My Life in Your Hands

by Leo Gartenberg

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LEO GARTENBERG

Introduction

Before you read this book, I would like to explain a few things. Originally, when my children and grandchildren were after me to tell them incidents about my life, they showed great interest in the stories that I related to them. They insisted that I put down everything in writing that I went through and what happened to me during my lifetime. They wanted to know all that I could remember from the earliest days of my life. I obliged them and wrote down things from about the time that I was three years old until the recent past.

It was my intention to do it in type, mimeograph it and prepare a few copies to give to them and to other members of my family. I mentioned this to a few of my friends and readers of my books and my weekly column in the *Jewish Press.* As soon as they heard about it, they insisted that I include them on the list for the photostat copies and should I ever decide to make a book of the stories and incidents, I should be sure to send them the book with my autograph. Some of them paid me beforehand towards the expense of the printing of the book.

I explained to them that some of the material, while of great interest to my family, may not be of interest to them. Everyone insisted that I should leave nothing out. "If it is of interest to your family, it is also of interest to me," each one said. It was at that time that I decided to print a book which would make it my fourteenth book that I wrote myself or co-authored with my very close friend, Dr. Morris Mandel who is an author of about twenty-five books, and Dr. Rabbi S.Z. Kahana, former director of the Religious Department of the State of Israel. He is the author of dozens of books and thousands of articles.

So my dear readers, should you come to a part which is of no interest to you, just skip that part and continue reading. I am sure that everyone will find something of interest to them. Having in mind that the book will be read by people outside of my family, I did cut out many incidents which I will preserve for my family. I trust that you will enjoy reading the book. Perhaps some of you will learn a lesson from some of my experiences. By all means, please let me know your comments. Please send in your donations for the book, the profits of which goes to charity. Thank you very much.

Leo Gartenberg

My father, Reb Moshe Gartenberg, *Z'l*

Prologue

The Gartenberg Family

I will attempt to trace back the Gartenberg name. I am referring now to a book called, *Die Yiddishe Naft Magnaten,* the Jewish Petroleum Magnates.

About fifty years ago, when I was a steady reader of the *Jewish Morning Journal* which was printed in New York City, I also used to read their weekly magazine known as *Der Amerikaner* which came out every Friday. In that magazine, there appeared a column in a serial which went on for several years. The name of the article was *Die Yiddishe Naft Magnaten,* which was about the Gartenberg family. *The Jewish Morning Journal* went under. When I started writing *The Story of My Life,* I was most anxious to obtain those articles, as they were about my family, the Gartenberg family. I did not know how to get them. Fortunately, my brother-in-law, Charles Klughaupt told me that a friend of his by the name Jack Gold who came here from Polish Galitcia acquired and had in his possession a book by the name of *Die Yiddishe Oil Magnaten.* The book was written by a Mr. Y. Hirshaut, in which there were the articles that I was looking for. The book was published by The Central Farband fun Polishe Yiden in Buenos Aires. I am very thankful to Mr. Gold for letting me use this book as reference. The book was published in 1954. In the first chapter, the author writes that the oil business was started not as oil as we know it, it was discovered as a foul smelling material which was imbedded in the fields of the towns of Joreslov and Boreslov. This bad smelling earth was considered as a ruination for the owners of the fields. It was a fatty substance which ruined the seeds the farmers had planted. The approximately one hundred Jewish families who lived in Boreslov and who made their living from the fields, were just as bad off as their non-Jewish neighbors.

When Avromele Scheiner left the *cheder* (the one room Jewish school), a great change occurred in the lives of the Jews of Boreslov. It was soon discovered that the substance in the ground near Boreslov

which appeared as ordinary hard earth, was lighter than ordinary earth. If this material was dried out and the sands around it were removed, it became brown in color. If it was heated, it melted, and when cooled it became a little hard. The Jews discovered that it was a sort of wax and that it was possible to use it to make Shabbos candles. Avromele's father was the first one to experiment with the material. He melted the earth in a copper pot, placed a wool thread into a tin tube, poured in the wax into the tube, and when it cooled off, there was a candle. The candles burned fairly well, but did not compare to the wax candles which were produced at that time from wax made by bees. It gave off a bad odor and produced a lot of smoke which made the white walls of a room turn black. On the other hand, the work was worthwhile because the material was plentiful, and the candles cost practically nothing to produce. Soon all the houses in Joreslov used these candles as lights. Avromele's father who was the first one to discover the value of this material, soon became a candle merchant. It was Avromele Scheiner who after a long time, found a way to remove all the bad smelling ingredients and the smoke, who put his father on the right track how to produce a good candle. Avromele went around to the neighborhood villages, and all the way to Drohbitch where he sold the candles at a good profit. The episode took place at the end of the eighteenth century.

The muds of Boreslov which for generations were the curse of the people, now became a blessing. All the beggars became rich. The price of land soared sky high. Everyone who owned land either sold it at high prices, or went into the business of producing wax. Reb Avrohom Scheiner married, and after years of research in the basement of his house, made the startling discovery, that the muds which suddenly appeared in the grounds in the neighborhood of Joreslov, was not ordinary mud, but contained a fat earth-oil. He found that the oil had a strong burning power, good for light and heat. This discovery of the Chasidic Avrohom Scheiner was very important for the countries of Europe as well as other countries of the world. Soon the oil became known as the "liquid gold."

In the great tumult it was soon forgotten that the discoverer of the oil was the chasidic religious Avrohom Scheiner of Joreslov. Soon the chemical factory in Lemberg became very much interested in the new discovery. The owner of the factory known as Miklash was an engineer by the name of Lukashewitz. He invited Mr. Scheiner to his office to consult with him how together they could find ways to improve the oil. The Polish engineer and the chasidic Jew spent a lot of

time together and after several months, there appeared the first oil lamp in history.

This story still has a small epilogue. In the year 1943, during the time that Joreslov, Borislov, and Drohobitch were occupied by the Nazis, there was a small group of Jews who worked in the oil refinery of Drohobitch. These few Jews were the remains of the thousands of Jews who had worked there before. Because of their knowledge in the field, their lives were spared by the enemy. Everyone knew that it was only a temporary relief. As soon as the murderers would be able to replace them with new workers, the Jews would be marched off to the burning ovens of the concentration camps. Into the hands of these few Jews, there fell a scientific article which appeared in a German oil journal. In the article there appeared a write-up about the oil business. It was stated that the discoverer of oil was a German by the name of Scheiner. Abraham Scheiner's grandchild who was one of the few remaining Jews, read the story about his grandfather. He remembered him as a Jew with a long white beard and side locks.

After writing about the wax and oil business, it is time to bring in the Gartenberg family, and their contribution to the business. The book starts out with two brothers; Moshe and his older brother Eluzer. (My father's name was Moshe. My name is Eliezer. I do not know if our names go back to that time.) Moshe at the age of seventeen, was selling milk to many of his so-called sworn customers. For no money in the world would they buy milk from anyone else, since they could not trust anyone else. Although, he was still a young fellow, seldom would one find a milk merchant who was so particular about the *kashruth* of milk as he was. He himself went to the farms to pick up the milk. The women who milked the cows, had to use only the kosher pails that he provided. He saw to it that the women scrubbed their hands thoroughly before they began to milk the cows. All of his buyers knew his complete honesty in measuring the milk. Therefore, he made out very well in the milk business.

The leading rich man of the town was a man by the name of Reb Gedalyeh Reingewirtz. He had only one daughter whose name was Chatilie. She was the apple of his eye. When she was young, she and Moshe used to play together. Chatilie was very good-natured. When she once met a poor woman with a child whose shoes and clothing were torn, Chatilie without thinking, removed her dress and shoes and gave it to the child. She came home to her parents dressed only in her shirt. Mrs. Reingewirtz did not know what to do. She ran into her husband's office to tell him what happened. At the time, there was in

the office the holy *tzadik* of Drohobitch, Rev Feivel Magid. When he heard what Mrs. Reingewirtz related, he expressed interest to see the child. Reb Feivel was known for the fact that he did not let anyone call him Rabbi. He never took any money from anyone. When the child came into the room, he placed his hands on the head of the child saying, "In the paths of angels you are walking my child. May you be blessed. All the blessings of our prophets shall come over you. A queen in Israel you shall grow up."

When Chatilie became sixteen years of age, her father was anxious to marry her off. However, none of the young men introduced to her were good enough in the eyes of her parents. Moshe was doing very well in his milk business, and it was a good thing that he did, because his father who was operating a small inn, and selling spirits, did not do too well at all. He was therefore practically the sole provider of the household. His brother Luzer went into the lumber business, but did not succeed. In time, Moshe who was now the largest milk supplier in the neighborhood, made a connection with Reb Gedalyeh by buying the milk from his cows. In time, Moshe became a rich man. Eventually he went into partnership with his brother Luzer in the lumber business. Reb Gedalyeh was influential in arranging for them to purchase a forest of trees from the local land owner. They had the trees cut and erected their own saw mill. The trees were sawed into all kinds of lumber.

When the wax business became a large undertaking, mines were dug to get the wax out of the earth, so that there was a great demand for lumber to support the mines.

Years later, Moshe married Chatilie. They moved to Drohobitch. The brothers went into the oil business and became very rich. They became known as the oil magnates of Europe. Moshe's wife, Chatilie, continued being a very good-hearted woman. With the money at her reach and with some monies that her father, Reb Gedalyeh left her after his death, she occupied most of her time in all sorts of charities. She saw to it that such institutions as Jewish hospitals, old age homes and orphan homes, were erected in Drohobitch and in the nearby cities of Joreslov and Boreslov. I heard that some of the buildings that she and her husband built are still operating. Later on Moshe Gartenberg bought a luxurious home in Vienna where they lived during the winter months, always returning to their home in Poland before the Purim holiday, so that they should be at hand to distribute large amounts of monies for the poor and the institutions, and serve the yearly Purim banquet for the lucky people; Jews and non-Jews alike

who were fortunate to be invited to this great dinner. While in Vienna, Moshe Gartenberg became very close to the famous Reb Meyer Rothschild, Baron Gutman and others. He also invested large sums of money in various business institutions and became a director in several banks. He was the largest stock holder in four of them and comptroller of the banks.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Chatilie, the beloved wife of Moshe Gartenberg, passed away, leaving instructions to her husband to continue her charitable work and in particular to finish the orphan home which was the greatest aim of her life. Moshe Gartenberg could not go on living in Drohobitch after his wife's death. He moved away to Vienna, leaving the business under the management of his brother, Luzer. His lawyer sold his house. All the furnishings of the house were distributed to the poor Jews of the city. Soon Luzer Gartenberg also passed away, leaving the management of both businesses in the hands of the son-in-law, Yankel Feierstein, who enlarged the business even more. Later he started drilling and opened refineries in Yasle and Garlitz. Moshe Gartenberg passed away in Vienna in about 1915. At his death, the newspapers came out with the headlines, "The Austrian oil king passed away." Also, King Frantz Joseph passed away at the same time. The papers said: "We lost two kings this week."

