

## **CHAIM TYBER**

Chaim Tyber came from a town that had a reputation in the history of Jewish culture. The old synagogue alone, built in the Renaissance style – could tell a lot about the centuries-long history of the Jews in this town. Not just one great scholar came from Kutno. From

Kutno also stems the great Jewish writer Shalom Asz. The uniqueness of the cultural atmosphere has left its mark on the people of literature and art who hail from this city.

Chaim Tyber was a young painter and graphic artist who was deeply involved in the specific way of life of the Jews of Kutno. He had to break through various difficulties, and also fighting the various ingrained traditions and superstitions, cost the artist quite a bit of strength. Chaim Tyber inherited his passion for drawing from his father, who did not have the strength to excel as an artist.

He loved to read a lot and enjoyed listening to the discussions that the adults had, but most of all he was attracted to the old books with the beautiful title pages. He spent hours thinking about these drawings. He therefore valued these books more than the contemporary books with their usual covers, which seemed to him poor compared to the books with their decorations and



Chaim Tyber z"l

ornaments. Already as a young boy, he happily imitated these lovely covers and dreamed of creating similar intricate ornaments. When he was very young, Chaim left his hometown and arrived in Łódź. From Łódź he moved to Warsaw, where he was admitted to the local art academy. There, he was mainly interested in drawing, he only dealt with painting by chance.

Tyber was both a draftsman and a pointillist. His line is easy and thin. When one gets to know his works more closely, one feels how strongly they affect the audience, thanks to the great ability of the artist to elicit the expression of the given motif. The creation of Tyber reflects in a kaleidoscope the life of the Jews in the small town in all its forms and in its hardened conservatism. Tyber takes people as they are. He looks at them with a magnifying glass and tries to bring them out as he saw them in the given second. The images of his childhood have remained in the artist's memory and remained so fresh that he enjoyed the treasure extensively while creating his compositions. He was probably born a year or two before the outbreak of World War I<sup>1</sup>, and his first

couple of years were very difficult. Some motives of his work are connected with the memories of that time.



Cheder youngsters – Chaim Tyber

At the jubilee celebration of the Jewish plastic arts workers' union in Warsaw, in the year 1939, there was a long frieze, which contained a lot of sketches by Tyber, with a Jewish theme. It was a rich gallery of small *shtetl* Jewish types. We see there old Jews with beards and long kaftans with yarmulkes on their heads. Others wear black hats with visors, from under which dull eyes look out. It feels as if the difficult living conditions have broken the people. Still these forms breathe with a special worth. The flaw of Tyber's works is their excessive naturalism. Aside from that the artist overly narrowed his theme. He did not show the youthful circles, which were already then struggling with growing fascism and nationalist repression. Tyber was the painter who had all the possibilities to show broadly the conditions of Jewish life.



Going to the *cheder* – Chaim Tyber

<sup>1</sup> TN: Chaim Tyber, born in Kutno, 1912 – died in Białystok ghetto, 1943.

In September 1939, Chaim Tyber fled to Białystok. Here he began a new life, which opened up new perspectives for him. He first developed as a painter in Białystok. It started for him to work well. He sold his drawings and pieces. There, he also married. In 1940 he participated in exhibitions in Minsk and Moscow. One of Tyber's works was reproduced in a book published in Moscow and Leningrad, entitled "Очерки по истории изобразительного искусства Беларуси" (Essays on the Plastic Arts of Belarus).

But not long did Tyber's success last. He failed to evacuate to the depths of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the German attack on the Soviet Union struck him in Białystok. He was sent to the ghetto, there. Along with many Jewish artists, he worked in [Oskar] Steffen's workshop, where he copied paintings from the world's famous masters. In his spare time, he dynamically captured scenes of the nightmare of life in the Białystok ghetto. Tyber died along with his wife and child during the second "*aktion*" in the ghetto, in 1943.

Tyber's graphics are unique images that are painted using the graphic technique. They possess a great deal of light and shadow, a great deal of expression, and are fully formed. No vacant area is noticed in his drawings.

(From the book "Deceased Jewish Artists" by Yosef Sandler. Publisher "Yiddish-Book", Warsaw, 1958. Submitted by H. Szlajfer, Paris).