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## The Funeral of Rabbi Ozjasz Thon

The beginning of the year 5697 was not favourable for Krakow's Jewish community.<sup>1</sup> The commune members worried more and more about Rabbi Ozjasz Thon's health. The rabbi, like his mother, had very weak lungs and had struggled for his every breath since childhood. However, over the previous eight years the illness had progressed considerably.<sup>2</sup> It was not certain whether he would appear at the Tempel synagogue for Yom Kippur. When, after the prayer of Kol Nidre, he stepped up to the lectern and began his sermon, the congregation breathed a sigh of relief. They absorbed the rabbi's every word, unaware of the effort it had cost him to speak.

Physicians firmly discouraged the rabbi from fulfilling his responsibilities. But he did not follow their orders. After all, he could not leave his fellow brothers. He used to say, "Service to the Jewry is the most important." It soon turned out that the sermon he had delivered at Yom Kippur was to be Rabbi Ozjasz Thon's last public appearance.<sup>3</sup> After returning home, the rabbi fell ill, and the doctors diagnosed pneumonia.<sup>4</sup> Shortly afterwards, he suffered cardiac arrest which was only the first in a series. After a few days, aware of his condition, Rabbi Ozjasz Thon presented his wishes regarding his funeral ceremony to his loved ones.<sup>5</sup> He dreamed it would be "a huge gathering of people."

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<sup>1</sup> September/October 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Nella Thon-Rostowa, the daughter of Rabbi Ozjasz Thon, emphasised that her father suffered from lung illness, whereas newspapers noted that the rabbi remained in the care of physicians due to his failing heart and throat problems; Nella Thon-Rostowa, *Ozjasz Thon. Wspomnienia córki* (Lvov: Cofim, 1937), 6, 52–53; *Haynt*, no. 259, November 12, 1936, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Nasz Dziennik* (ND), no. 312, November 12, 1936, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Thon-Rostowa, *Ozjasz Thon*, 54.

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Rabbi Ozjasz Thon died of a heart attack on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1936, at half past three in the afternoon at his home at 5 Jasna Street in Krakow.<sup>6</sup> He passed away surrounded by the members of his immediate family and his close friend Chaim Hilfstein.<sup>7</sup> He left behind his wife and two adult children: his daughter, Professor Nella Thon-Rostowa, and son, Nathaniel Thon, associate professor of chemistry at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup>

The news of the rabbi's death reached the town around 4 p.m. Among the first to pick it up were journalists at *Nowy Dziennik*, a Polish-language daily newspaper addressed to Jewish readers, founded and co-edited for many years by the deceased rabbi. The editing staff decided to notify the citizens of Krakow about this tragic event. A black flag was hung from the building housing the *Nowy Dziennik* newspaper office at 7 Orzeszkowej Street. The first leaflets left the printing presses in the evening. They were posted on walls and



1. The last photo of Rabbi Ozjasz Thon

Source: N. Thon-Rostowa, *Ozjasz Thon. Wspomnienia córki* (Lvov: Cofim, 1937, 63).

<sup>6</sup> The street is now named after Wojciech Bogusławski.

<sup>7</sup> Chaim Hilfstein (1876–1950), Jewish physician, chairman of the Hebrew Gymnasium in Krakow and Zionist activist.

<sup>8</sup> ND, no. 312, November 12, 1936, 3.

distributed amongst Krakow citizens. Shortly thereafter, an obituary ordered by Ozjasz Thon's family was pinned up on city fences.<sup>9</sup> Others followed.<sup>10</sup>

The *Nowy Dziennik* journalists answered telephones and telephonograms all evening from people asking for confirmation of the tragic news. They also received telegrams with condolences. The Jewish Telegraph Agency was among the first to send its condolences to *Nowy Dziennik*.<sup>11</sup>

The Jewish Telegraph Agency passed on the information about the rabbi's death to the Polish Telegraph Agency.<sup>12</sup> From there, the news reached non-Jewish circles. The wire already included the place and time of the funeral: Thursday (12<sup>th</sup> November), 2 p.m., the Jewish cemetery at Miodowa Street in Krakow.<sup>13</sup>

Following the Jewish tradition, the funeral should take place within a day of the death. Thus, preparations commenced immediately. This was why, while *Nowy Dziennik* continued to receive condolences and the Polish Telegraph Agency sent out its wire, a meeting was held with the participation of representatives of Jewish circles and city authorities. They discussed the points of the upcoming funeral ceremony.

