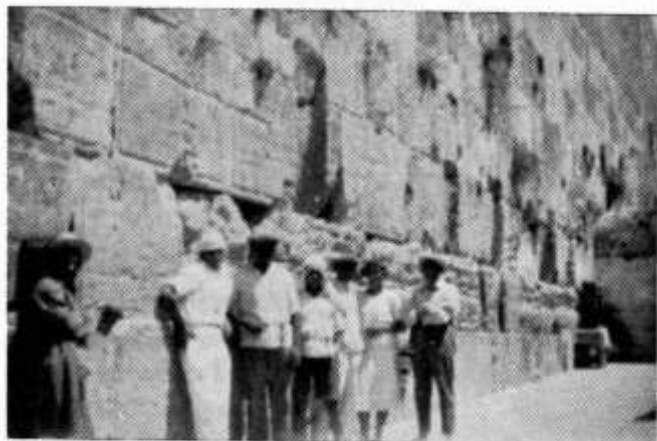


## THE FIRST ONES – AND THOSE WHO FOLLOWED THEM

Among the first immigrants to *Eretz Israel*, among the sons of Kutno was Rabbi Gaon "*Zeit Raanan*"<sup>1</sup> ztz"l. He immigrated to Israel at the end of the 19th century, settled in the Old City of Jerusalem and established a *yeshiva* there. He devoted his entire life to the Torah education of the boys of Israel. He died in Jerusalem and was laid to rest on the Mount of Olives.



Kutners near the occidental wall – before the creation of the state...

Yaakov Meir Walcman, who immigrated to Israel as a small child, was also one of the first immigrants from Kutno. He settled in Jerusalem and was the undertaker of the *Chevra Kadisha*. Y. M. Walcman was killed in riots in Jerusalem, by Arab rioters.

With the second *aliyah* to *Eretz Israel*, the two brothers Azriel Yosef Elberg and Eliyahu Eliezer Mordechai Elberg, who was a member of *HaShomer*, arrived there.

Dr. Abraham Glikzman, who was a member of the Warsaw "*Haynt*" publishing house, immigrated to Israel in 1910. The author Issachar Dov Frajer (Bar-Drora), also a son of Kutno, immigrated in 1910. He was one of the editors of "*Do'ar HaYom*" which appeared in Jerusalem and the weekly of the farmers' association "*Bustanai*"<sup>2</sup>. Died in Israel.



The first Kutno pioneers

During the First World War, many of the people of Kutno left their city and began to migrate across many countries, and many of them eventually arrived in Israel. Many of the following pitched their tent there and took root in the country but many others, due to absorption difficulties, returned to Kutno. The descendants of Kutno who settled in Israel were: Ludwar, who, as narrated in the book "*History of the Defense of Tel Aviv*" (p. 35), was killed together with Yosef-Chaim Brenner in the events of 1921; Hirsh-Yosef Płocker; Chaim-Yonah Offenbach, who was among the first settlers in Afula; Rojer, who was one of the first founders of Raanana. He died in Raanana and left a large family.

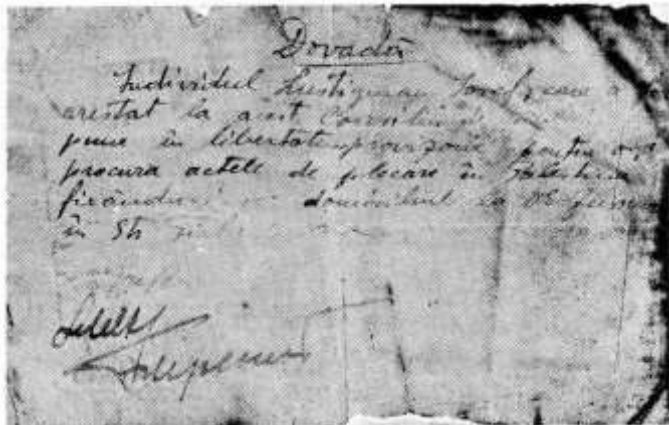
The sons of Kutno arrived in Israel with the third wave of immigration: Shlomo-Franz Wallensztajn and his brother Yosef z"l and his wife Golda (née Kalman). They were among the first contractors to build the Neve Shalom houses in Tel Aviv; Osowski (Eli "Dundik") settled in Jerusalem, was a bookbinder, worked hard to free his son Yaakov, who was a political prisoner in Stalin's days and desperately wanted to immigrate to *Eretz Israel* (see his letter from prison on p. 487 of the original book). Osowski the father, succeeded at having his son Yaakov's daughters make *aliyah*, his granddaughters. In 1923, the Abraham Klingbajl family came to Israel and settled in Tel Aviv in