Moshe Gartenberg's books showed that his personal fortune was worth at that time in American money, the sum of $12,000,000. Whatever became of this vast sum of money, I do not know. Neither do I know at what period my grandfather, Rabbi Mordechai Gartenberg, came to Hungary. I was told that he came there as a young child and that he came from the neighborhood of Drohobitch, Boreslov and Joreslov, and that some of the family that remained in Poland eventually moved to Vienna. Once in a while if I meet someone by the name of Gartenberg, I inquire their origin. They all tell me that they came from Poland mentioning the names of Drohobitch, Joreslov and Boreslov or Vienna. They all remember that the family was very rich and very charitable.

Eventually this story sort of backfired on me personally. When I was in Europe in 1946 doing work for the *Vad Hatzalah* (which is a chapter by itself, and about which I will write in length later on), I was invited to a breakfast meeting at the home of Rabbi Vorhand, who was the spiritual leader of Prague. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss primarily the various problems concerning saving Jewish children in the various countries of Europe and the refugee problem in

general. While there, I met a Rabbi Dr. Jacob Griffel, who was doing outstanding work in the saving of thousands of people. He was an attorney specializing in the oil business. (I will write about him in later chapters.) When he heard the name Gartenberg, he told me, "Do you know that your name is very famous, I knew your family very well?" When I met Rabbi Dr. Jacob Griffel years later in New York, he told me about the oil business in which he was very active. He told me about great fortunes that were being made and that through his efforts, an uncle of his became exceedingly rich. The name of the uncle was Mr. Belkin, who only a few short years before was collecting chicken feathers in butcher stores in Brooklyn and was now on his way to becoming a millionaire. It was all true, and that with luck, anyone could do the same. The result was that I, my family, and several others that Dr. Griffel brought into the picture, organized a group and we went into the oil business.

We started drilling wells, but not having the large amounts of funds needed for deep wells, we started out with shallow wells, which began to produce oil. However, being shallow wells, they eventually dried out. The result was that we all lost our investments. We just did not have the luck. But the whole thing came about for my having the name Gartenberg, a descendent of a very famous oil rich family. Eventually Dr. Griffel brought us into the oil royalty business. After waiting about twenty-five years, we finally got our investment back. Waiting twenty-five years to regain an investment, is a loss anyway. But at least we got something back. The investment in the drilling business was a complete loss.

My grandfather, *z"l*, was Rabbi Mordechai Gartenberg. As far as I know, he was brought to Hungary from Poland as a small child. His first wife, that is my grandmother, passed away before I was born. He and our family lived in a town called Kis Dobrony (Klein Dobrony) in the state of Bereg, which was at that time Hungary. Now it is a part of Russia. My grandfather lived two houses away from us. He operated a small Hebrew school, which in this country would be called a Yeshivah, and which therefore made him a Rosh HaYeshivah.

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My memory goes back to the time when I was about three years old. My grandfather and his second or third wife, lived in a private house consisting of two large rooms. I remember that I was in the front room which was among other things also the kitchen, and I was having a hard time trying to cross the threshold of the kitchen to enter the next room where my grandfather was teaching his class. He was teaching the chapter of *Vayechi* where our father Jacob was speaking to his son Joseph about how he buried his beloved wife Rachel in Beth Lechem on the way to Ephrath. As small as I was, I loved to listen to bible stories. I had great pity on mother Rachel being left alone on a lonely road. I wanted to hear the whole story which I could not hear from the next room. Since the houses were built from mud bricks, the walls had to be wide as well as the threshold, which made it difficult for me to cross without assistance from someone.

At the time we were five children, all boys. My brother Mayer was the oldest; then Hershel (he passed away when he was about ten years old); I was the next one; after me came Yosef; and the youngest was my brother Shlomo. The two girls Elkeh and Feigeh came later. As there were already a few of us, I slept in my grandparent's house. I remember that one night I woke up with my throat clogged from a cold. I had trouble breathing. I slept in the same bed with my grandfather. I either woke him or he woke up by himself. By the light of the lamp which he immediately lit, he saw that I was getting blue in the face. Usually they poured hot milk or tea into the throat to relieve the congestion. It was late at night. The fire in the stove was out. There was no way of getting anything hot. Grandfather quickly pulled out some straw from the bed which was used as a mattress, took a spoonful of chicken fat, lit the straw and placed the spoon with fat over the flame. The fat began to boil in a minute. When it was real hot, he forced my mouth open and spilled the hot fat down my throat. While the inside of my mouth was scalded my throat was cleared and I was able to breathe again. Thus my life was saved. As we lived in a small town, there were no doctors, therefore we had to depend on

home-made remedies and the advice of the local experienced women of the town. When we had sore throats, they took a long stocking, filled them with hot ashes and wrapped it around our necks, which helped. If we had a cut, since there were no band-aids or iodine, the women chopped up some grass, mixed it with something fat and then wrapped it around the cut. I remember once when I was cutting grass to feed to the cows while they were being milked, I cut the thumb on my left hand all the way to the bone. The women put some fine cut grass around it. It eventually healed, but I still have the mark left to this day.

When I was a little older, I started my Jewish learning with the *Alef Beis.* We were always late for the public school because my grandfather kept us until the last minute in Hebrew school, saying our prayers. We had to be in public school by 8:00 a.m. We were dismissed from the Hebrew school only a few minutes before, and nervously kept our eyes on the big clock on the wall. I decided that something drastic had to be done immediately. Since I slept in that room which was also our bedroom, I stood up on the bed which was right under the clock and moved the big handle five minutes ahead giving us an extra five minutes. However, grandfather opened his eyes at that moment. I was forced to move the clock back. One can try, can't he? We had no problem during the summer months since the public school was closed. A few days before Rosh Hashanah we were dismissed from the Hebrew school. Since we only had to attend public school, we had time for ourselves to do as we pleased. Most of this time was spent in the garden harvesting the fruits and vegetables, taking long walks in the woods, or playing all kinds of games. We played practically the same games being played today, but they were such, that we had to manufacture them ourselves. There were no stationery or candy stores where to buy games or toys.

One of our favorite activities was "mushroom picking." Mushrooms were growing in the fields all around the village. The best time for the picking was in the morning before the sun was burning hot. We brought home bushelsful of them. The large ones which were dark brown or black on the inside, were used up right away. The small round ones that were pink colored on the inside were hung near the stove with a string that we had pulled through them. They soon began to dry up from the heat and smoke. We kept them on the outside for a long time and used them during the entire winter, either mixed with scrambled eggs, or put into vegetable soups. Many times, we took a few mushrooms, put a little salt on the inside and placed them on the

stove to bake; or took a wooden spear which we stuck through the mushroom and held them over the hot coals in the stove; or baked them on the hot stove. When they were ready, we ate them as a sandwich between two pieces of bread, and that was called a "baked mushroom sandwich." We never heard of eating them raw, as they are being eaten now.

We also went into the garden, tore off a few fresh stalks of corn, took off the husks, stuck a wooden spear into the corn and baked it over the hot coals in the stove until they were well done. We would invite a few of our friends and we would eat the corn kernel by kernel while sitting on the porch discussing events, or watching the few people who passed by on the street who were either walking or riding in the horse and buggy wagons. We would do the same with fresh new potatoes that we dug out of the ground from our nearby garden. We also stuck a spear through them, baked them over the coals in the stove or over a fire that we set up in the yard. So you see, we managed to spend our time in various diversions, no matter how primitive they seem now since we can get these things in plastic bags in the super markets.

Soon there came the days of *Slichos* which meant getting up early. Getting up early for *Slichos* was quite an adventure for us kids. In order to be able to do that, we had to go to sleep very early the night before, in order to be able to rise early. If we were actually up at the time, our father took us along with him. If we were asleep, as a rule we were not awakened. It was quite embarrassing to find out that we were asleep and we were not present in the synagogue. We were ashamed to look into the faces of our friends. As many people did not have a clock or a watch, it was arranged that the Sexton of the town came around to wake them up. He banged on the window with his stick, saying with a special song, *"Shteyt ohf tzu avodas Habohere."* "Get up to the service of the Creator." The streets as a rule were already muddy, and we had to wear our winter boots to be able to make it to the shul. Not only the local people came to the services, but also the people who lived on the various farms around the village came in their horse and buggies to the place. For this special occasion, the *Mikvah* (the village bath house) was heated, and we all went there before going to the synagogue. We always had a race or contest to see who could undress, jump into the hot water, dunk three times, and get dressed again in the shortest period of time. The one who took the longest was considered a slow poke.

From the bath house, we marched into the synagogue which was

brightly lit with dozens of candles burning in the chandeliers that were hanging from the high ceiling. Our *Shochet* (slaughterer) was also the cantor, and conducted the holy services in a beautiful style. The whole congregation helped along in chanting the prayers with the special melodies for the occasion. During the parts when the prayers were recited in a loud voice by the individual people, the children did their best to sing louder than anyone else, making sure that their mothers in the women's section a floor above, would hear them. We waited to be complimented by our mothers, saying that she heard our prayers all the way up there and as a reward received a loving pinch on the cheek or maybe a piece of candy or a cookie.

On the Holiday of the New Year, we started the prayers early and finished late in the afternoon. We did not skip any of *"Yotzros in the Machzur."* The biggest treat to us was our going up to mother in the women's section and receiving a piece of chicken and *challah* that she took along in order to feed us during the long hours of the prayers. We listened to the blowing of the Shofar, which actually began many weeks before. The symbol of the Shofar was (and still is) the reminder of the coming of the holy days, and for all to repent and ask for the forgiveness of our sins. During the two days of the New Year, all of us tried to be on our best behavior. Sitting next to our father, he saw to it that we should follow the congregation with the prayers and not to skip any of them, and of course stay in the building and not run around in the yard. On this holiday, contrary to the other Sabbath days, all the women attended the services. In our section, women as a rule were not encouraged much to attend the services in the synagogues. In the winter time, we, the menfolk, did not use the main hall, as it was large and hard to heat. So we used the room in front of the main hall, known as the Beth Hamedrash, where the place was heated by a stove. There was no room provided there for women. The section for women was located above this room with a grating and a curtain. Their entrance was from the side of the building with a staircase to walk up.

There is a humorous anecdote about a synagogue that was built in a certain town. Loads of bricks were brought to be used for the project. After the temple was all completed, there were a supply of bricks which remained. As the bricks were assigned to a holy project, the question arose as to what to do with these remaining bricks. It would not be right to use them for any other building purpose. After a meeting of the members of the community, it was decided that the question should be presented to the rabbi of the town for his opinion. After the question was presented to him, the rabbi with a smile on his

face said, "If I would not be afraid of my own wife, I would say, that the bricks should be used to block up the entrance of the ladies section of the building."

