

Latvian Jewish Encyclopedia

Article 3

By Chaim Freedman
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Yehoshua (Hosias) Lemky



Born 1853 Windau, Courland (Latvia)
Died 1942 Berlin, Germany

Son of Leib (Lewin) and Rasche Lemky.
See separate article on the Lemky family.

According to his grandson Hosias Lemky was a Cantor at the Adass Jisroel Synagogue in Berlin. He was not a rabbi, but was very religious and scholarly. He also functioned as gabbai taking care of many of the administrative functions of the community and caring for the synagogue appertances such as the silver Torah crowns. The Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary was attached to the Adass Jisroel Synagogue, and Hosias also carried out administrative tasks at the seminary.

Hosias disapproved of his son Simon's plans to emigrate to Eretz Yisrael. Hosias was a member of the ultra-orthodox organisation Agudat Yisrael, one faction of which believed that Jews should stay in Germany to ensure the continuation of the community.

Simon was imprisoned in Oranienberg Concentratio Camp on Krystalnacht in 1938. Friends managed to have him released and he got to Eretz Yisrael.

Hosias was very wealthy and had 230,000 Reichsmarks in the bank. Even though conditions for the Jews were very bad after the Nazis came to power in 1933, Hosias refused to save himself by leaving the country.

Before the Second World War Hosias and his wife lived at Berlin-Charlottenburg, Marburger Str.5. During the Nazi period they had to move to Berlin-Wilmersdorf, Joachimsthaler Str. 13.They lived in one room and as most of the Jews of Berlin were deported to the extermination camps in the East, the Lemkys had to fend for themselves. Soon no one came to help the elderly couple and they had very little food. In March 1942 Hosias died in the Jewish Hospital from illness and malnutrition. Six months later the Nazis came for his wife and deported her to Theresienstadt Concentration Camp in Czechoslovakia where she refused to eat non-Kosher food and died a month later.

Information from "Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin, Centrum Judaicum" August 28, 2003:

"We found a Hosias Lemky, born Nov. 3rd 1853 in Windau (Latvia) who worked at the Israelische Synagogengemeinde Adass Jisroel as "Vorbeiter und Kantor". He died March 24 1942 in Berlin. His wife Helene (Lenne) Lemky nee Graumann, born July 22nd 1855 Kamin (West Prussia) was deported to Theresienstadt on Sept 14th 1942 where she died a month later. Their address was Berlin-Charlottenburg, Marburger Str. 5. She had to move later, so her last address before deportation was Berlin-Wilmersdorf, Joachimsthaler Str. 13. Probably their son Simon Lemky, last address in Berlin: Marburger Str. 5 went to Palestine."

"Adass Jisroel Die Judische Geneinde in Berlin (1869-1942)" by Mario Offenbergl:

"Helene Lemky, nee Graumann, born 22-7-1855 in Kamen
Lastly living in Berlin-Charlottenburg, Joachimsthaler Strasse 13,
with the Family Friedmann. On 8 September 1942 she had received
in the Artillerie Strasse 31 from the Court official in Berlin-Schoenberg the
orders from the Gestapo and she was six days later on 14 September 1942
deported to Theresienstadt as an 87 year old, with the so called "Second
Large Old People Transport" (1000 persons).
Her son Simon was then in Palestine.

Her husband Hosias Lemky, born 3 Nov 1853 in Windau, was second Cantor in
Adass Jisroel (responsible for the Weekday services in the Synagogue in
the Artillerie Strasse 31), he died on 24 march 1942 in the Jewish
Hospital in Wedding, Iranische Strasse. The address of the couple until the
death of Hosias was Marburger Strasse 5.

According to the burial card Hosias Lemky did not die the 24th, but already
the 23rd of March 1942 and was buried on 26-3-42 at the Cemetery of Adass
Jisroel in Berlin-Weissensee, Part D, Row 1a, grave number 14."

Memoirs of Siegfried Wollheim (in the above book):

"First Chazan Keiles was besides his official work also a sought after "Mohel"
and on many weekdays he saved us from the Tahanun prayer (which
is not said at a "Brit Milah"). Very loved was also Mr. Lemke, especially
when here cited with a resounding voice from the Torah before "Minchah" .

The Esra had brought the Adass much closer to me, especially in the Artilleriestrasse. Every second day Yom Tov I went in the afternoon to the Esra-events from Charlottenburg to the Artilleriestrasse, first to minchah, and I often remember the last Kaddish, the prayer of sorrow, of the second Chazan, Mr.Lemky, on the last holiday in the melody of the High Holidays, when he thundered out the prayer with his bass-voice."

Hosias Lemky lived in an apartment within the synagogue. A neighbouring apartment was occupied by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Auerbach who taught at the Rabbinical Seminary. He settled in Petah Tikvah, Israel. His son, Shmuel Auerbach recalled Hosias Lemky with affection. In particular he recalled that Hosias took groups of youth from the community for hikes in the forest and used to lead them singing his favourite tunes.

Hosias had the following children:

Simon (died 1948 in Petah Tikvah, Israel).

Julius (1874-1934), lived in the USA.

David Paul Gunther (1977-1942) lived in Hamburg, Germany.

Leopold (1880-1935), lived in Berlin, Germany.