

Avraham Imre Klein

*Ruth Blank wrote the following sometime in the early 1980s: **Klein Family**. Our grandfather, Avraham Meir Klein, wrote a Sefer "Imre Avraham", a commentary on the Parshioth of the Torah and Pirkei Avot. Uncle Shamsi Klein wrote an introduction in which he relates the life and activities of our grandfather. The following is the translation of the most important highlights from Hebrew.*

Abraham Meir Klein was born in 1844, in the village of Smolenitz, Slovakia, which is not far from Tyrnau. At the age of 9, he could follow very well a course in Gemara and Tosfoth. His teacher was the famous Rav Chaim Miller from Nadash. He studied at the Yeshiva of Rav Wolf Fuchs from Sered and later with Rav Maharam Schick from Jergan.

Back home in Tyrnau, at the age of 16, his father suggested that he learn the family's malt business so that he could take over at a later date. Avraham Meir, well versed in the Talmud, was not very keen to follow his father, Rav Yechiel, who was also a well to do landowner. Tyrnau, was well known for its Rabbi Eisick, the codifier of the Minhagim Lekol Hashana.

After the expulsion of the Jews in 1539, there were no Jews until about 1850 when the decree was abolished. Wanting only to learn Torah, Avraham Meir left home and walked for 6 weeks until he came to Rabbi Zvi Hirsh of Liska well known for his "Akh Peri Tevua" and as a Hasid and Kabbalist.

In Erlau, he stayed to learn the way of the righteous and then spent time in Arieli and Weizen before returning home, a Talmid Haham and well versed in the ways of the Just. A position was secured for him by his father at the customs office. This job demanded that he be up at night, which suited him as he could learn Torah as well. It is said that he never slept more than two to three hours; days and nights were alike to him.

Avraham Meir married Rivka, the daughter of Asher Ehrenstein from Skalitze, near Moravia. She was the granddaughter of the president of Congregation, Yezkiel, of Skalitze. For more than fifty years, this saintly woman, companion to Avraham Meir, gave up the pleasures of life as she herself went to far away yeshivot in the Eastern part of the country to enroll one after another her seven sons. They also had seven daughters.

Avraham Meir, then President of the congregation, in order to avoid further disagreement with the Rabbi Shimon Seiden - whom he otherwise respected and had received the title Moreinu HaRav from him at his wedding - left the congregation and founded a more orthodox one. He established a Beit Midrash where Chumash and Mishnayot were completed every 3 years. At night they learned Talmud and he himself studied with the students the entire Shas.

On Shabbat and Haggim, he taught Agada, Musar and gave Drashot. For 25 years, Avraham Meir made a living by renting out 3 courtyards to the army for their lodgings and supplying them with all their provisions. By then he was a landowner as well as owner of fields, but the city asked him to sell the fields.

He was not keen on being a Rabbi with a congregation, as a full-time occupation. As he liked to work, he built a workshop and did all the repairs for the soldiers. Because of his genuine piety and integrity he was well liked by non-Jews as well. The army honoured him and had access to his house as if they were family. The seven daughters were educated in the ways of the Torah and they all married into religious and G-d fearing families. For many years he did not eat meat or poultry during the week, only on Shabbat.

While Schamshi, his son, was Gabai in the new synagogue, a new Mehitza was built as the old one was lacking. The Rav at that time was Shmuel David Unger.

In 1916, his son Michael died on the battlefield in Poland at the age of 35 leaving his widow, Rosi and two girls. Also prematurely, a daughter Scharna, died soon after her husband, only thirty years old. They left four small children.

Avraham Meir Klein passed away in 1924 at the age of 80. Rivkah passed away in 1925 at the age of 79. Both are buried in the Tyrnau cemetery.