

## GLOSSARY

**ADMOR** (Hebrew: Adonainu, Morainu, VeRabbeinu = Our Master, Our Teacher, and Our Rebbe). A honorific title used for leaders of Hasidic sects. Such a leader is also called a *rebbe* or a *tzaddik*.

**AGUDAT ISRAEL** (Hebrew: Union of Israel) – political party of *orthodox* Jews and opposing Zionism. Founded in Katowice in 1912, the movement was supported by the traditionalist *orthodox* Jews including a number of Hasidic groups. In the interwar period Agudat Israel was a leading political power in most of the Jewish communities in Poland. Among its leaders was the famous rabbi Abraham Mordechai Alter, who was from Góra Kalwaria and the leader of Gerer Hasidism.

**BEIT MIDRASH** (Hebrew: house of study) – one of the main institutions and centers of the *orthodox* community. A place of study of the Jewish religious texts, attended by boys and adult men.

**BUND** (shortened from Yiddish: The General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia) Jewish socialist political party founded in Vilna in 1897.. In the interwar period Bund was the largest Jewish workers' party in Poland. Members of Bund opposed both *orthodox* Jews and *Zionists*.

**CHEDER** (Hebrew: room) elementary religious school for Jewish boys preparing for continuing education in a yeshiva. A cheder can be private or affiliated with a social organization. Education in a cheder started between the age of 3 and 5 and ends around 13. Students at cheder were taught reading and writing in Hebrew, rote learning of selected passages from the Hebrew Bible, with Pentateuch in particular.

**DAYAN** (Hebrew: judge) – judge of the religious court (*beit din*), usually comprising three judges. The court would be headed by the president (*av beit din*). Every community had its own court which convened on market days.

**GENERAL ZIONISTS** (also Zionist Organization in Poland, est. 1916) – was the most powerful *Zionist* party in interwar Poland, affiliated with the World Zionist Organization. Its basic agenda was the guaranteed creation of the Jewish national home in Palestine.

**HASIDISM** (Hebrew: hasid = pious) – Jewish movement of religious revival started in 18<sup>th</sup> century in Podole and Volhynia. Its founding has been traditionally ascribed to Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name) of Medzhibizh (1698/1700–1760). The opponents of Hasidism were *misnagdim* (Hebrew: opponents) representing traditional Judaism. The most famous Hasidic courts include those from Góra Kalwaria, Bobowa, Kock, Lublin, Leżajsk, Rymanów, Opatów, Nowy Sącz and Przysucha.

**HITAHDUT** (Hebrew: Union) – The Zionist Labor Party Hitahdut was a secular organization combining national (Zionist) and socialist program. Founded in 1920 in Prague, the party was

joined by intellectuals and working youth. According to Aron David Gordon, whose ideas inspired Hitahdut, the future Jewish national home was to be built according to the principles of equality but not through revolution.

**JEWISH CEMETERY** (Hebrew: *beit olam* i.e., house of the eternal world or *beit chayim*, house of (eternal) life). Jewish cemeteries, like other cemeteries are located outside of residential areas for hygienic purposes. Some Jewish cemetery customs are to bury the dead in chronological order (rather than by family) and to bury women, men and children are buried separately. Other traditions are not to bury a righteous person near a thief and to bury suicides and apostates near the cemetery fence. When there was not enough space, the old graves were buried with soil, about two meters deep, so that the former grave was undamaged.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY** (Hebrew: *kehillah*) – the basic communal structure in Judaism. The term can mean either the community with its internal organization and self-government or the self-government itself. The Jewish community would organize the whole of Jewish life in the area and supervise its institutions: *synagogues*, courts, philanthropies and ritual baths.

**LEAGUE FOR LABOR PALESTINE** (full name: League for the Support of Labor in Palestine) was a coordinating body for organizations supporting the *Zionist* labor movement in Palestine. The main office of the League was located in Warsaw. The member organizations included Hitahdut, He-Halutz, Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair and Poalei Zion-Right.

**MATZEVAH** (Hebrew: tombstone) – traditional Jewish tombstone. Usually in the form of an upright stone or wooden headstone crowned with a rectangular, triangular or semicircular ornamentation and placed at the head of the buried. Inscriptions on matzevot can include biographical information and carvings can reflect religious or social status of the deceased.

**MASKIL** (Hebrew: enlightened, intellectual) – term used to describe followers of Haskalah or Jewish Enlightenment. The *maskilim* sought to replace the traditional forms of Jewish life and the cultural separation with legal, professional and linguistic integration with the non-Jewish environment around them. Still they wanted to maintain religious separation, although in a modernized form. The maskilim attached special importance to education, upbringing and literature.

**MEZUZAH** (Hebrew: doorframe) A piece of parchment placed in a decorative case on a doorframe. The parchment is inscribed with handwritten verses of the Jewish prayer Shema Israel (Hebrew: Hear O Israel) and two passages from Deuteronomy.