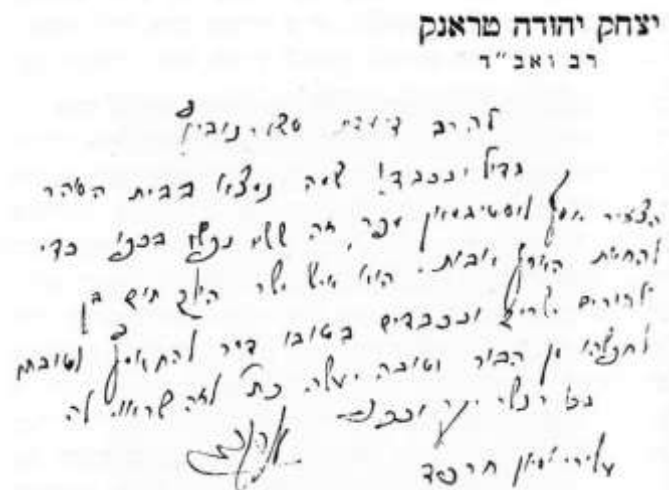
Kutners in Jerusalem, in 1925, in Purim disguise

<sup>1</sup> TN: Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Leib Zylberberg.

<sup>2</sup> TN: Hebrew for "Orchardist".



Certificate of liberation of Moshe Lustigman from prison in Romania



Recommendation of Rabbi Trunk to liberate Moshe Lustigman from prison

Neve Shalom<sup>3</sup>. In Israel, members of this family were plumbing contractors. Their house served as a hostel for the descendants of Kutno.

Immigration to Israel was not a bed of roses. Moshe Lustigman, who immigrated to Israel in 1924, together with Menachem Kolski, says that when he reached the Romanian border, he was arrested by the Romanian police. From the prison, he turned to Rabbi Yehuda Yitzhak Trunk ztz"l for a letter of recommendation to receive a certificate, because without a certificate it would not have been possible to enter *Eretz Israel*. Rabbi Trunk z"l complied with his request and obtained him a letter of recommendation from the Rabbi of Chernivtsi<sup>4</sup>. Thanks to the recommendation of the Rabbi of Chernivtsi, he was released from prison. He received a certificate and immigrated to Israel. In Israel, he met with other Kutno residents, including: Hirshel Feder, Shiya Szpajer, Props and Shmuel Wajngart, who was a member of kibbutz Givat Hashlosha<sup>5</sup>, Abraham Klingbajl in Neve Shalom and more.

The former Kutners then worked in jobs that were typical of Israel; in the building, on the roads, in the

orchards, etc. They worked – when the work was found, but the situation was not always satisfactory. The *Yishuv* – and the descendants of Kutno within it – knew long periods of unemployment, and they began to migrate from place to place, from settlement to settlement looking for work. M. Lustigman goes on to tell of that period: "When the working situation worsened, I and Wajngart moved to Jerusalem. The Kutno group was formed there together with the Łęczycza one. Among the descendants of Kutno were: Chaim Elbaum z"l, Shmuel-Leib Wajngart, Shiya Szpajer, Menachem Kolski and myself. Expatriates of Łęczycza – Yitzhak Synrodin and Zvi Rabinowicz. We then paved the roads in the Beit HaKerem and Beit Vagan neighborhoods of Jerusalem. Here we met Yaakov Meir Welcman who joined us as a day employee. Although he was extremely ultra-Orthodox, he took on all the hard, physical work. He was killed in the 1936-1939 riots<sup>6</sup>, trying to save a Jew from the Arab rioters. Hard days passed for us, we lived a common life and we put our wages into the group's common coffers. After the group disbanded, each one went his own way and luck."