At the same time, although the rabbi did not wish for public mourning to be declared after his death, it was also debated.<sup>14</sup> During an extraordinary meeting of the Central Zionist Organisation, a 30-day mourning period was proclaimed in Małopolska. All events and celebrations not connected with mourning the deceased rabbi were to be suspended.<sup>15</sup>

In the evening, in the building at 7 Orzeszkowej Street, all of Ozjasz Thon's colleagues gathered for an extraordinary meeting of the supervisory board, management and editing staff of *Nowy Dziennik*. The participants celebrated the memory of the deceased and discussed the plan of action for the next

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> *Haynt*, no. 261, November 15, 1936, 4; ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 1; *Haynt*, no. 261, November 15, 1936, 2.

<sup>11</sup> "Warszawa. 11. 11. Z powodu zgonu Przywódcy żydostwa polskiego, Wielkiego Żyda i Najszlachetniejszego Człowieka, Ozjasza Thona, najszczerze współczucie 'Nowemu Dziennikowi' zasyła"; ND, no. 312, November 12, 1936, 3.

<sup>12</sup> It soon turned out that the news published by the Jewish Telegraph Agency began to live its own life. It was circulated by the Jewish Agency with a blatant error; the Jewish Agency announced that Ozjasz Thon had died at the age of 68 on 26<sup>th</sup> November, and this information was reprinted in various foreign magazines; *Palästina. Zeitschrift für den Aufbau Palästinas*, 12 (December 1936): 639.

<sup>13</sup> The words "old cemetery" was used in the message to differentiate it from the necropolis on Jerozolimska Street; ND, no. 312, November 12, 1936, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Thon-Rostowa, *Ozjasz Thon*, 54.

<sup>15</sup> ND, no. 312, November 12, 1936, 5.

edition of the daily newspaper, which was to be devoted to the rabbi and to provide notification of the details regarding the funeral.<sup>16</sup>

The next day, all newspapers announced the rabbi's death. *Nowy Dziennik* published the obituary ordered by the family. This was the only news about the rabbi's death that his loved ones published in newspapers at that time. The obituary was placed on the third page. It read as follows:

OZJASZ THON, died on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 1936 after long and hard suffering at the age of 67. The bereaved FAMILY notifies that the funeral shall take place today, Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 1936 at 2 p.m. A short note said: It is requested to desist from paying visits of condolence.<sup>17</sup>

In the same edition, other notices of Rabbi Ozjasz Thon's death could also be found. They were published by those Jewish organisations and associations with which the rabbi worked (The Zionist Organization of Western Malopolska and Silesia,<sup>18</sup> Direction of Keren Hayesod Le'Israel, and Direction of Western Malopolska and Silesia, Local committee of the Zionist Organization in Krakow, Secretary-general of A.H.H. Akiva,<sup>19</sup> B'nai B'rith "Solidarity" Mission,<sup>20</sup> and Teachers, Pupils and Parents from Jewish Society of Folk and Secondary Schools in Krakow<sup>21</sup>). Moreover, organisations and associations as well as Jewish circles connected with him posted obituaries in many Polish cities and towns with notification of his death.<sup>22</sup>

Ozjasz Thon's death notice also appeared in national Yiddish newspapers. *Haynt*, one of the most popular Jewish daily newspapers, published an article devoted to the rabbi, which due to the newspaper's Zionist affinities focused on his activities in the Zionist field. "A leader has died," they wrote. "A leader in the best meaning of this word. A teacher, a warrior of word and action."<sup>23</sup> The article included the deceased's photograph.<sup>24</sup>

References to Rabbi Ozjasz Thon's death also appeared in the local Polish-language press, including Krakow's *Czas*. However, this note did not receive much exposure. It was published on the 11<sup>th</sup> page of a 14-page daily, in the Krakow section, under the title *The Death of Rabbi Thon*, and was partially a copy of the Polish Telegraph Agency's wire. However, its authors added their own words of recognition for the rabbi's work in *Nowy Dziennik*. They

<sup>16</sup> Seven of the 14 pages of *Nowy Dziennik* dated 12<sup>th</sup> November were devoted to the person and funeral of Ozjasz Thon; *ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*, AŻIH, Gmina wyznaniowa żydowska w Krakowie, sygn. 107/661.

<sup>23</sup> Translated from Yiddish by the author.

<sup>24</sup> *Haynt*, no. 259, November 12, 1936, 1.

W głębokim smutku pogrążeni, zawiadamiamy o przed-  
wczesnym zgonie długoletniego naszego

Członka Honorowego  
**Dra OZJASZA THONA**

który opuścił nas w dniu 11 listopada 1936.

Pogrzeb odbędzie się we czwartek 12 listopada o godz. 2 popoł.

