

We'ohavta l'reacha kumocha

Categories: Other

WE'OHAWTA L'REACHA KAMOCHA¹

Religious group that existed before the war and had its own guest house and restaurant in Wiśniowa Góra². Founder of Ve-Ahavta Le-Reiakha Ka-Mokha, the famous Orthodox activist Boruch Gelbart (author of *Mafteyach*³), resumed the group's activities shortly after arriving in the ghetto. Its numerous members paid a monthly fee, for which they bought bread (as long as it was available in free trade). They had a prayer room where every inhabitant of the ghetto could come and receive bread with coffee. Those who could afford to pay did so, and those who had no money received food for free. Before eating, however, they had to ritually wash their hands and recite the "Birkhat ha-mazon," a blessing of thanks for food after eating.

Boruch Gelbart, founder of the association, helped a group of hungry children, giving them water to wash before eating, and praying with them after the meal. On Saturday mornings, each person who came to the headquarters of the association was given hot, kosher, Sabbath coffee.

In November 1940 when bread began to be rationed, the association's premise was closed. Boruch Gelbart took upon himself to mediate a variety of difficult cases. Using his extensive contacts and connections with high-ranking officials of the ghetto, Gelbart made many successful requests, especially on behalf of the so-called beneficiaries. It was very important as benefits were the only source of income for those people.

Boruch Gelbart showed a special commitment on behalf of his association during the forced settlement of "foreign Jews" and

newcomers from the provinces into the ghetto. The Ve-Ahavta Le-Reiakha Ka-Mokha provided housing, beds, and house utensils for many of the deportees.

At the end of 1941, the association began to teach the Torah.⁴ Its members said that if the “Love of one’s neighbor is the main law of the Torah,”⁵ they would express it in that way. Therefore, a study group was created and named “Daf Yomi”⁶. They met on Młynarska St. as well as in other parts of the ghetto, and publicly studied the Torah in the courtyards in the summer afternoons.

I.B.A. [Jerachmil Bryman]

Footnotes

1 Ve-Ahavta Le-Reiakha Ka-Mokha – Love thy neighbor as thyself (Hebrew).

2 Wiśniowa Gora was a popular resort among the Jews of Łódź.

3 Mafteyach (Hebrew for “key”) – The work was published in Łódź in 1931.

4 Tora (Yiddish Toyreh) – The first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy); the name “Torah” also refers to parchment scrolls of the Pentateuch. Destroyed Torah scrolls are buried in a cemetery. 5 Talmud, Nedarim 30b.

6 Daf Yomi (Hebrew) – The daily reading of one page of the Talmud. This way the reading of the entire Talmud is a seven-year cycle.

Resources

Encyclopedia, s. 230-231.

Tags

religious life

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