Girls, before their marriage were as a rule not permitted to go up to the services. Again there is a humorous interpretation on a passage in the Psalms on this. It is known that when a couple stand under the "chupah" canopy, the bridegroom, holding the wedding band in his hand says the following *"Harey at mekudeshet 'li' betabaas zu,"* Behold, thou art consecrated unto "me" by this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel. In the Psalms, we find the verse where King David writes, *"Somachti beohmrim li beys Hashem neylech,"* the ordinary meaning is, "I was happy when they told me, we will go to the house of G-d." When they asked a recently married woman, how she likes being married, she used the words as follows, "I am delighted that my husband told me the words. *Harey at mekudeshes 'li,'* Behold you are consecrated to 'Me' because now, *'Beys HaShem neylech,'* now I am permitted to go into the house of G-d."

After the services we had our holiday meal, and right after we all attended the services of *"tashlich"* where all went to the lake outside of the village where we said the prescribed prayers which are based on the verse *"Vesashlich bimtzilos Yom Kol Chatohsom."* We pray to the L-rd saying, "And thou will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." It is a custom to throw out from our pockets any crumbs that may be there, and if there are any fish in the water they will swim over and devour them. It is a symbol that, "Just as we clean out our pockets, and throw them in the water, so shall the Lord throw all our sins away," as is written, "O, mayest thou cast all the sins of thy people, the house of Israel, into a place where they shall be no more remembered or ever again come to mind." We children did not know the reason for doing this; we thought that it is done in order to feed the fish, and that way we earned a mitzvoh (do a good deed) of feeding the creations of G-d. We all tried to outdo each other by bringing along large pieces of bread that we saved from our meals to feed the fish. We thought that the more we fed them, the greater was the Mitzvoh.

After these services, we all returned to the synagogue, where we all said the Psalms with great concentration. We were not allowed to go home to sleep, or to play any games those two days of the holiday. We were told that being that everyone was being judged those days in heaven, how would it look that at the moment when we were being judged in heaven for the deeds that we did the past year, and a new verdict was being given for the next, we should be found sleeping or in

the midst of playing games? It was therefore of most importance to be on our best behavior during this period. We really did try to be exceptionally good in our behavior during the days between the New Year and the Yom Kippur holiday. We continued to rise early for the *"Selichot"* every morning and say our prayers with great concentration.

A great excitement that we had was the preparing of the *"Kaphores"* for Yom Kippur. The custom of *"shlugen Kaphores"* is not accepted all over the world. As a matter of fact, there are some places like Russia or Latvia where not only is the custom not practiced, but it is looked down upon. For those who are not familiar with the custom, let me explain it. In Hungary, Poland and some other countries, it is a custom to take a live chicken, usually a white one in the hand, recite three times the *"Bnei Odom"* as found in the prayer books, take the chicken and gently swing it over our heads and say *"Zeh chalifohsi, zeh t'muhrohsi,"* etc. The interpretation of this sentence is as follows: "This shall be my exchange, this shall be my forgiveness, this chicken is destined to death, and I will be granted a long good life in peace." This is generally done on the day before Yom Kippur. It is the custom for a man to take a rooster and a woman to take a hen.

We practiced this custom while we were in business at the Pioneer Country Club. Many of our guests requested that we supply them with live chickens over which they would recite the prayers. Mrs. Gartenberg, may she rest in peace, saw to it that several coops of poultry were delivered to the hotel, and men and women came to the back of the kitchen, took a chicken, said the prayers and gave her a dollar or two for her efforts and which she later distributed to charity. As a rule, when the chickens were slaughtered and cooked, we sent them with David Kosofsky, our policeman at the hotel, to the Jewish prisoners in the prison outside of our village of Ellenville. David Kosofsky has also passed away. Before he died he expressed a wish that I should officiate at his funeral as the rabbi. I am not an ordained rabbi, but I did officiate at his funeral and later at the unveiling of his tombstone. May he rest in peace.

The custom of *"Kaphores"* was an exciting event in the lives of the children in our village in Europe. Many days before Yom Kippur, each of us selected the chicken that would be his *Kaporeh."* We made a mark by tying something to the leg of the chicken. We endeavored to pick out a white chicken as a symbol that "even though our sins were red, they would become white as pure snow." We looked upon this custom as though we were bringing a sacrifice to the Holy Temple in ancient

times, where if one committed a sin, one brought a sacrifice to G-d and asked for forgiveness which was granted to him. So you see that the custom has merits, and is still being practiced by many people to this day.

Soon the holy day of Yom Kippur arrived. Of course everyone, men, women, and children, visited the *mikvoh* (the public bath) not only because no one had a bathroom with a tub or a shower in their own house, this was something that I did not see in my youth, not until I came to this country, but also to purify our bodies for the holy holiday. While in the mornings of the New Year many of us went to the *mikvoh*, not only on the day before, but also on the holidays itself, and the day before Yom Kippur, except the day of Yom Kippur, when we are not allowed to have any bodily pleasure, we are according to the Torah not allowed to wash our faces, or even the hands (only the tips of our fingers).

The days between the holidays, we played all kinds of games. The most popular game at that time of the year was the game played with walnuts. Where did we get these walnuts from? Very simple. There were several walnut trees in our village which were originally planted in front of the houses, with most of the branches overhanging on the street. It is an accepted fact that all fruits that are hanging over public property belong to the public and one can pick them and also those that fall to the ground. We made it a practice every morning to go to pick up all the nuts that fell, figuring that they belonged to us legally. When walnuts are picked from the tree or when they fall to the ground, they are still in their green shells. The shells are hard and cannot be removed easily. The nuts are usually placed in hay or straw, kept in a warm place, and several days later the shells can be removed. Here again the empty coffins in our attic came in handy. When taking off the shells from the nuts, the fingers become colored with a yellowish green color. Our hands became colored and although we washed them with soap, and rubbed them with sand and ashes, it took several days to clean our fingers.

Would you like to know how the walnut game was played? I will tell you anyway. Several boys got together. Each one put a few nuts into the kitty. The nuts were laid out in a line next to each other. Choosing the largest one, it was placed standing up on the ground, and the rest of the nuts were laid out flat, to the left of the large one that was called the "head." The players lined up in back of each other about one hundred feet away. The first selected player was given a

large hard ball made of rags, and he was to roll this ball on the ground towards the lined up nuts. If he was a bold one, he aimed his ball towards the right side of the line. He took a risk that the ball may roll too much to the right and miss the whole line, but there was always the hope that the ball would hit the first nut known as the "head" and in that case win the whole line of nuts. The more timid players aimed the balls more to the left, and if the ball knocked out a nut from the line, he won all the nuts that were laid out to the left of the nut that was hit. This was the game that we played most often between the holiday of New Years and until after the holiday of Succoth.

Soon it was Yom Kippur. On this holiday our parents were more strict with us, and we really had to be in the synagogue and recite all the prayers in the book. Most people in our village did not possess any slippers, and since we are forbidden to wear leather shoes on this day, people took off their shoes and remained in their stockinged feet. As a rule stockings were changed only a few times during the year. Therefore, the smell in the synagogue was not too pleasant. In order not to feel the cold of the floor, straw was spread on the synagogue floor. It was a popular game among the children to steal as much straw as possible from under the seats of the people and place it under their seats so that their feet would be warmer and also softer on their bodies when they fell *"Korim"* the following day.

We all know that on Yom Kippur we are forbidden to take a bath or wash our faces, only the tips of the fingers may be washed. One Yom Kippur the whole town had a good laugh. Two men who were G-d fearing men, but not educated at all, presumed being it is a Mitzvah to go to the Mikvah on an ordinary Sabbath morning, how much greater the Mitzvah would be on Yom Kippur, and therefore decided to go to the Mikvah. Not having a towel with them, they were unable to wipe themselves and marched into the synagogue with water dripping from their beards. All burst out laughing. The two men were at a loss to understand why everyone was laughing at them until they were told that one is not allowed to even wash his face on this Holy day, and definitely not to take a bath. They were embarrassed but everyone understood that they meant well and the incident was never mentioned again.

During the following days we were occupied with the "esrog, lulov, hadasim and aruvos." Being that we lived far away from a tropical country, we had to receive the first three items from far away countries where they have warmer weather all the time and they were

imported to us.

After Yom Kippur came the holiday of Succoth. According to the custom, the building of the Succah begins right after Havdula on Yom Kippur night. We were lucky since we did not have to start from scratch. We had a fully built Succah from year to year. We did have to go to the swamps to cut the schach to cover up the open part of the Succah under which the table that we ate on stood. We spent a lot of time on the trimmings of the Succah. Fortunately, we had no problem in obtaining the colored papers from which to make the chains or the *Mogen Davids,* since these items were sold in our department store. All our energies were spent in making these trimmings.

The biggest job was to make the birds. Weeks before the holiday, my mother, whenever she cooked or baked, pinched out holes on both ends of the eggs she used and blew out the contents so that only the shells remained. Then we made four more holes on either side of the shells and enlarged the former holes. On the rear end we placed narrow folded colored papers to act as the tail; on the two sides we placed folded papers as wings; and on the top, we made the hole large enought to push through a piece of dough which we shaped to look like the head of a bird. By putting two black peppers on the side which acted as the eyes, the bird was ready to be hung from the ceiling. The rest of the ceiling was trimmed with different kinds of colored trimmings. We covered the walls with *Mogen Davids* plus the usual prayer sheets and designs which we made up weeks ahead of time. We boasted of having the most beautiful Succah in the whole town. All the local residents came to admire our Succah. Of course, we had the material from our own store as well as the labor force. (Read the story "The Missing Lulav" on page 91 in my book No. 5, *"Torah Thoughts,"* relating how I made a Succah in Fublaines, France, with no materials, in the year 1946, in a Childrens' Refugee Home.) The great excitement on Succoth was the *Esrog* and *Lulov.*

There are many stories related about some situations when these items were not available or not brought in, in the right time. I do not remember a time when we were short of these items. There was never any problem of having the aruvos. They grew in our section. I remember that I discovered such a tree in a field not far from our garden. They were the real nice ones. The leaves were narrow and green while the stems were red. I kept it a secret. No one knew about it, even my own brothers were unaware of the place. I remember that my friends who did not know where to find these particular kind of

trees, had to supply their parents with ordinary twigs. Here there was a question of whether they were really kosher.

A few days before my father and I left our village on our way to come to this country, I called my brothers and my best friend, Shlomoh Mermelstein, took them to the place where this particular tree was located, and revealed to them my life-long secret. I never heard from my friend, Shlomoh again, and I wonder many times whatever happened to him. To this day, whenever I meet a person with the name of Mermelstein, I make it my business to find out whether there is any connection between him and my long lost friend.