**MIZRACHI** (literally „eastern” but also a contraction of the Hebrew words: *merkaz ruhani* = spiritual center. A political party which promoted Zionism among *orthodox* Jews. Established in 1902 in Vilna, the movement followed the slogan of Meir Bar Ilan, one of its leaders: *the Land of Israel for the People of Israel according to the Torah of Israel*.

**OHHEL** (Hebrew: tent) – wooden or brick structure built over a grave of a distinguished rabbi or *tzaddik* and his male descendants. Such monuments are visited by *Hasidim* from all over the world. The locations with main *oholot* include Aleksandrów, Bobowa, Chrzanów, Góra Kalwaria, Kock, Lelów, Nowy Sącz.

**ORTHODOXY** (from Greek: *orthodoxos* "having the right opinion", in this context: *orthodox* Judaism) – a Jewish denomination emerged in response to *Haskalah* or Jewish Enlightenment, at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century and following emancipation. *Orthodox* Jews advocate traditional Judaism and oppose changes in Jewish way of life and any alterations in the religious observance. A wide range of Jewish groups are considered orthodox including modern orthodox, Haredi, Hasidic and others.

**PESACH** (Hebrew: passed over); also Passover. One of the oldest and most important Jewish holidays. The festival commemorates the liberation of Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

**RABBI** (Hebrew: my master, teacher) – spritual leader of the Jewish community, learned in Halakhah (rabbinic law) and ordained in a special ceremony called *smichah*. Rabbis traditionally taught, supervised kosher food, mediated disputes and officiated at lifecycle events. Rabbis are usually hired by the Jewish community.

**REVISIONISTS** (full name: Organization of Zionist-Revisionists in Poland, later called New Zionist Organization) – Zionist political party founded and headed by Vladimir Jabotinsky. Until 1935 it remained within the World Zionist Organization. The Revisionists aimed at the creation of the Jewish state on both sides of Jordan river to be achieved by means of armed struggle.

**SHAMMES** – (Hebrew: *shammash* – servant) a Jewish institution and organization official. The *shammes* played various roles depending on the institution to which he was connected. His varied jobs included: calling men for prayers, synagogue cleaner, tax collector, bailiff, process server, secretary and messenger. It was a prestigious function performed usually by impoverished members of the community.

**SHTIBL** – (Yiddish: small room) – a room for prayer and study and a center of the *Hasidic* social life typical for Eastern Europe. Usually small in size and modest in decoration.

**SHUL** – traditional term for the synagogue. In Poland the word *shul* usually referred to synagogues of the *misnagdim* or opponents to Hasidism. Also Ashkenazi Jews coming to Poland from Western Europe would use the term to describe their houses of prayer.

**SUKKOT** (Hebrew: sukkah = booth). One of the agricultural festivals celebrated for 7 days after the harvest (September-October). Booths are constructed as reminiscence of the type of dwellings used by ancient Israelites during their 40 years of wandering after the Exodus from Egypt and a symbol of the divine attention. In the *sukkah* meals are eaten, prayers recited and some sleep there as well. It is a happy holiday during which sweet dishes are served as a symbol of prosperity.

**SYNAGOGUE** (from Greek: assembly); house of prayer in Judaism. In traditional synagogues, there are separate sections for men and women. An *aron ha-kodesh* (holy ark) contains scrolls of the Torah, which are read from a bimah (a raised reading table) during some of the services. Customarily, the congregants face the eastern wall, which is where the aron is located and is in the direction of Jerusalem.

**TALMUD** (Hebrew: instruction, learning) – the classic record of the oral tradition in Judaism also known as the Oral *Torah*. Talmud has two components: *Mishnah* and *Gemara*. It contains commentaries to Torah, rabbinical discussions and considerations, moral guidelines and tales. Two compilations were created: Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud. The study of the Talmud remains a key component of Jewish education, especially in traditional circles.

**TORAH** (Hebrew: law, instruction) – the holy book of Judaism. Also known as the Five Books of Moses which include Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Torah is the holiest object for the Jews. Torah scrolls written on parchment and kept in *Aron ha-Kodesh* in the synagogue are read during services.

**TZADDIK (Hebrew: righteous)** – charismatic leader of a Hasidic community, also known as *rebbe* or an *admor*. According to Elimelekh of Lhizensk (Leżajsk), a tzaddik is a kind of “channel” through which divine abundance could be brought down from the supernal worlds to our own. Most of tzaddikim established dynasties, passing on the leadership to their sons, sons-in-law or leading disciples.

**YESHIVA** (Hebrew: academy) – Talmudic school attended by boys following graduation from *cheder*. The curriculum would include the study of Talmud and rabbinical literature. Education at this level would start at the age of 13-14 and end at 20+.

**ZIONISM** – Jewish political movement founded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and aiming at Jewish national renewal and creation of the Jewish state in Palestine. The cornerstone for the Zionism was laid by the book of its founder Theodor Herzl: *The Jewish State*. The first Zionist Congress convened in Basel in 1897. The ideas of Zionism were embodied in the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.