However, some returned to Kutno due to absorption difficulties, among them were: Lamski, Yoel Sztajnfeld, Arbuz, Elberg and others.

In the 1930s, immigrants began to arrive in *Eretz Israel* again. Among the people from Kutno came Shalom Landau z"l, Yehoshua Apelast, Dov Bigelajzen, Daniel Szpiro, Chaim Zajdner, Azriel Szymonowicz, Menachem Gwircman, Mr. Shlomo-Aharon Elberg and his family – the Honorary President of the Kutno organization in Israel, Yaakov Zajdner, Yehoshua Elbaum, Yechiel Falc, Rojzman, Yechiel Lipski and more. Many of the Kutno people stood out in various areas of life in the country, lots settled in kibbutzim and dedicated their lives to building the country. Such was Nathan Tiger z"l. In the days of "Wall and Tower"<sup>7</sup>, kibbutz settlements were established overnight, in a hostile Arab environment. Some of the descendants of Kutno, such as Simcha Frumer, Abraham Lustigman, Yechezkel Bagno and Moshe Lustigman, enlisted in the *Notrut* (Jewish auxiliary police for the defense of the Jewish settlements during the 1936 events against the Arab rioters). Bagno fell in battle with the Arab gangs. From Krośniewice, Yaakov Klingbajl, Lolek Wajnstajn and others participated in the defense of the Jewish settlements. Even in the field of party activism, or at the nationwide level, the Kutners, such as Yaakov Riftin and Simcha Babe, stood out. There was also a great contribution from Kutners in the ranks of the "*Haganah*", *Etzel*<sup>8</sup>, *Lehi*<sup>9</sup>, and finally in the IDF.

But even earlier, during World War II, with the establishment of the Jewish Brigade in the British Army, the people of Kutno enlisted in the war against the murderers of their people – the Nazi enemy. Among them

<sup>3</sup> TN: not the mixed village but an area of old Tel Aviv, just north of Jaffa.

<sup>4</sup> TN: Chernovitz, in Ukraine.

<sup>5</sup> TN: near Petah Tikva.

<sup>6</sup> TN: see article on page 302 of the original book.

<sup>7</sup> TN: period of fortifying the settlements during the Arab Riots 1936-1939 and later.

<sup>8</sup> TN: aka "Irgun".

<sup>9</sup> TN: aka "Stern Group", after the name of its leader Abraham Stern.

were: Epsztajn, Ze'ev Rusk, Yaakov Ferenbach, Warszawczik, Nachman Falc z"l, Mendel Erdberg and more. Rabbi Y. Gil (Lifszić), in his book on the Jewish Brigade, wrote these words about the late Ze'ev Rusk.

### Rusk Ze'ev z"l

(Excerpt from page 299 about the Jewish Brigade by Captain Y. Lifszić)

"He fell on the eighth day of Nissan, March 22<sup>10</sup>, 1945, during the attack of the Third Battalion in broad daylight, in which the first German prisoners were taken, a victim of the first frontline victim of the army.

Born in the Polish city of Kutno in 1914, he studied at a *yeshiva* and later at the *Mizrachi* school. From an early age he joined the Zionist movement and was an active



Kutners as construction contractors and workers in *Eretz Israel*

member of the *Mizrachi Histadrut* in his hometown, entered a training farm in one of the Polish towns, and from there immigrated to Israel in 1934. He was anxious about the fate of the settlement and the land, and was aware of everything that was happening in them, responding to every call of the institutions. And when the draft order appeared, he volunteered for the army.