Of course, everyone tried to buy the nicest esrog and lulov. My father who was often in Munkacs or Ungvar always brought back a nice one. Not everyone in the town was fortunate to own their own "four items." One set was bought by the congregation, which belonged to the whole community. On the mornings of the holiday, the set was taken to the inhabitants of the town who made the blessings, and soon taken to the next house. All the children in town were anxious to be the messenger, because after the holiday they received a few pennies for their efforts. After Succoth, my mother used the *Esrog* to make preserves for the winter. We used the Hadasim for "besomim" and saved the leaves of the Lulov to be used as binders for the *Hoshanos* for *Hashanoh Rabboh.*

My brother, Mayer, *Z'l.*; (r) sister, Florence;

my mother, Miriam, *z'l*; sister, Elaine; brother, Joseph

As a rule, the Hebrew teachers who were engaged to teach us, left for their homes about two weeks before the *Rosh Hashonoh,* the Jewish New Year holiday. During this period, being that we only had to attend the public school, we had lots of time on our hands. There was practically no homework given by the teachers to take home. We used the time for games, we went to the forests where we found wild, hard, apples and pears that were not edible, at that time. We brought home sacks full of them and put them away in a warm place (like the attic) in order that they should ripen. These we used for food during the whole winter, to eat them raw, or to have our mother cook them. We also went fishing in the shallow waters in the woods. They usually contained a lot of small fish for which we took along straw or reed bushels and when we saw something like a school of fish, we used to catch them that way. This was also the harvest time for all other kinds of fruits and vegetables which we stored for the winter food supply. As there were no storage places where to keep them, they were usually put under the beds on which we slept. They were kept there for the whole winter and used as we needed them. The final cleaning up was a few days before the Passover holidays.

On Chanukah, except for the good meals that my mother prepared, there was no particular excitement. It was nice to watch the colored candles lit in the Menorah. We attended school everyday of the holiday. No big business about latkes, we had them all the time. This holiday the game that we played was the "Dreydel" which we made ourselves out of wood.

We never bought any bread or cake, my mother baked them all. The baking was done early on Friday morning. In the afternoon after the baking was done, by adding some wood to make the oven more hot, it was used to put in the "chulent" which consisted of a tremendous large pot which contained beans, barley, a kugel made of flour (like a kishke) and meat or fat. In the front of the stove where it was not too hot, there were placed either a potato kugel, noodle kugel, or a rice

kugel. The oven was very large, with enough room, not only for our pots, but for many others. Therefore, we invited all our neighbors to bring their pots of raw food to be placed into the oven. The neighbors were very happy to do this, because not all were in a position to spend money for wood or coal to heat their own ovens. Everyone made chulent for the Sabbath. However, not all of them were the same. The more well-to-do people were in a position to put in besides the beans, barley and potatoes, also a piece of meat, a few marrow bones, or pieces of chicken. Those that could not afford these luxuries, just put in the above-mentioned things.

About midday on the Sabbath, the women lined up in front of the stove to pick up their pots. Many of them liked to find out what their neighbors put into their pots, so when they thought that no one was looking, they picked up the cover of the other pots, and hastily gave a look to see what the other women put into their pots. It was a nasty thing to do, but it was done. After all, what other opportunity does a woman have to see what is doing in another woman's pot, than when a dozen or so pots are in front of her? I believe that it was in cases like these that the saying of *"Kuk nit in yenems tepel,"* Do not look what is in the other person's pot, was phrased.

My grandfather, Rabbi Mordechai Gartenberg, *Z"l*, besides being what would be called in this country, a "Rosh Hayeshivoh," the head of the whole education system, was also a well-accomplished "Baal Tefiloh" (a cantor). In our town the "Shochet" (slaughterer) was also the official cantor. My grandfather was always engaged in a town a distance away to be the cantor there. He went there before the New Year and remained until after Succoth. In his last year, we were advised that he was not well. My father engaged a wagon and went to pick him up to bring him home. He passed away suddenly on the trip home. Normally, my father would have had to report his death to the authorities of the town where he passed away. This would cause a great inconvenience. They would have taken him off the carriage, placed his body someplace (there was no such thing as undertakers and/or funeral parlors). A doctor from a nearby larger city would have to be called in to determine the cause of death, perhaps even perform an autopsy before they would give out a death certificate. My father decided to do nothing but continue the journey home.

My grandfather was well in his eighties at the time. I was about seven or eight years old. It happened during the Chol Hamoed Succos (the intermediate days of the Succoth holiday). I remember it well. My uncle, Morris Lebowitz, my mother's brother was visiting us. He was

on his way to America, and had stopped off to say goodbye to us. He came to America to be with his other three brothers and two sisters who were already here. We thought that we would never see him again. Of course, as it turned out, eventually, we also came to this country.

My grandfather was loved by all. Practically all of the young couples, boys and girls, were his students. He was very distinguished looking with a long white beard. He was one of three people in the town who wore a Shtreimel and Caften (a fur trimmed hat and silken long outer coat). I missed him a lot since I slept in his house which was next door to our house, when he passed away. Our step grandmother lived for a few more years. I continued to stay with her and took care of her. Her back was always itching her, and I had to scratch it for her all the time. Our real grandmother passed away many years before. We did not know her, so this was the only grandmother that we really knew. My parents and the grandchildren respected her a lot. She did not want to move out of the house. She only came to our house on Friday nights to listen to the Kiddush. My grandfather was missed by the whole town, since he was the teacher for all the children of the town.

After a few years of learning Chumish and Rashi, and a little of Tenach (in our section of Europe, very little time was devoted to the study of Tenach), when I reached the age of seven, I started learning Talmud. The first gemorah that I learned was in the Mesichtoh Kesubos. Why children of such tender age should learn this particular Mesichta which deals with marriages, laws between man and wife, etc. is something that I never understood. Perhaps this tract was the one that our hired teacher (after my grandfather passed away) was most acquainted with. He therefore chose this tract. These hired teachers were not great scholars. And so life went on in our small village. After Succoth it rained steadily, the roads were very muddy.

In the springtime things were more pleasant. The muds on the street started to dry up, and we were able to go to school while it was light since the days were longer. No longer did we have to wear long boots or sacks or old rags wrapped around our feet to keep our feet warm. We were not tied down to the house, but were able to play outside. We played outdoors games whenever we had a few free minutes. We played ball with balls made out of old rags. Girls played with dolls that they made from rags wrapped around pieces of wood. As soon as the earth became dry, we played a game called hop-scotch, I believe.

About two or three weeks before Passover, the hired teacher left our village to go home to his family in the village that he came from. Now we had no Hebrew school, only public school which started about eight o'clock in the morning. This meant that we did not have to get up at six in the morning. The school lasted until three o'clock in the afternoon with a morning recess from about ten-thirty to eleven. The morning session was over at twelve, and we had an hour and a half for ourselves. We were able to run home (who ever walked when there was a chance to run?) to have lunch which consisted of a cooked meal most of the time, instead of just a slice of bread with something in between that we took along in the morning and ate on our way to the Hebrew school. Most of the time it was two slices of bread smeared with a sort of margarine called kokus. I presume that it was made from nuts or vegetables. Sometimes the bread was smeared with jam, mostly lekvar made from prunes. The more prosperous families also gave their children an apple or a piece of an apple as a treat.

On rare occasions we were lucky to have a hard boiled egg, or shared an egg with a brother. Even those families who had their own chickens did not have too many eggs in the winter time, because as a rule, the chickens do not lay eggs in the winter. The only eggs that were available were those that were saved from the former summer or fall. In our case, since we had a store, the gentile women sometimes brought in a few eggs in exchange for merchandise that they took from the store. The eggs that were occasionally available, had to be used with caution. First, two of them had to be saved for the coming Sabbath to be used for the *"Tzibeles mit eiyer"* (eggs and onion) that was then mixed together with chicken livers and served to the entire family. As most families consisted of ten people, this delicacy had to be served sparingly. It was therefore more onions than eggs and was eaten in small bites with a lot of white bread (a delicacy in itself) called *challah* or *barches.* My mother used to say that there was one dish that she did not have to spend a lot of time washing after the Sabbath, and that was the small dish used for the eggs and onions since we all wiped the dish real clean with the soft part of the white bread. Of course, our family was well-to-do and we therefore had different sizes of dishes; smaller ones for the fish; another for the eggs and onions; a larger deeper one for the soup; and a flat one for the chicken or meat. The average family was not so lucky. They used one or two plates for a whole meal.

So, as you can see, there was not an abundance of eggs, which reminds me of a little incident that I can never forget. It happened once

that both my mother and father were away from home. The other children were also out someplace and I was the only one home, which was a rare event. I was thinking to myself what kind of advantage could I take of this situation, and looking all over the house and in the store which I was left to mind, my eyes fell on the compartment in the shelf in which there was about a dozen eggs. Quickly I took one of the eggs, and handling it with great care, brought it to the kitchen where a fire was always going, took a pot and put hot water into it from another pot that always had boiling water in it and thus boiled the egg. I thereby had a whole hard boiled egg for myself.

Eggs were also very important for another reason and that was to hatch them. Towards the end of the winter, we took a basket filled with straw and made it into a nest. We put about thirty eggs in the nest and first examined them by candlelight to see whether they were suitable for this purpose. We placed an older chicken that was warm at the time and had this chicken sit on these eggs day and night for I believe thirty days. Eventually, the eggs cracked open and little live chicks came out. Many times there were two or three sets of chickens sitting in these baskets. These chicks that were thus produced was the food that was prepared for later on in the year both for their eggs and for their meat. These baskets were placed right in the rooms that we lived in. When the little chicks were finally hatched and started to walk around in the kitchen or bedroom, we fed them mashed corn or bread that was first placed in water in order to make it soft. Can you imagine having thirty chicks walking around in a kitchen with several children around? Many of the chicks were killed because a child stepped on it, and that was considered a real tragedy. Of course, on nice warm days they were taken out to the yard, but at night when it became cold, they had to be taken back into the house for the night. A few days after the first batch were born, another batch was born and so we always had about a hundred chickens around the house. Many of them died while still young, and had to be buried in small holes that we dug for this purpose. Of course, we needed a lot of eggs for the Passover holiday, from which to make noodles for soup, eggs for the Seder, and for the potato latkes, etc.

I remember one winter before Passover when there was a shortage of eggs. Mother was pretty much concerned. My older brother Meyer (may he rest in peace), told mother not to worry, that he knew where to get a basketful of eggs, but that it would cost a lot of money. Mother readily agreed to give him the money and soon he came back with about a hundred eggs. When he was pressed to say where the

eggs came from, he admitted that he saved them up himself. He was watching the older chickens who were layng an occasional egg in our stable, picked up the eggs and hid them in straw so that they should not freeze. Then he had them ready for Passover. Well, a deal is a deal. Mother paid as she promised and we had a supply of eggs for Passover.