**WYDZIAŁ**  
**Żyd. Klubu Sportowego „MAKKABI”**

Wzywa się wszystkich członków do stawiania się na boisku o godz. 12 w poł, celem wzięcia udziału  
w pogrzebie.

Dziennik M. Łódzkiego, Rozdział 4

Pogrążeni w głębokim żalu zawiadamiamy o śmierci Drogiego Przywódcy,  
twórcy syjonizmu naszej dzielnicy, bhp.

**Dra OZJASZA THONA**

Wzywamy wszystkie gniazda do udziału w pogrzebie i oddania Mu czi  
i hołdu na Jego ostatniej ziemskiej drodze.

Sekretariat naczelny A. H. H. „AKIBA“

**Żydzil!**

Przynosimy Wam wstrząsającą wiadomość.

**OZJASZ THON**  
**nie żyje!**

Zgasł Wielki Żyd i Dobry Obywatel. Zamikło na wieki gorące serce. Opuścił nas Wódz, Nauczyciel i Wy-  
chowawca pokoleń.

Ten, który sztandar wyzwolenia narodowego przez cały czas Swego nieustraszonego żywota wysoko dźwie-  
rzył, bez plany i skazy;

Ten, który żyłce poświęcił idei wyzwolenia narodu i odbudowy Erec Izrael;

Ten, który proroczym słowem zagrzewał nas do walki i wytrwania, oraz piórem pouczał i podnosił na duchu.  
Wódz, ofiarny i pełen zapasu, niezachwianie wskazywał jedynie właściwą drogę swemu narodowi. — kro-  
cząc zawsze na Jego czele.

Erec Izrael odbudowana, promieniująca hebrajską kulturą i wzniosłą etyką proroków, była Jego marze-  
niem i celem.

Oderwał głęboko tragiczne polecenie Żydostwa w Golusie — był nieustraszoną bojownikiem w walce  
o równouprawnienie Żydostwa. Zronił zawzięt i wszędzie dumnie i godnie cześć i imię narodu żydowskiego.

Życie Jego jest dla nas przykładem poświęcenia i ofiary w służbie narodu.

Ozjasz Thon urosł do miary symbolu narodowego. Oświeconym byłcie naród bez Niego.

Chylimy czoło przed Wielkim Zmarłym i pełni smutku oddajemy wraz z całym narodem żydowskim cześć  
Bogomowi Thonowi.

**Organizacja Syjońska dla zach. Małopolski i Śląska**

2. Obituaries

Source: (1) AŻIH, Gmina wyznaniowa żydowska w Krakowie, sygn. 107/661 (2-3),  
Nowy Dziennik, no. 312, November 12, 1936, 2, 4.

emphasised that “as an activist and publicist who often published leading articles in ‘Nowy Dziennik’, he was known for his persistency and boldness of opinion, which gained the due respect even of his opponents.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover in the note they briefly described the reaction of the Jewish community: “The death of Rabbi Thon, who as a man and politician was an authority for his co-religionists, caused sincere grief amongst the Jewish community and mourning amongst Zionism.”<sup>26</sup>

Wide masses of readers were also informed via the press of the funeral celebrations scheduled for the afternoon. *Nowy Dziennik* published information addressed to all those interested in participating in the ceremony. This was the plan for Rabbi Ozjasz Thon’s last journey, including detailed guidelines as to where the funeral procession would pass and who would be included in it. Moreover, the announcement called upon Krakow citizens of Jewish origin to lock their stores and workshops situated along the procession route for the duration of the funeral celebrations,<sup>27</sup> and appealed to those standing by the procession route to follow the orders of the safety personnel so as not to disrupt the course of the celebration in any way. All organisations and associations wishing to participate in the rabbi’s farewell were asked to notify the Funeral Committee at 107 Dietla Street by 10 a.m.<sup>28</sup>

The appeals published in the press met with a wide response. The list of people and associations wishing to accompany the rabbi to his resting place increased by the hour. Representatives of all Jewish institutions confirmed their participation, including the President of the Jewish Circle, deputy E. Sommerstein, the rabbi and senator M. Schorr, the director of the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Y. Gitterman. The Central Committee of the Zionist Organisation delegated their representatives to the funeral: I. Schipper, U. Rosenblatt, and M. Kleinbaum. The Cooperative Association was to be represented by H. Rosmarin,<sup>29</sup> and the Jewish Telegraph Agency by its director, M. Moses.<sup>30</sup> The headquarters of the Funeral Committee registered the arriving representative and delegates of various institutions and associations. Dozens of people also arrived at the Funeral Committee’s office as volunteers keen to help in organising the funeral.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Czas*, no. 312, November 12, 1936, 11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

