizrachi*", No. 7(159) of 1922).

He also read a lecture on the community at the third conference of "*Mizrachi*" in Warsaw (Tevet, 5682)¹⁰.

Rabbi Trunk was also elected as a delegate from "*Mizrachi*" to the 13th Zionist Congress in Carlsbad in 1923 ("*Mizrachi*", July 26, 1923, p. 9). But he, who had

⁵ TN: the political party supported by Orthodoxes. *Mizrachi* by the religious Zionists.

⁶ TN: meaning prominent citizens: Torah scholars, community leaders, rich merchants...

⁷ TN: January 1920.

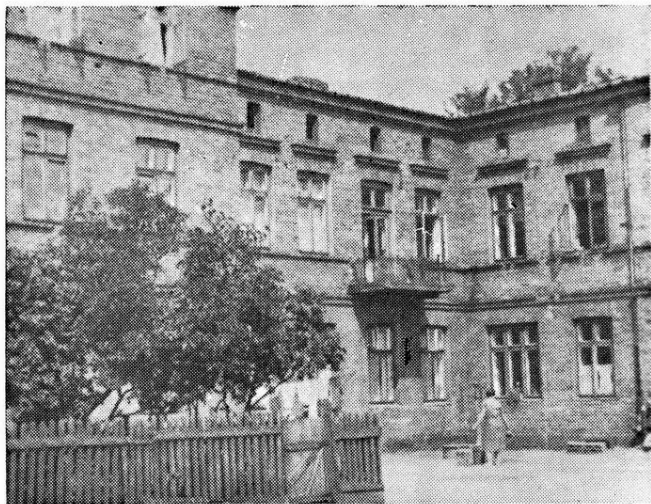
⁸ TN: July 1920, the conference where Chaim Weizmann was elected to the Presidency of the World Zionist Organization.

⁹ On the Hebrew Community (Lecture at the Second Conference of the "*Mizrachi*" in Poland, 1919), 14th of Iyar

1919, Nos. 19-21, pp. 17-20 (At the end of the paper, the editor (Yitzhak Nissenbaum) hy"d added: "This lecture was often interrupted by stormy applause and in the end, fiery ovations were made for the lecturer. The impression was so great that the offer was made without arguing at all about this lecture, only to give permission to speak to those who wish to fill it."

¹⁰ TN: December 1921 – January 1922.

already pointed out that he wanted to retire from political activity, did not go to the Congress.



The house of Rabbi Trunk

His deep interest in the activity and organization of the communities was also reflected in the fact that he was the initiator of a meeting of communities of the Kutner and Włocławek districts, in which there were rabbis and community leaders of the aforementioned regions. At this meeting, a community representative of the participating communities was formed – a revival of the old *Vaad HaGalil* in ancient Poland¹¹.

Rabbi Trunk also took an active part in the conference of *Mizrachi* rabbis (9-10 July 1923) and was a member of the presidium, as well as in the rabbinical meeting in Poland, which opened in Warsaw. On the 10th of Tevet, with the participation of more than 200 rabbis, as noted in the minutes of the conference, he proposed electing a commission for *Eretz Israel* because of opposition from the association that dominated the conference and, in order to avoid party friction between the supporters of the *Agudah* and *Mizrachi*, the proposal was rejected.

At the same time, he published in the central organ of the party, "*Mizrachi*", a large number of articles on current topics of *Mizrachi* ideology, polemical articles with the *Agudah*, and in general of Jewish social life in Poland at the time (see below in the bibliography).

In the summer of 1921, Rabbi Trunk was invited by the Kutner Former Residents Society of New York to a lengthy visit with his townspeople. Thanks to this visit, the connection between the American townspeople and their hometown has been strengthened, which has, among other things, found expression in the better organized and increased assistance for the needs of the Jewish population in the town.

Probably at the end of 1923, Rabbi Trunk withdrew from political activity and devoted himself wholeheartedly to two tasks: publishing the remaining writings of his grandfather Rabbi Israel Yehoshua, and managing the affairs of the community.

In the years 1927 and 1932, two books were published: "*Yeshuot Malko*, Kiryat Arba" (Piotrków, 1927) and "*Yevin Daat*" (Piotrków, 1932).

To these books of his great-grandfather, he added a number of pamphlets. At the end of the book "*Yeshuot Malko*", he published a short biography of R' Yehoshie'le titled "History of the Righteous" and "*Me'at Tzri*, Commentaries on the *Rambam*". Again, in the book "*Yevin Daat*" he added a number of pamphlets and Responsas titled "*Chasidei Avot*", Letters on *Pilpul* Friends and pamphlets on *Divrei Torah*", including "*Kuntres Gerem HaMaalot*", about using an automatic oven on Shabbat and "*Kuntres Hakarat Panim*", which deals with a case of suicide of a Kutner Jew, near the train station (the Jew threw himself under the train). These pamphlets, together with the answers, hold together 125 two-column pages. In the year 1936, they appeared, in the same H. Folman printing house in Piotrków, in his "*Sefer Mikre Meforash b'Orei Mikraot Sheb'Torah Al Daat Halacha v'Aggadah*" (148 pages).

His activity in order to enhance the state of the community has already been mentioned above.

In recent years, Mr. Trunk has been very sympathetic to the *Poalei Agudat Israel* Movement and has taken a keen interest in the activities of the Kutno branch, supporting them morally (he used to hold a course for them from time to time), as well as materially. He also showed a warm interest in the work of the Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO) in Vilnius, supported the annual grants of the community's administration to the institute and sympathized with the activities of the local collector's group.

Yeshayahu TRUNK, New York

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¹¹ TN: District Council.

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Mr. Yitzhak Majranc received the first honorary membership of the Jewish community of Kutno, on the suggestion of Rabbi Trunk ztz"l

attitude to the intensifying party struggle between the "*Agudah*" and the Zionists. He holds both parties responsible, not excluding "*Mizrachi*", for excessive fanaticism. He calls for mutual compromises and national unity).

This was Rabbi Trunk's latest article in "*Mizrachi*" and signals his severance from party struggles in the Jewish street).

¹² TN: Yehoshua 7:11, "... they lied and they also put them with their own possessions."

¹³ TN: Hebrew (from Talmud), (lit. "All who adds detract") – "anyone who exaggerates ("adds") detracts what is said."