Something else which occupied our time before Passover, when we did not have to attend public school, was the baking of Matzos. For people here in America who are accustomed to go to the grocery store to buy several cartons of matzos and bring them home, the acquiring of matzos in a village in Europe needs an explanation. The project started the summer before, when on a nice clear day the wheat in the fields was cut. This wheat while still in the straw was not left on the ground for a few days to dry by the sun, but instead, was picked up and brought into a place which had a roof or it was covered up so that it would not get wet from the nightly dew. After it was carefully thrashed, the wheat kernels were placed in a new sack, and put in a dry place. A few weeks before Passover, the sack was brought into the house and after making sure that there was no Chometz nearby, we placed a clean white tablecloth that contained no starch, on a table. Small amounts of the wheat was poured on the table and then the whole family, after washing and scrubbing their hands thoroughly, sat around the table and very carefully made sure that each individual wheat was whole, no piece cut off and picked each wheat separately from among other vegetation that might be mixed in. It was placed again in a new sack and either was ground in hand grinders after kashering the grinder with scalding water, or larger amounts of the wheat was taken to the village public mill. After the whole mill was thoroughly cleaned and kashered, the wheat was ground and brought home.

A particular house was assigned for the baking of the matzos. All the furniture was taken out of the room, straw was spread on the floor, long new white boards were placed in the room, and after the flour was mixed with the right amount of water, the water having been prepared a day before and known as *Mayim Sh'lanu* water that slept over, it was made into a dough, cut into small pieces and distributed to a group of women who lined up the boards and who *gevalgert* (rolled) the dough into a thin matzoh. When ready, it was given to someone who used a home-made instrument known as a *reydel* which made holes in the matzos and then given to the baker, who placed it into the oven for baking. All these people, from those making the

dough, until the bakers, were experts in their field and had to be very fast, so that the whole project from beginning to end did not last more than a period of eighteen minutes. When the matzos were finally baked, they were lined up on a clean white sheet. Both ends of the sheet were tied and a long stick was placed through the opening of the two sides of the sheet and then it was carried home by two people. Two hooks were screwed into the ceiling of a room and the whole large bundle was hung up high on the ceiling until Passover. The whole village worked in unison, doing their share, until everybody's matzos were baked and hung up in their individual homes. For us children, these days were the happiest in our lives, helping wherever we were needed, being assigned to various tasks of the project according to our abilities. The most popular job in our eyes was the job of the *reydler* making the holes in the matzos, but the best liked job was placing of the hot finished matzoh into the basket, hoping that a matzoh would break into pieces, or looking forward to a matzoh that would come out with a fold in it, which was not suitable for Passover, and thereby we were able to eat it.

Another project that was very important was the preparing of the *schmaltz* for Passover. You have to bear in mind that very little dairy was used during the Passover holiday. As a matter of fact, most houses had no dairy dishes at all. In those houses in which there were small children, there were two or three plates and a few spoons which were used to serve matzo soaked in milk to the small children. There was no cereal. The usual breakfast consisted of eggs and onions, cooked potatoes and a glass of borsht (the preparing of the borsht made of beets was a project in itself). The rest of the meals were parve or meat. The preparing of the *schmaltz* started in the middle of winter and came about in this way. The average household bought several geese, kept them enclosed in a cage near the house so that they would not be able to walk around or do exercise since that would make them lose their fat. Once or twice a day, they were taken into the kitchen. Mother or a servant would take a large container of corn that was soaked in water for several hours in order to make the corn soft, placed the goose on the floor, placed their feet over the body of the goose, forced open the mouth of the goose, took a handful of corn and pushed it into the mouth of the goose down through the neck, until the goose could not take anymore, and then placed the goose back into the cage. This task was repeated every day for several weeks until the goose became very fat. Some chasidic houses did not practice this method which was known as stuffing *(geshtopt)*. Some rabbis did not

approve of it, as it was a question of: (1) *Tzaar L'baley Chayim* (causing agony to a living thing and (2) there was some question about the kashruth. It was felt that some damage might be caused to the inside of the goose, which made its kashruth questionable.

In our house, at first we did not stuff the geese, so that our geese were never fat enough. However, during and after the years following the first World War, when times were bad, we were also forced to stuff the geese. Father did not eat their fats or their meats and we had to cook separately for him whenever we had meals made from these geese. When the geese became fat and were hardly able to breathe, they were taken to the local *Schochet* (slaughterer) for slaughtering and the *veyshet* (the part of the inside of the neck through which the food passes) was thoroughly searched to make sure that no hole was caused during the stuffing. The other inside parts of the goose was also examined to make sure that everything was alright. Many a time it did happen that he found something wrong, After trying his best, according to the laws of the *Shulchan Urech* to pronounce the goose kosher, on rare occasions he was obligated to pronounce the goose as *Treyf*. You can readily imagine what tragedy that was to the people, especially to the poor who made a large investment in the goose and who put many weeks of painful labor into the project. But that was part of life. The non-kosher goose had to be sold to gentiles for a fraction of its value.

But if the goose was with mazel kosher, there was a celebration because an ordinary goose supplied a family not only with its fat for Passover, but also food for a week or two. First, the white feathers were plucked off. The feathers were dried and stored to be used as the inside of pillows and feather-beds which every mother prepared to give her daughter to use as bedding after her marriage. The skin of the goose was taken off very carefully and put into a pesachdige pot on the stove and boiled until the pieces of skin became good and brown. The fat was poured off and put into glass jars, hidden in a cold place, as the fat supply for the coming Passover and the brown *gribenes* were used as a meal. Mother cooked a large pot of potatoes which were mashed. The *gribenes* were warmed up and together with roasted sliced onions, were placed on top of a plateful of mashed potatoes, and was a meal for one night. The small parts of the goose, like the feet, the head, the wings, the *pupik*, and the large neck were cooked and made into a fricassee, or as we in Hungary called it a *paprikash*. That was a meal for another night. The large goose liver was broiled on the coals in the stove, cut into small pieces and roasted with a lot of sliced onions, placed on a plate with mashed potatoes, a real delicacy (what would a

Hungarian not give for a *geshtopte leyber*?). This as well was supper for a night.

Under the arms of the goose there is a round piece of fat known as *inners*. These chunks of fat were cut into small pieces, and sprinkled with red paprika, placed in the window between the outer and inner glass, so that it would harden. Each member of the family received a large slice of bread. The "Inner" was cut into bite-size pieces and with a tiny piece of garlic rubbed on the toasted bread, was eaten as a supper, followed by a cup of tea. The same pieces of fat were also sometimes placed on a long piece of wood that looked like a spear. They were held in one hand above the coals in the stove and a large slice of toasted bread was held in the other hand, and as the fat was dripping from the chunks of fat, it dripped over the garlicked toasted bread. Together with a large cup of hot tea, this too was a meal. Other pieces of the goose like the *dichtlech* (the lower parts of the goose) were hung on strings and placed in the chimney, and as the smoke of the chimney surrounded them for many days or weeks, they became what is known as "smoked meat" like pastrami. These were used for several meals afterwards, always with plenty of mashed potatoes. Some of the pieces that were not used for fricassee as described above, were cooked with lots of spices such as garlic. The contents were later placed on plates and cooled in the window (we never saw an ice box, never mind a frigidaire) and were later on dished out as a meal. If not cooled off, the food was eaten as *petzey* either hot or cold. The rest of the meat of the goose was used as cooked or roast goose meat for the Sabbath. This went on and on, with each *ba'al habusteh* making different uses of the various parts of the goose. So, my friends, this is the European small village "Goose Story."

A very important task that was especially entrusted to the boys of the family was the "airing of the Seforim." A few weeks before Passover, on a nice day, all the books were taken out of the closets and placed on papers or straw on the ground in the yard, so that they would get a good airing from the winter dampness, and at the same time, as the gentle winds were blowing, would remove any bread crumbs that may have fallen into them. The books needed constant watching so that the chickens and other household animals would not step over them and tear the pages. After an all day airing, they were picked up later in the afternoon and replaced in the closets after the boards of the closets were thoroughly washed and made Pesachdig.

All the rooms in the house had of course gone through a thorough cleaning. Some had to be scrubbed and painted, furniture had to

be moved, and above all, everything had to be moved from under the beds. Remember, that space in the warm rooms was very tight and every available space had to be utilized. The empty space under the beds was used to store foods like potatoes, sacks of beans, corn, etc. But now, before the holiday, everything that remained from the winter had to be removed to clean up for the holiday. They tell the joke about the child who asked: "Mother, when will the holiday come so that we will clean up from under the bed?" "That will be Passover," replied the mother, "and that will be in a few weeks." All the straw from the beds that were used for mattresses had to be removed. The wealthier people had the straw in the beds in straw sacks, but mostly it was put there loosely, with a sheet over the straw. Now, with children sleeping in these beds and some of them wetting during the night, you can imagine the smell of the removed straw! For Passover, everything was made fresh and clean. Thus the weeks before Passover were going on.

Between school and the various jobs assigned to us, we also had to go to the tailor (everybody with minor exceptions) for measurements for a new suit. We also had to go to the shoemaker to be fitted for a pair of new shoes, if we were fortunate enough to get a new pair. Very seldom were suits or shoes bought ready-made. There were no clothing or shoe stores in our village and it was too far to go to a larger city where there were such stores. Therefore, shoes and suits had to be made to order. The new clothing was to be worn only for the Sabbath and the holidays. Last year's Sabbath suit was now to be used during the week. And so with great anticipation, we were nearing the exciting Passover holiday.

Soon we were busy going out into the fields to look for the horseradish *Maror* (bitter herbs). None of us liked the task of grinding the horseradish, but it had to be done. We preferred the preparing of the *Charoses,* to peel the apples (we ate the peels) and grind the nuts and the other ingredients. We had the job of taking away the Chometzdige dishes and bringing them up to the attic and bringing down the Passover dishes. Our mother cautioned us to be careful not to break any plates or glassware as we carried them up or down the ladder to the attic. We recognized our *Kosos* (wine glasses) of a year ago, but we tried to get a larger one each year as we were a year older now and therefore could drink more wine.

We had to help mother pluck the chickens that were slaughtered for the holiday, watching her as she opened the chickens, being most careful to watch for any imperfections on the inside parts of the birds,

and if something seemed wrong, to take the chicken to the *Schochet* for his opinion as to whether the chicken was kosher or not. We all wanted to be the one to take it to him because we usually received a reward of about two pennies for the job, just as we received it for bringing the live chicken to the slaughterer.

We watched mother and tried to help her bake the various cakes and cookies for the holiday. We thought that we helped, but mother yelled that we were only disturbing her with being under her feet. But she would not have it otherwise, and as a reward for our help, we were given the pots to lick the sugary remains in them. The sponge cake, nut cake and the cookies were baked in pans with white paper first being placed in them. After the cakes were baked, the papers were taken off and here again we had a great treat licking off the skins of the paper with the remains of the cakes.

The night before Passover was very exciting with placing pieces of bread in various places of the house for *Bedikas Chometz,* walking along with father from room to room to look in all corners for the pieces of bread, holding a candle for light and a goose feather to sweep the crumbs into an old wooden spoon, and then tying the spoon around with a white piece of cloth. The big event the next morning was when, after a hurried breakfast when all the bread was used up, we hurried to burn the *chometz* in the yard. We built a great fire in which we threw in not only our spoons with the pieces of bread as well as the candle and the feathers, but also those belonging to our neighbors who were glad to be relieved of this task and who gave us a few pennies for our trouble. After getting rid of the *chometz,* we finally felt that the holiday was here. We came back to the house and had a light lunch consisting of potatoes and borscht. The borscht was homemade, prepared a few days before from our own beets that we saved during the whole winter and that was made in a special barrel that was saved from year to year for this purpose.