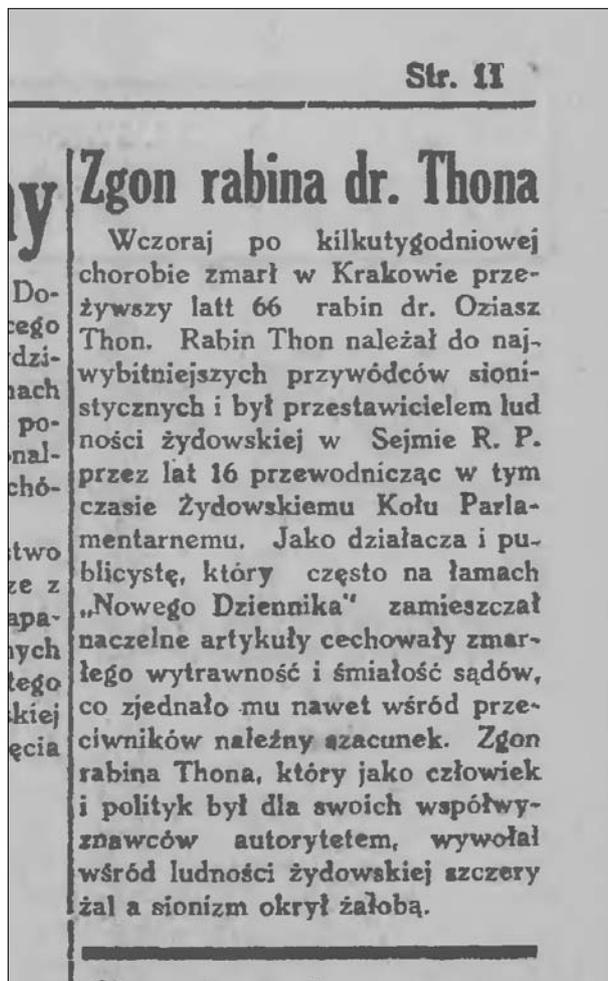
<sup>27</sup> The Zionist Organisation appealed for the same and declared that all its branches would suspend their operations for the duration of the funeral.

<sup>28</sup> ND, no. 312, November 12, 1936, 6.

<sup>29</sup> Henryk Rosmarin (1882–1955), Jewish lawyer, Zionist leader, member of Polish parliament (1922–1935), editor of *Chwila*.

<sup>30</sup> ND, no. 312, November 12, 1936, 5; *Haynt*, no. 259, November 12, 1936, 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Haynt*, no. 261, November 15, 1936, 4.



3. The information about Rabbi Ozjasz Thon's death

Source: *Czas*, no. 312, November 12, 1936, 11.

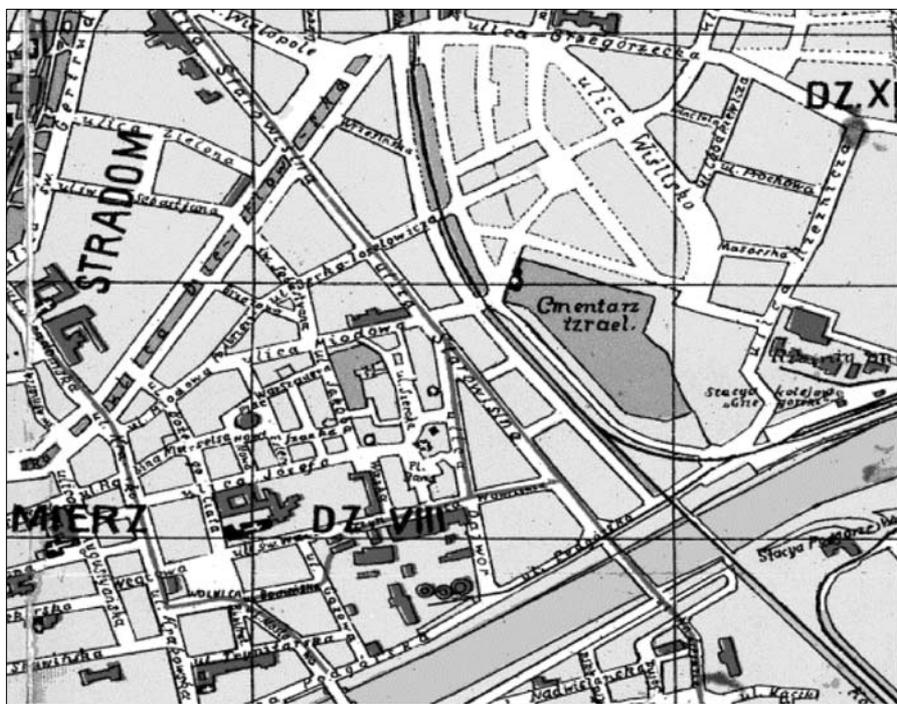
However, despite their most sincere desires, not everyone could be present at Rabbi Ozjasz Thon's funeral. Thus, apart from condolences, the widow, *Nowy Dziennik* and the Krakow Commune Board received notes of apology justifying absences.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Haynt*, no. 260, November 13, 1936, 1.

