



JACOB DINEZON



Jacob Dinezon was born in *Nay Zhager* (New Zhager), Lithuania near Kovno in 1851. (Some say 1852, others say 1856. The Yiddish newspaper *Haynt* of August 1919 says 1851, the year we use here.)

When his father died in 1866, Dinezon was sent to live with an uncle in the city of Mohilev (Mogilev) near the Dnieper River. He is enrolled in a prestigious Jewish school that embraces the spirit of the *haskole* (Haskalah/ Jewish Enlightenment) where he learned Russian, German, mathematics, world history, and science.

At seventeen, he entered the employ of a wealthy and prominent family in Mohilev named Horowitz. Starting as a Hebrew tutor, he was soon promoted to bookkeeper, and then to manager of the family business.

Through this family, Dinezon was introduced to the owners of The Widow Romm and Brothers, a major Jewish publishing company, which published his first novel, *Ha'neahovim vha'neimim, oder Der shvartser yungermantshik* (*The Beloved and Pleasant, or The Dark Young Man*), in 1877.

Moving to Warsaw, Poland in 1885, Dinezon became a central figure in the city's Jewish literary scene. He advised and contributed a story to Sholem Aleichem's Yiddish literary journal and published I. L. Peretz's first book of Yiddish stories. He wrote several novels and novellas, including *Even negef, oder a shtein in veg* (*A Stumbling Block in the Path*), *Hershele, Yosele, Alter*, and *Der krizis* (*The Crisis: A Story of the Lives of Merchants*), and in league with Peretz, produced a literary journal and other publications.

In 1908, Dinezon and Peretz sign the invitation urging participation in the "Conference for the Yiddish Language" that is held in Czernowitz. Though Dinezon does not attend, Peretz addresses the conference, which seeks to elevate Yiddish to a modern, national language for the Jewish people.

With the outbreak of World War I, Dinezon, again in partnership with Peretz, helps found the Home for Jewish Children, an orphanage for the many displaced children arriving in Warsaw from the Russian-German war zone.

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During Passover 1915, Peretz dies of a heart attack in Warsaw. Dinezon sits as a *shomer* (watchman) until his friend's body is removed from the apartment. One year later, Sholem Aleichem dies in New York City.

On August 29, 1919, surrounded by family and friends, Jacob Dinezon dies in his Warsaw apartment. In a show of solidarity, Jewish mourners from all walks of life come out in the tens of thousands to express their grief on the day of his funeral. His final wish is fulfilled when he is buried beside his friend Peretz in the Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery.

His collected works including a collection of Yiddish stories, *Zikhroynes un bilder: shtetl, kinderyorn, shraybers (Memories and Scenes: Shtetl, Childhood Writers)* (www.jewishstorytellerpress/memories) was published in Warsaw in 1928.

More information about Jacob Dinezon is available at www.jacobdinezon.com.