As the lunch was a very light one, since there was not too much of a choice of foods, *chometz* was forbidden and we were not allowed to eat matzos until late at night at the *Seder* (we never heard of egg matzos), we were soon hungry. As this was the time when mother was making the egg noodles for the soups for the holiday, we were following her around like little chickens as she made the noodles by pouring the egg mixture into a small pan on the stove and carrying the ready ones and placing them on the bed onto a white sheet that was spread on the bed. We were hoping that some of the ready product would fall apart and we would have an excuse to devour them. But mother as all mothers,

was a great cook and baker, and as *Tzuh Lehachis* they all came out perfect. Being hungry, we had no choice but to steal some of the sheets of noodles and swallow them in a hurry. Mother knew what would happen. She remembered from the previous year. She pretended that she did not see what was happening and kept on making the sheets and spreading the sheets on the bed, and we kept on stealing them. Every once in a while, she would holler out in a mock anger: "I don't know what is going on here, I keep on making them and instead of having more all the time, they seem to be getting less and less. There is no other answer, but that some strange thieves from the outside are hiding under the beds and stealing the sheets as soon as I put them on the bed." Pretending to look under the bed, she said, "It is funny but I do not see any strange thieves under the bed, so it must be my own little thieves that are doing it." Bending down to kiss us on the forehead, she said, "Eat my goldene children. I knew what you would do so I prepared a little extra egg mix, *eszt gezunterheit sheyfelach* and *Im yirtze HaShem* next year you should do the same." The same thing was repeated during the entire holiday in reference to potato latkes. She kept on making them and we kept on stealing them and the pan just never got filled up.

Soon we were busy helping to set up the long table for the *Seder*, placing dishes, wine glasses and all kinds of plates and silverware on it. When the table was finally set, the highlight of the day was putting on our new clothes and shoes and new hats, and getting ready to accompany father to the synagogue, with mother warning us, "Be most careful; watch your clothing; don't dirty them or G-d forbid tear them; remember these are your new clothing, so keep them clean." We proudly followed father to the synagogue making sure that everyone saw our new garments. In the synagogue we did very little praying that night. We were busy looking for our friends to see their new clothing and commenting, "Oy, gewalt, Yankele or Moshele, I did not recognize you in your new suit. You look like a new boy today. What a beautiful suit you are wearing," and he made the same comment about our new suit or shoes. And great was our pity if we came across a friend whose parents were unable to make him a new suit or a new pair of shoes. We smiled at him saying, "I am sorry that the tailor did not have time to finish your new suit, but don't worry, he will finish it right after the holiday," and we quickly moved away before the tears fell from his eyes. (Read my story, "The Fifth Question" in my book, *"Torah Thoughts"*). Soon we were on our way home, watching that we did not step into the mud or into a puddle of water so as not to dirty

our new clothes or shoes. There were no lights on the street. The only light that there was came from the windows of the houses where the *Yom Tov* candles were burning.

As we entered our home, we found everything perfectly wonderful, just as good and as nice as they are here in this country. If certain things were missing or not as elaborate as we have them here, not knowing about them, we did not miss them. Before the holiday, we all boasted that this holiday, unlike the year before, we would stay awake till the end of the *Seder*. However, after asking the four questions, and drinking two or three glasses of wine and partaking of the heavy meal, we soon became tired and sleepy and were carried to bed. I do not remember practicing the custom of stealing the *Afikomen*, this custom did not seem to prevail in our section of the world. Neither can I remember the legend that the Prophet Eliyahu was coming to the house to drink from the large glass of wine called *Kos shel Eliyahu*. So, not having any anticipation about these matters, there was nothing to keep us excited and make us stay up late. Therefore, we were soon led or taken to bed for the night. The next day in the synagogue, none of us would admit to this, but kept on boasting to our friends, how we drank all the four glasses of wine and were up very late. Each of us tried to show off how mature and grown up we already were. Some of us even exaggerated that we were up to the unheard hour of ten o'clock, which surely was unusual.

On the next day of the holiday, we were told by our parents that the only way that we could be sure that we would be able to stay up for the entire *Seder*, would be if we would all take a nap in the afternoon. We all readily agreed, and after the mid-day meal and taking a walk in the street or the garden, we all went to rest. But who can rest in bed in the daytime when the sun is shining on the outside and all our friends are playing games with nuts or marbles, etc. Soon we slipped out of the room and joined our friends and the next night we were even more tired than the night before, and the same procedure was repeated. We fell asleep right after the meal. As a rule, the non-Jewish Easter holiday comes out about the same time as the Passover holiday. There was no school at this time of the year. Our *Chol Hamoed* was spent playing various games around the house. Of course we did not completely neglect our prayers and some Hebrew studies. We still had enough free hours to roam around the village, visit friends, taste the *latkes* and other goodies that were prepared by the mothers of our friends, make comparisons between our mother's baking and cooking, naturally the mother of each child always coming out the winner.

3

Soon the holiday of Passover was over. As usual, a committee from among the members of the community was chosen to make a trip to Ungvar or Munkacs to engage a new teacher for the *Cheyder*. At a particular spot in the market place, several teachers were standing. The delegation who was sent for this purpose engaged them in talk in order to find out what kind of teachers they were and what price they asked and which class of children they were prepared to teach. One was finally chosen and was asked to come to our village at a specific time to start teaching the children of the village. It is in place here to explain to you that it was not financially feasible to engage various teachers to teach the small children who just started the Alef Beis; and another for those who were already learning *Chumish* and *Rashi*; and yet a third for the more advanced older children who were already learning the Gemorah, etc. Therefore, one teacher was hired for all the children of the village consisting of about thirty to forty children.

The teacher divided the time of study between all the classes. In general our lives in the springtime of the year was much easier than in the winter time. The days were longer, we did not have to get up early while it was still dark, there was no mud in the street and we were able to walk to school. Actually at that time of year we ran to school. Why should one walk if one can run and cover the distance in half the time? Between classes we were able to run home for a light bite, as it took only a few minutes to get to one's home, so why bother with a sandwich when we could have a fresh cooked meal?

Our village consisted of a long row of houses on both sides of the street. In most cases, a yard was made up of two rows of houses with an opening to the street, where many families lived (except the rich ones who had their own yard and were the only ones occupying it). Our particular yard was occupied by four families. Our house faced the street, with a general store in front followed by a large kitchen and another large room which was occupied as a bedroom. However, a kitchen does not as a rule mean only a kitchen; neither does a bedroom

mean only a bedroom. Our kitchen had two entrances, one from the yard which was the main entrance to the whole apartment and another entrance from the store into the kitchen. The store also had an entrance from the street through which the customers entered to make their purchases.

Now let me describe the room which was called the kitchen. By this explanation you will be in a position to better understand how most of the people in our neighborhood lived. The walls of the houses being that they were made of mud bricks, were built wide, at least three feet wide, so that the building would be solid and also to protect the inside of the house from the cold weather in the winter and the hot weather in the summer. Therefore, the windows of the houses had double glass. The space between the two glasses was used as frigidaires to keep food cold. In the summer time it was used for fruits and vegetables, like green tomatoes, so that they would ripen faster. In the entrance to the kitchen, between the outer and inner doors, we usually kept two or three pails of fresh water that was drawn from the community well located in the yard. Of course, being that we were what was known as a "Middle class" family, we had a better type of house than the average family in the village. Our house was set up with double doors and also double windows. The average house did not have these luxuries. As one entered the kitchen on the left side in front of a large window, there was a table of a sort. This table was unlike any other table that an American child has ever seen. It was not like a conventional table at all. It was an open box having only three sides and standing on four low feet. The top of the table was movable. Against this box, there was another three-sided box without a top, of the same size as the first three-sided box and this second three-sided box was made so that it fitted into the first box and had small wheels attached to it. It was slid in and out of the first box like an old style match box. Therefore, this contraption that was made by the village carpenter, was used as the family table. The top was used to work on and eat on and the inside was filled with straw, and with a sheet over it, was used as a bed for two or three children. Of course we had to climb in and out of it when we went to sleep there. As a rule, the top of the table was removed for the night so that we would have plenty of fresh air.

On Thursday nights the inner box was pulled out and the top of the table remained on, because usually on Friday mornings, mother, may she rest in peace, rose very early, about three or four o'clock, and from the dough that she prepared the night before, rolled it and *flecht*

the kaylitch (twist the white bread). She also made various cakes, using ingredients such as cheese, jam, nuts, raisins, sugar, etc. This was all done on the top of the table. She did her work very quietly so as not to wake us, but we knew what was going on and while we were pretending that we were asleep, we kept half an eye open on every move that she made. The minute she turned her back, we grabbed whatever our fingers could reach on the table; a raisin, a piece of nut; or even just a drop of sugar, which was also a treat, or we stuck our fingers into the jam jar. As soon as mother returned, we closed our eyes and pretended to be asleep. Our mother who was the best natured woman in the world, as anyone who had the privilege of knowing her will agree, knew quite well what was going. on. She pretended to be angry, and said in an angry voice: "I don't know what is going on in this house. The minute I turn my back, some of the ingredients are gone. Now who could be doing this? It can only be the angels from heaven and they were only supposed to come here tonight when my family would be returning from the synagogue, but it seems that they smelled the good things that are on the table and they are stealing everything away from me. Surely, it cannot be my three little angels in bed below here, because even a blind person can see that they are fast asleep. Why, I can even hear them snoring, bless their little hearts."

Past this bed-table, was the entrance to the store and beyond that a large double bed. This occupied one side of the room. The next side was occupied by another bed and the shelves for the dairy dishes. The third side was taken up with a stove which was heated by wood or coal. Then there was the entrance to the large bedroom, as well as shelves for the meat dishes and the pots and pans. The balance of the fourth wall on the left side of the entrance against the wall, was where the barrels containing home-made sauerkraut, pickles and borscht made from red beets were kept. The middle of the kitchen was used for dozens of things. There was a small table and a half dozen chairs scattered around. Here was the place where potatoes were peeled; the green leaves from the stalks of corn were removed and saved to feed to the cows; beans were prepared, if they were still green, the two points were broken off and later cooked. If they were already dry, the skins were opened and the beans taken out and the skins were fed to the cows. This was also the place where the shoes and boots were cleaned and polished. Mother sat there mending the stockings and torn clothes. On long wintry nights, the neighboring women came and together they plucked the feathers that were taken off the geese

and that were then used to fill up pillow cases and featherbeds. At the end of the evening, they were treated to a plate of cooked corn that was sprinkled with powdered sugar. All the news and gossip of the village was aired here, including all the news of the world. Marriages were arranged here, bartering and exchanges of goods and labor took place here. Everything was discussed and arranged right here in the middle of the kitchen. While we children pretended to be sleeping, in reality we kept our eyes and ears open to whatever was going on.