In the early hours before noon, the citizens of Krakow, visitors from other towns, delegates of individual organisations, associations and authorities and representatives of safety personnel recruited mainly from the members of Bnei Akiva and the police gathered in the streets close to Jasna Street, where the rabbi's house was situated. The crowd grew thicker with every passing minute. Everyone wanted to accompany Rabbi Ozjasz Thon on his journey to his final place of rest. People pressed in the windows and on balconies along the route of the procession.<sup>33</sup>

An hour before the funeral procession was to move out, the participants of the head delegation of the procession started to arrive at Jasna Street. The first to arrive were the representatives of the Zionists led by Hilfstein, followed by the members of the rabbinate.

At the same time, the rabbi was being prepared for his last journey. He was accompanied by representatives of the Krakow rabbinate, Rabbi Schmelkes and cantors Schächter and Birnbaum.<sup>34</sup>



4. The route of the procession

Source: Najnowszy plan stołecznego król. miasta Krakowa, 1933.

<sup>33</sup> ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 1–2.

<sup>34</sup> ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 2; *Haynt*, no. 261, November 15, 1936, 4.

The procession started out at exactly 2 p.m. from the house at Jasna Street and progressed towards the cemetery at Miodowa Street along Św. Sebastiana, Brzozowa, Bożego Ciała, Dietla, Krakowska, Józefa and Szeroka streets.<sup>35</sup>

The route led around the Jewish quarter of Kazimierz and included the most important streets of this part of the city. Seemingly, the route was quite short (approximately 2.3 km long), and it should not take longer than 45 minutes on foot. However, the procession moved along very slowly, and it therefore took several hours to complete the whole route. Approximately 30,000 people accompanied the rabbi on his last journey<sup>36</sup> (it is worth noting that there were about 60,000 people of Jewish descent in Krakow at that time). The weather favoured such a numerous gathering wishing to honour the rabbi for the last time. Despite the fact that the funeral celebration took place in mid-November and the last few days had been windy and rainy, the rain and the wind had stopped on that day. It also must have been quite warm, as the procession participants wore overcoats, often with fur collars, but had not put on scarves or gloves.<sup>37</sup>

Life stood still in the Jewish part of Krakow for the time of the procession. Following the request of the Funeral Committee, business activities were suspended, and candles clad in black shroud were lit in windows along the procession route.<sup>38</sup> The blue-and-white Zionist colours and black flags decorated many balconies within the Jewish quarter of Kazimierz.<sup>39</sup> Black flags were also hung from the buildings of organisations and associations connected with Rabbi Ozjasz Thon, including that of Jewish craftsmen associated with "Shomer Umonim."<sup>40</sup>

The coffin with the rabbi's body was carried by four men (at first these were members of the Zionist Organisation, later representatives of various communities that wanted to honour the deceased).<sup>41</sup> The coffin was covered with a black shroud on top of which a white-and-blue Zionist flag was placed. Representatives of Kadimah walked on both sides of the coffin. Each of them wore a sash and carried a sword covered with a shroud in their hands.<sup>42</sup>

The procession was led by Rabbi Schmelkes, surrounded by the representatives of the rabbinate from all over Poland.<sup>43</sup> The coffin was followed by the

<sup>35</sup> ND, no. 312, November 12, 1836, 6.

<sup>36</sup> ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 3.

<sup>37</sup> ND, no. 314, November 14, 1936, 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Haynt*, no. 261, November 15, 1936, 4.

<sup>39</sup> JR, no. 92, November 17, 1936, 3.

<sup>40</sup> ND, no. 312, November 12, 1836, 6.

<sup>41</sup> ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 2.

<sup>42</sup> ND, no. 316, November 16, 1936, 2. See *Haynt*, no. 261, November 15, 1936, 4.