Quiet and humble, clever and joking, his jokes always brought a spirit of life among his friends, kind to his company, friendly, loyal and devoted."



Abraham Lustigman in the War of Independence



Simcha Frumer, policeman in the days of Mandate Palestine

And not only outside the borders of Israel, did the "sons of Yehuda learn the bow"<sup>11</sup>: the people of our town also took an active part in our homeland, in the *Haganah*, in *Palmach*, in *Etzel*, in *Lehi* and finally in the ranks of the IDF, even the highest ones... Eizyk Yehoshua (*Etzel*) was promoted to the rank of Lt. Col. in the IDF (he died in 1966). Shmuel Laron, Major Pilot, and Shmuel Wajchselfisz, Major.

Also, Yehoshua Elbaum, Azriel Szymonowicz, Leah Elberg, Simcha Frumer, Abraham Lustigman, Menachem Kolski, Yaakov and Eliyahu Klingbajl, Moshe Kruk, Nachman Neszer, Moshe Lustigman, Yechezkel Bagno, David Metal, Nissim Walcman, Liuba Turbowicz and others. In *Palmach* were the brothers Szymonowicz, Moshe Plocer z"l, Zvi Szapiro z"l. Shmuel Wajchselfisz was the commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion in *Palmach*, now a major in the IDF.

But the period of the war against the Nazis was also the period of the struggle against the "White Paper" of the British Mandate government. And many from Kutno and the surrounding area took part in this struggle in the ranks of the "*Haganah*" in weapons and combat training courses. At the same time, the "National Military Organization" was established, and many of the city's residents also participated. Among the first were Yaakov Zajdner and his brother Moshe, Israel Walter, Moshe Wigdorowicz, Shlomo Walcman, Yecheil Lipski, Sami Falc, Nachman Falc, Chaim Fisz, Mendel Erdberg, Abba Warszawczik, who underwent military training in *Etzel* and *Lehi*.

After the surrender of Germany, the remnants of the Holocaust began to arrive in the country from the people of our city. And many of them enlisted in the *Haganah*, *Etzel* and *Lehi*. Wajchselfisz, Shmuel Laron, Israel Fast, Abraham Goldsztajn, Meir Lubart, Felek Tajchner, Pasirsztajn, Plotkin and others enlisted in the National Military Organization. Israel Walter, Efraim Firstenberg and his wife Chana and Epsztajn and others enlisted in *Lehi*.

<sup>10</sup> TN : erroneously mentioned as 19 in the original text.

<sup>11</sup> TN: Biblical quote.

After the war, our people actively participated in the smuggling and illegal immigration of new immigrants to Israel. Many of them received a certificate of excellence from the Jewish Agency for their dedication to their jobs, and these were: Mordechai Zandberg was in charge of the Szczecin point on the Polish-German border. Felek Tajchner was in charge of the Czechoslovak-Polish border. With him worked Yaakov Szwarc, a member of kibbutz Ayalon, Efraim Wajchselfisz worked in the *Escape* center in Poland and later in the ones in Austria and Italy. He bought ships and smuggled immigrants to Israel. Among the emissaries from Israel were Zvi Asz who worked in the training staff of kibbutz HaArtzi *HaShomer HaZair*. Tola [born] Stuczyńska<sup>12</sup> (Puterman) z"l worked at the escape point in her vehicle. Israel Lubart was sent to the "*Escape*" by *Agudat Israel* and worked in Germany. Pinchas Hirszberg was one of the "*Escape*" organization activists and worked at the youth center. With a group of Warsaw children, he came to France and from there immigrated to Israel. Efraim Dekel<sup>13</sup> mentions in his book about his action among the youth of the border smugglers.

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<sup>12</sup> TN: see her biographical account of her days in WW II, on page 366 of the original book.

<sup>13</sup> TN: in "Survivor of the Sword". See article on Yaakov Szwarc, on p. 309 of the original book.