Another very important function took place in this spot in the kitchen, and this matter has to be explained in minute detail, especially to you American children who have things so easy and who very often complain that they have so many hardships in life, like getting up from a soft chair and walking over to the television set to turn a knob to change the channel. In our village, like in millions of others all over the world, there were no toilet facilities, better known here as bathrooms. Now, where did we go for the "call of nature"? The answer is on the outside of the house, of course, where else? Now to urinate, we did not bother too much. Any place outside of the door would do, but for bowel movement? Well, read this, you lucky people who have 1½ or 2½ colored tile bathrooms. At the end of the building, past the woodshed, past the stable where the cows and/or the horses were held, there was a pile of manure. That is where the average person also went for his "duty." Now we who were a lot better off than the average family was, already had modern facilities. A carpenter made up a little wooden shed, with a door and a roof. Inside of this construction, there was a box-like seat reaching from one wall of the shed to the other. One or two openings were cut in the board on top of the toilet bowl (the box). Then a deep hole was dug in the ground and this shed was placed over the hole and that is where we went alone or with another child to perform our duty. After a year or two, when the hole was pretty well filled up, another hole was dug nearby. The shed was removed and placed over the new hole and we were set for another year or two. The first hole was covered up with earth. A fence was placed around it so as to warn us not to stop there and sink in *Cholileh v-chas* (G-d forbid), although it did happen sometimes. Don't ask what the result was from such an accident. The person to whom it happened was isolated for several days. So now you see how things were and what we did about them.

This was alright for warm days of the summer and even the spring or the fall, but what is to be done on the cold wintry nights or

even during the summer when it was raining very hard? Go out and catch pneumonia? We were only dressed in our undershirts and were barefoot. Should we start getting dressed and put on our boots several times a night during the long winter nights? We would never reach the toilet in time anyway. Many a times the weather was 65 below zero (not that we ever saw a thermometer) but it was so cold that if you spit, it froze before it reached the ground. What should then be done? The answer to this solution was the famous *shefel,* a large bucket placed right in the middle of the kitchen and that, where, you should excuse me, we did our duty. Of course, one child alone did not venture from his bed to go to the bucket in the pitch dark night, but woke up the brother sleeping next to him, and so holding hands, they went to find this *shefel.* Many times we wandered around the kitchen trying to figure out in our sleepy heads the direction to the *shefel,* in the meantime bumping our heads into pieces of furniture or other objects. After circling around the kitchen several times, when we finally did reach the *shefel,* it was already too late and we did not need it anymore. Of course, all this trouble of walking around, bumping our heads and arriving late to the *shefel* could have been avoided if there would have been a small lamp burning during the night. But who ever heard of a lamp burning all through the night? Petroleum was expensive and was not to be wasted. Of course, if someone was sick, then a tiny lamp burnt in the room all night so that the sick one could reach the *shefel* without any hardship.

A door led into the large bedroom from the middle wall of the kitchen. During the summer months, this particular room was the bedroom for our father and mother and contained a crib for a baby. The cribs in our village did not have four feet like those you see in this country. The cribs had four legs alright, but the legs were fitted into a frame like a half wheel so that they were able to sway back and forth. A string was tied to the crib with the end of the string reaching mother's bed so that when the child cried at night, mother was able to sway the crib back and forth by pulling the string, and usually the child fell asleep again. I can hardly remember not seeing a crib next to my mother's bed, because as soon as one child was big enough to sleep in a regular bed, there was already a new arrival to take its place in the crib.

This room besides the two beds for our parents placed along one wall and a crib for the current baby, also had two very large clothes closets. We called them *chiffoners.* These were placed in front of the second wall, and a divan (long couch) was set between them. The two

clothes closets were used not only to hang all our clothes but their shelves were used for storing the linen of the house, like sheets, towels, bedspreads, pillow cases, and napkins (used only when important guests came for dinner), but their most important use in our eyes were the tops of them. Here we kept apples, jam preserves, pickles in jars, etc. for the winter. Every Saturday afternoon during the winter months, after father got up from his Shabbos afternoon nap, he would take down a large apple, cut it into as many slices as there were people in the family, give each one of us a piece making sure of course, that we recited aloud the blessing over it, so that all of us could answer "Amen." The third wall was occupied with two other beds and a large book shelf where our holy books were kept. We also always managed to squeeze in a barrel between the furniture which contained the sauerkraut that we prepared ourselves to be used as part of our meals during the winter months. On the fourth wall where there was the entrance to the kitchen, there was placed a large stove that was used for cooking purposes as well as to give some heat. This stove was heated by wood that we chopped ourselves from large logs cut into small pieces to fit into the stove. In the middle of the room there was the very large table used for meals and many other purposes. There was still enough room to place a few large straw sacks, that is, sacks that were filled with straw and placed on the floor for the children to sleep on and especially to be used by the poor who came for donations and knew that they would always find a place to sleep in our home.

I will always remember one particular incident. Three of us were sleeping in one of the large beds in the kitchen. I awoke in the middle of the night and by stretching my leg touched the leg of someone sleeping on the other side of the bed. Now, I wondered, to whom does this pair of legs belong to? I touched my brother on the right side of me and the other one on the left side of me. All were accounted for. So who was it that was sleeping at the other end of the bed? I woke up my two brothers and we had a consultation trying to figure out as to who our guest sleeper may be. After a long meeting, it was decided that it had to be our far distant cousin, a young girl about eight years old, whose refugee parents lived in the next village and who were very poor and therefore rationed her out to live with us. She helped mother with the current baby. She usually slept in the bed next to ours and no doubt when she went to the *shefel*, on the way back, she miscalculated the distance and by mistake wandered into the other side of the bed, meaning that one bed would now be vacant. In order to make sure that

we were right, I, being the oldest, was apppointed to check out the other bed to see if our conclusion was right. I got up, went to the other bed, only to discover that someone was sleeping there, and what was more, the face had a long beard attached to it. Oy, gevald, what is this? How did Eidel get a beard overnight? I quickly ran back to our bed to relate the frightful fact to my two brothers, who at first did not believe me and therefore they themselves ventured out from the bed to check for themselves, and came back admitting that it was really so. Now the question arose, who was the person on the other side of our bed and who was sleeping in the bed next to us, a person with a beard? We did not sleep any longer for the balance of the night. We were anxiously waiting for morning when it would become light so that the mystery would be solved.

When it finally became light, it was discovered that our guest sleeper in our bed, was really the cousin, Eidel, and the man with the beard in the other bed was the *Shames* (beadle) from the synagogue in the next village of Grosz Dobrony. What happened was this: our father was on one of his trips to the city of Ungvar to make purchases for the general store and was to return home by train. Our train station was in Csap, a distance of a few miles. The train was delayed for several hours and arrived late at night. Normally father would sleep over and first come home the following morning, but since he met this man there, they decided to walk back together during the night which took them a few hours. When they arrived in our village, father did not want the man to continue his journey to the next village all by himself, and therefore he invited him to spend the rest of the night in our house. Not wishing to disturb the household late at night, father just picked up our cousin and put her in our bed on the other side and this man took our cousin's place, and so the mystery of the additional pair of legs in our bed and the bearded sleeper in the other bed was finally solved. Nu, I ask you, would things like this happen nowadays, and here in America? Who would pick up wandering guests on the street and bring them home to sleep in their own bedrooms?

Our parents only had a separate bedroom in the summer time. As soon as the nights became cold, the stove from the kitchen was moved into the next room and the entire family, no matter how many we were, all moved into that room in order to conserve light and heat. The kitchen was abandoned and was used as a cold storage room where our food supplies for the winter were stored. Beyond the store, the large kitchen, and bedroom, was a porch that led to a room that

was known as the *kamer* and this room had many uses. First of all it was the place where the large earth stove was and where every Friday mother baked five or six very large rye breads (each bread was about ten times as large as the small round breads that we have here), the white challahs for the Sabbath and all sorts of cakes. This was also where we chopped the wood for the stove for cooking and for heating, and above all this was our ready-built *Succah.* In the middle of the ceiling was a big cut-out space where we put the *schach* for the Succoth holiday. We raised up the roof which was especially constructed for that purpose, so that in the event that it rained, we were able to close up the roof and remain in the *Succah* to finish the meal. After this room was the stable where we had one or two cows which supplied us with our dairy products. So here you have a typical middle-income family residence in a village in Europe. Most of the other people in the town lived in inferior houses and set-ups, and only a very few had any better houses or lived on a higher standard than we lived.

We practically never had to go out to buy anything at all. Mother just took everything that she needed from the store. The children in our family were never short of any candies, chocolates, or toys. In this store we sold practically everything that the inhabitants of the town needed. Beginning with all kinds of raw food such as flour, yeast, herrings, sugar, salt, kerosene lamps, candles, yardgoods, work shoes, boots, hardware, ready-made work clothing, shirts, underwear, etc. We even had coffins for the gentile trade, including all the trimmings that go with it, like cardboard initials from which the name of the deceased was put together. We had a lot of fun making up names from the initials. We also had a special use for the coffins. Only a sample of a coffin was kept in the store. The stock in all sizes and designs was kept in the attic on top of all the rooms. On Saturday afternoons, when we were off from school and played the game of hide and seek, what better place would be found to hide in than one of the dozen or more coffins in the attic? On a rainy day when we could not play in the yard, we played in the attic and if we got tired, just opened a coffin and laid down in it and rested or took a nap. It seemed a natural thing to do.

When fall came, we had a very special use for the coffins. We went to the woods and picked sackfuls of very hard small apples and pears, that were known as winter apples and pears, and that were so hard that we could not even bite into them. These we brought home, took them to the attic, placed some hay in the coffins and spilled the hard fruits into them. We covered them up with more hay. From the

warmth of the attic and the hay they soon began to ripen and became soft. Every Friday afternoon, we went up to the attic, uncovered the coffins and from under the hay, we picked out the soft fruits and brought them down into the house. We ate some of them during the Sabbath and the rest were cleaned, cut in halves and mother would make a fruit borscht for Sunday morning breakfast. The attic was also the place where the chickens came to lay their eggs and whoever was fortunate to be there at the time, picked up the eggs and brought them down to mother. We made deals with her; an egg for a piece of candy, or a few eggs for a bar of chocolate.