<sup>43</sup> Among others: Rabbi Samuel Komitzer, Rabbi Chameidest and Rabbi Vogelmann from Katowice, Rabbi Kohlberg from Chrzanów, representing the Association of Silesian Rabbis,



5. The funeral of Rabbi Ozjasz Thon – procession

Source: NAC, sygn. 1-A-743-1, 1-A-743-3.

family and representatives of local authorities, with Wroński, the delegate of the voivodeship, Kaplicki, mayor of the city of Krakow,<sup>44</sup> and Chordziejewski, the delegate of the starosty, in the lead.<sup>45</sup> They were followed by delegations of the Zionist organisation, Jewish circle, the management and the board of the Krakow religious community together with delegations of other communes,<sup>46</sup> representatives of Zionist associations and institutions (*Nowy Dziennik*, *Ezra* library), and representatives of sports clubs and youth organisations. At the end of the procession was a group of young people from Jewish schools together with teachers and the public.<sup>47</sup> A person carrying a banner with the name of an organisation, an association or a school led each representation. The procession was closed by Jewish cabmen, who collectively drove along the procession's route and accompanied the cortege all the way.<sup>48</sup> Also amid the procession were journalists and photographers who recorded the whole event in writing and in photographs. Later, these materials were printed in many magazines all over Poland as well as abroad.<sup>49</sup>

When the procession arrived at Miodowa Street, it stopped by the Tempel synagogue, with which the Krakow stage of the rabbi's life was associated. The synagogue choir accompanying the procession intoned a threnody, and then the procession proceeded.<sup>50</sup> The next stops on the march were made next to the Stara and the Remuh synagogues. However, these were not its only pauses. Other unscheduled stops were enforced by the fact that the municipal services had not cleared mud off the streets along which the procession walked. Heaps of slush hindered the march. The procession participants also had to meander around puddles to avoid wetting their shoes or getting their clothes dirty.<sup>51</sup> For the same reason, it was not always possible to walk with the coffin along the very centre of the streets.

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Rabbi Hirschfeld from Biała, Rabbi Lewin from Lvov, Rabbi Steiner from Bielsko, and Rabbi Moses Schorr representing the Associations of Rabbis in Poland; ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 1–2; *Haynt*, no. 260, November 13, 1936, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Mieczysław Kaplicki (1875–1959), dermatologist, Mayor of the City of Krakow in the years 1933–1939.

<sup>45</sup> IKC, no. 317, November 14, 1936, 19.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Nowy Sącz was represented by a delegation consisting of H. Syrop, I. Drillich and M. Berliner, the Jewish commune in Rabka, Jordanów and Maków was represented by Chairman J. Freundlich; ND, no. 314, November 14 1836, 5.

<sup>47</sup> ND, no. 312, November 12, 1836, 6.

<sup>48</sup> ND, no. 314, November 14, 1936, 5.

<sup>49</sup> *Dokumentacja fotograficzna Haynt*, no. 261, November 15, 1936, 4.

<sup>50</sup> ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 2.

<sup>51</sup> The municipal service's failure to prepare the route was criticised by the journalists of *Nowy Dziennik*; ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 3.



6. The funeral of Rabbi Ozjasz Thon (Miodowa Street)

Source: NAC 1-A-743-4.

Vast crowds accompanied the procession to the crossroads of Starowińska and Miodowa streets, where it stopped. Jewish youth and children stood on both sides of the street all the way to the gates of the new cemetery, where they were the last group to bid farewell to the departed rabbi.

Not all the mourners could fit into the cemetery. However, those who found themselves outside the cemetery gates were able to listen to the funeral ceremony thanks to the sound system installed especially for the occasion.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the ceremony was to be covered by press representatives who were admitted to the cemetery.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, they gathered opinions about the rabbi. One of the journalists, Michał Hager, noted the following statement: “Rabbi Thon did not require acclaim. He had only one purpose: to help Jews. And he dedicated his life to that one purpose.”<sup>54</sup>

Everything was prepared at the cemetery. The funeral home prepared a bier. Candles were lit amongst the decorations of palm trees. The grave for the coffin was also prepared in the ground.

The rabbi’s family and colleagues entered the funeral home, where Rabbi Schmelkes, together with Cantor Schächter accompanied by the Tempel Syn-

<sup>52</sup> ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Haynt*, no. 261, November 15, 1936, 4; ND, no. 314, November 14, 1936, 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Haynt*, no. 261, November 15, 1936, 4.

agogue choir, said their prayers.<sup>55</sup> Next, the coffin was taken from the funeral home. Colour guards stood along the main avenue. For the rabbi's last resting place, a northern section was selected by the main avenue at the intersection with an alley parallel to Miodowa Street. Flags were lowered when the coffin was laid in the ground. Senator Schorr and the rabbi's nephew, director of the Polish-Israeli Chamber of Commerce in Warsaw, said *kaddish*.<sup>56</sup>

This marked the end of the funeral ceremony, during which in accordance with the rabbi's wishes no eulogies were said.<sup>57</sup> In one of his last conversations, Rabbi Ozjasz Thon had justified his decision regarding this matter in the following way: "I do not wish any speeches, because I laid my life on my nation's tombstone."

A day after the funeral, on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1936, an obituary was published in the *Haynt* daily newspaper by its editorial staff. This was the first note about the rabbi of its kind prepared and published in Yiddish. It said: "With lowered heads we stand before the fresh grave of a great Jew, Thinker, Leader and Activist, Ozjasz, the son of Moses Thon, whom we respected for 17 years as our colleague. In the name of the orphaned 'Haynt' readers drawn by his word, we unite with the grieving family in their inconsolable sorrow."<sup>58</sup>

On that same day, notes informing of the course of Ozjasz Thon's funeral were published, among others, in *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* and Krakow's *Czas* and *Nowy Dziennik*. The last of these also published a list of persons who had sent their condolences to the newspaper or the family of Ozjasz Thon. These came from private individuals as well as institutions and the government, both from Poland and abroad. *Nowy Dziennik* published a lists of senders of condolences as well as the contents of some of them for the next few days.<sup>59</sup>

Today some of the condolences are in the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow and Jewish Historical Institute of Emanuel Ringelblum (Warsaw). After Rabbi Ozjasz Thon's death, some of them were collected and bound. The volume from the Museum of the City of Krakow includes 95 telegrams and letters addressed to the Editorial Office of *Nowy Dziennik*.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 4; JR, no. 92, November 17, 1936, 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Haynt*, no. 261, November 15, 1936, 4, ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 3; the Krakow daily *Czas* erroneously informed its readers that Schorr gave an eulogy; *Czas*, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 9.

<sup>57</sup> According to the information printed in Krakow *Czas*, Schorr gave an eulogy at the rabbi's grave.

<sup>58</sup> *Haynt*, no. 260, November 13, 1936, 1.

<sup>59</sup> ND, no. 313, November 13, 1936, 4; no. 314, November 14, 1936, 4; no. 315, November 15, 1936, 3; no. 316, November 16, 1936, 3; no. 317, November 17, 1936, 3; no. 318, November 18, 1936, 3.

<sup>60</sup> MHK, Księga kondolencji po śmierci rabina Ozjasza Thona, sygn. MHK R. 3837.

After Rabbi Thon's death, *Nowy Dziennik* also published recollections dedicated to him by L. Fischlowitz, M. Kanfer and H. Pfeffer.<sup>61</sup> I.M. Najman and M. Kleinbaum published a text about Ozjasz Thon's political career in *Haynt*.<sup>62</sup> This also included a text by Nachum Sokołow devoted to the person of Rabbi Thon. Memoirs were also printed by foreign magazines. Zionist journals did this most often.

Texts dedicated to Ozjasz Thon also appeared in *Nasz Przegląd* and *Haynt*. A radio station broadcasted a programme prepared by S. Stendig dedicated to the rabbi.<sup>63</sup> The information about the death of Ozjasz Thon and recollections about the rabbi were printed by the Jewish press for another few weeks following his death. One of the last magazines in which such a note appeared was the Zionist monthly *My sami – pismo społeczno-literackie syjonizmu państwowego*. The rabbi was referred to there as one of the first and truest sons of Zion, with a recollection that he had used to say, "Take away Zionism from me and I will not be able to breathe."<sup>64</sup>

How to honour the memory of Rabbi Ozjasz Thon was also debated. It was suggested that one Palestinian village should be named after the rabbi, while the coeducational Szymonostwo Fürstenberg grammar school in Będzin founded a scholarship in Memory of Ozjasz Thon.

Grand mourning services also served to honour the memory of the deceased. On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November they were organised in all Krakow synagogues; however, the most significant for the whole community were the prayers that took place in the Tempel Synagogue.<sup>65</sup> Secular meetings were also organised in Krakow. A mourning commemorative meeting honouring the departed rabbi was also organised on 22<sup>nd</sup> November at the base of the Jewish Commune on Krakowska Street.<sup>66</sup> Similar meetings took place in other cities (Bielsko-Biała, Bochnia, Rzeszów, Grybów, Dębica, Nowy Targ, Nowy Sącz and Jasło).<sup>67</sup>

On 18<sup>th</sup> November, i.e., the seventh day after the funeral completing the first mourning period called *shiva*, a formal service took place in the Tempel synagogue during which a speech dedicated to the rabbi was made by

<sup>61</sup> ND, no. 314, November 14, 1936, 1–2. See also: ND, no. 318, November 18, 1936, 2.

<sup>62</sup> *Haynt*, no. 260, November 13, 1936, 4.

<sup>63</sup> The contents of the programme entitled *The Person of Ozjasz Thon* broadcasted on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1936 at 4 p.m. by the Krakow radio station were printed by *Nowy Dziennik* on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1936; ND, no. 315, November 15, 1936, 2

<sup>64</sup> *My sami – społeczno-literackie pismo syjonizmu państwowego*, 2 (1936), no. 7 (9), November 26–December 15, 1936, 1.

<sup>65</sup> This was not the only celebration in this synagogue dedicated to the memory of Ozjasz Thon. Another service was held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1936.

<sup>66</sup> ND, no. 322, November 22, 1936, 1; no. 323, November 23, 1936, 11.

<sup>67</sup> ND, no. 322, November 22, 1936, 10.

PREZYDIUM  
RADY MINISTRÓW

Warszawa, dnia 14 listopada 1936 r.

Szanowni Panowie!

Z powodu ciężkiej straty, poniesionej przez Panów na skutek śmierci wybitnego redaktora i publicysty b.p.Ozjasza Thona składam na ręce jego współpracowników najszczerze kondolencje

Z poważaniem

  
Szef Biura Prasowego

Do

Redakcji "Nowego Dziennika"

w Krakowie

ul. Grzeszkowej 7

7. The condolences from the Polish Government

Source: MHmK, sygn. 3837.

Rafał Landau, the chairman of the Krakow Jewish commune. On that day, *Nowy Dziennik* also published the recollections devoted to the departed rabbi written by Leon Motzkin, Apolinary Hartglas, Emil Sommerstein, Abraham Podliszewski and Markus Braude. Moreover, an interview given by Ozjasz Thon in 1930 was quoted in which he stated that he would want the Hebrew University to some day educate young men who might in the future

strengthen the Jewry and the spirit of the nation. This dream, which became a *postulatum testamentum*, was realised after the rabbi's death, the fruit of which are the university's graduates that make up the intellectual elites of the Jewish nation.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1936, *Nowy Dziennik* printed acknowledgements addressed from the widow and children as well as the rabbi's son-in-law to all those who provided their assistance during Ozjasz Thon's illness as well as to those who after his death united with his closest ones in grief.<sup>68</sup>

On the thirtieth day after the funeral (*shloshim*), Krakow remembered its rabbi. On that day, a tribute was paid to him as a commemorative plaque to him was placed on his house at 5 Jasna Street. The inscription in Hebrew read: "Rabbi Abraham Ozjasz Thon lived in this house from 5665 to 5697. He was one of the best of his nation, who with the power of mighty words and his excellent pen defended the honour of His Nation and its rights."<sup>69</sup>

At the same time, the rabbi's daughter, Nella Thon-Rostowa, fulfilled the obligation she took upon herself on the rabbi's deathbed and prepared memoirs of her father. They were published a year after the rabbi's death by the "Cofim" Jewish Publishing Association.<sup>70</sup>

The family erected a black marble tombstone on Rabbi Ozjasz Thon's resting place, with an inscription in Polish and Hebrew: *Rabbi Ozjasz Thon, Delegate to the Sejm, 1870–1936*.<sup>71</sup>

Many photographs, publications, portraits by Neumann and Schönker, and a bust sculpted by Hochmann remained after the rabbi. As well as the memory and fruit of the work of a great Zionist.

<sup>68</sup> ND, no. 322, November 22, 1936, 3.

<sup>69</sup> ND, no. 342, December 12, 1936, 3.

<sup>70</sup> Thon-Rostowa, *Ozjasz Thon*.

<sup>71</sup> Inscriptions commemorating the rabbi's loved ones: his wife Maria and son-in-law Bronisław Rost (both killed in Radom in 1942) and his only grandson Gabriel Józef Rost (murdered in Bełżec) were engraved after the war on the same *matzevah*.

## **Abbreviations**

AŻIH – Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego im. Emanuela Ringelbluma w Warszawie

IKC – *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*

JR – *Jüdische Rundschau*

MHmK – Muzeum Historyczne m. Krakowa

NAC – Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

ND – *Nowy Dziennik*

## **Sources**

AŻIH, Gmina wyznaniowa żydowska w Krakowie, sygn. 107/661

MHMK, Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa

## **Photos:**

NAC, sygn. 1-A-743-1, 1-A-743-3.

## **Maps:**

Najnowszy plan stołecznego król. miasta Krakowa, 1933