As I said before, we sold practically everything in our store, except dishes and glassware. Mother told me the following story. After father had married her and brought her to our village where they fixed up the store, he decided that they should also have a counter of dishes and glassware. Mother brought along with her a five hundred kronen "dowry" so it was decided that this sum of money should be used to build a counter with several shelves on which the dishes and glassware would be displayed. It was immediately done. Father traveled to the neighboring large city and brought back a supply of dishes and glassware which were promptly placed on the shelves. Mother was very proud to see what her dowry had accomplished. One morning while father was in the synagogue, a customer came into the store and wanted to be shown a particular dish or glass that was on the top shelf. Mother, being inexperienced in these matters, stepped on the lower shelf, and the shelves perhaps not being secured properly, and with her weight pulling it forward, toppled. All the dishes and glassware fell down and broke into tiny pieces. Luckily, neither she, nor the customer were hurt, but the whole merchandise was destroyed. The customer quickly left the store and mother remained alone in the midst of the ruin. She was flabbergasted. Not knowing what to do, she just stood there with pieces of glass all around her. What is more, she was terrified as to what father would do to her. She did not yet know him well enough and what kind of a character he had. Would he yell at her or perhaps even hit her?

When father came back from the synagogue, he found her sitting in the middle of the broken rubble. She was speechless and shivering from fright. Mother told me that father went over to her, pulled her out of the rubble, took her in his arms, kissed her and said: "It is alright, darling, do not worry, everything will be alright," and later added: "Easy come, easy go." With happy tears in her eyes, she told me

that she never forgot that scene and that she was thankful to father for the rest of her life for the great assurance and comfort that he gave her that day. In truth, during all my life, I never once heard my father raise his voice to mother, or saw him being angry at her. He never came back from a trip that he should not bring her back a gift. They were very happy all their married life. Mother was a very great and remarkable *Ba'al Habosteh.* Not only did she tend to the store when father was away, she also took care of the house, reared the children, prepared all the food, tended to the garden, made her own dairy products (like cheese), and churned the butter, etc.

I will always remember an incident that was the joke of the town for a long time. There was a fire across from our house, and the roof of our house started to burn. We were all running around wild trying to save anything that we could grab from the house. Mother ran into the house, and with so many things there, everything being very precious to her, grabbed the *puter fessel* (butter churner) which was in a corner of the kitchen. She immediately ran out of the kitchen since the roof had already started to burn. While holding the churner in one hand, she used the other to direct the volunteer fire fighters to extinguish the blaze. Evenutally, the fire was put under control. The houses in the yard, except for some minor damage confined mostly to the roofs of the buildings, were saved. Only then was it noted that mother was still holding the butter churner. For a long time after this incident, when something precious was mentioned in the village, it was said that it was as precious as Tante Miriam's *puter fessel.* My sister Elaine, tells me, that during this time she was in the house in a crib. Everyone forgot about her in the great excitement.

Mother was very proud of my father and was very happy that he chose her as his wife. I remember a funny story that she told me, one that she heard from father or my grandfather. It was the custom in our section of Europe, for young men to go on what was called in Yiddish, a *beshau,* meaning to visit the home of the girl who was suggested as the bride. One day, my father, accompanied by his father, went to a town far away to visit the family of a girl who was suggested as a possible prospect. During the morning, while my father and grandfather were in a room reciting their morning prayers, the girl, wishing to show off that she was a good cook, undertook to prepare the breakfast for the guests. One of the courses was to be a soup which required an *einbrendel* (browning flour in butter), adding some onions and other ingredients to the soup. Being the girl was very

nervous, she accidentally burned the whole business while it was on the stove, and the whole kitchen filled up with smoke, reaching also into the room where the guests were reciting their morning prayers. Smelling the smoke and the stench of the burned food, they knew exactly what was happening and put the girl out of the class of being a *beryah* (a good cook and housekeeper). My grandgfather told my father: "Moshe, du kumst?" meaning let's go. "This girl is not for you." They soon made their departure and the poor girl was unfortunately taken off the list as a prospective bride. My mother added: "Her loss was my gain," as she was the one that father eventually married. "Think of it, I would have been born by a strange woman," I said to myself, "instead of by my mother." Like the old joke they say about a father who was telling his bashful son not to be ashamed to approach the girl whom they suggested to him as his future bride. The father adding: "Look here, I was not ashamed to approach your mother when she was suggested to me as a bride." To which the foolish son replied: "Where is the comparison? For you it was easy. You were to meet my mother, but I am to approach a total stranger."

Having described the interior and exterior of a residence in a small town, I will now describe the land around the buildings. As a rule, every house in a village has some land surrounding the building known as the "garden." This land in the back of the buildings was divided among the tenants living in the yard according to the size of their respective buildings. Right after Passover, someone who had the right tools and a pair of horses or oxen was hired to plow up the land, and this being done, the ground was prepared for planting. The average family divided their share of the garden into various sections where different types of produce was to be grown. This consisted of potatoes, beans, corn, onions, radishes, pickles, beets, etc. The seeds were saved very carefully from the year before or were bought in our store where all kinds of seeds in colorful packages were sold. They were sent to us by a wholesaler in Budapest. The whole family, from the oldest to the youngest, was involved in the planting of the various seeds in the garden. After a few weeks, when the vegetables began to sprout from the earth, we all became busy loosening the earth around the sprouts and dragging water from the well. We watered the vegetables every few days, not depending only on the rains. About the middle of the summer, the produce began to ripen and we were all very happy to pick the ripe ones. As soon as we came home from public school or Hebrew school, we grabbed something to eat, and immediately ran to the garden to watch the results of our labor. We each

had our favorite vegetable. The most popular were the little red radishes and the green cucumbers that we devoured right as we pulled them out of the ground or tore them off the vine. Of course, some of them had to be brought into the kitchen where mother washed them, sliced them, put them on a plate with some cottage cheese, said that we should eat like *mentchen* (human beings) and not like *chazeyrim* (pigs).

Besides the vegetables, we also had fruit trees in the garden such as plum, apple and pear trees. It was most interesting for us to watch how the trees started blooming and how the small green fruits that came out of the flowers later ripened into real fruits. We just could not wait long enough to have the fruits ripen, and if we did get belly aches after eating them, did not tell our parents about it since they had warned us not to touch the fruits until they were fully ripe, but we were not made out of iron and could not control ourselves. When the fruits were finally ripe, we picked them off the trees and then there arose the problem what to do with so much fruit. Of course, it wasn't really a problem as the same problem arose every year at summer's end and it was always solved. The fruit was stored away for the winter months. The apples were placed on the top of the clothes closets in such a manner that one apple should not touch another. This would allow air to circulate between them and prevent spoilage. Some of the apples and pears were picked while they were not completely ripe. They were placed in the attic where it was warm all the time, and remember the empty coffins that were utilized for this purpose.

Of course, plums cannot be saved while raw, therefore these were used to make *lekvar* (plum jam). Let me describe to you how *lekvar* was made in a small town in Europe. We dug two deep holes in the ground; one was a round one the size of a large copper pot and the other, a foot or two away, was a square one. Down in the bottom, an opening was made between the two holes. Here we put dry wood which was kindled with the flame reaching under the large pot. Each plum was opened by hand and the pit removed. The open plums were placed into this large pot which was placed into the hole and the plums began to cook. Before the plums were put into the pot, a mixer consisting of pieces of wood that fitted into the pot, was put in. The mixer was attached to a long stick that was held by a person standing in the square hole, who mixed the batch of plums back and forth so that they would not settle to the bottom of the pot and burn. Once the fire was lit under the pot, the mixing could not stop for even one minute, until the jam was completely ready. It takes about two days and nights for the whole thing to be ready. We children were very

happy to help out in this preparation, and very proud to be entrusted to mix the plums with a long stick, especially since it gave us a legitimate excuse to stay up for a couple of hours longer. We were also able to steal a few spoonsful of the cooked plums.

Another important task was to dry out the plums to make them into dry prunes. Here again, two holes were dug in the ground. One was a large square one on top of which was placed a long flat basket made by hand from twigs of trees. This flat basket was filled with raw plums. In the opening between the two holes a fire was made, but in this instance, instead of using dry wood which gives out a bright fire, raw or damp wood was used. For drying prunes there is a need for smoke, not heat. Again we offered our services in the help of drying the prunes, as well as with the apples and the pears which were first cut into halves or quarters before drying them. We tended to the fire and turned the fruit so that they would be smoked all around. We did not like to do the turning of the fruits too much because the smoke got into our eyes. But anything is better than studying or going to bed early. So we did not mind the inconvenience of a little smoke getting into our eyes.

These dried fruits made up many of our winter meals. The fruits were used to make *frucht borscht,* a sort of fruit soup. If it was to be used with a meat meal, they were seasoned to taste and cut up and cooked in water. If they were used with dairy meals, mother added milk or sour cream in the cooking which together with a slice of bread, made up a good and refreshing meal. The *lekvar* was used in baking and cooking as well as to spread on bread. Most of the time it served as a snack to take along to school. Many of the fruits were made into preserves. These were placed into glass jars, sealed tightly and boiled in hot water and was then stored to be used on special occasions like holidays or when guests arrived, and most important of all, was used to give to the sick or to pregnant women, or those that had just given birth.

While we had all kinds of fruits and vegetables in our garden, there were no grapes growing in our village. Just days before the Jewish New Year Holiday, peddlers came around and sold grapes from their wagons that they had brought from Mezo Kaszony which was the nearest place where grapes were grown that were used in the manufacturing of wine. My mother bought the grapes from them to be used as follows. (1) We made the Shechyonoh on them by the kiddush on the second night of Rosh Hashonoh. (2) We ate them as a fruit at the end of a meal.

But what is a kilo of grapes when you have to divide it among a large family? My parents agreed that I would be allowed to go on a *"gesterei"* (visit) to my uncle Reb Chaim Elyeh and aunt Yite Gartenberg in Mezo Kaszony during the intermediate days of the Succoth Holidays. They operated a grocery store and bakery there. I was to go to work in the vineyard, where I would be able to eat all the grapes that my stomach would be able to take. So it was, on the first day of Chol Hamoed I walked the eight kilometers to Batyu, where I took the train to Kaszony. I applied for the job to pick the grapes. Early the next morning, together with many other volunteers, I was picked up in a wagon and taken up to the mountains to pick grapes. We were given a basket which we tied to our backs and went to pick the grapes which we put into the basket. The first fifteen minutes, I put more grapes into my mouth than into the basket. After a while, when I had eaten enough of the grapes, I began to put them into the basket. We were taken back to the city for our lunch. I was unable to take any food, as I was stuffed with grapes and developed a bellyache. This was about sixty years ago. At this time, I do not remember whether I went back to work any longer in picking grapes that afternoon or the following day. I do remember that a few days later, there came to me in the mail, a few kronen as the salary for the time that I worked. Another fruit that we had to buy from the peddlers were cherries and watermelon, of which there was not enough grown in our village.

Gertrud Gartenberg ע"ה

4

My memory goes back now to the time when I was about seven years old. At that time my grandfather, *Z"l,* was already dead. He was a tremendous loss to the entire community because now the problem arose what to do about the education of the children of the community. The only solution was to hire teachers from other parts of the land, as I explained in previous chapters. These teachers that were brought in, hired themselves out for the summer or winter months to teach the children of the various villages. There were no special Hebrew schools. The teaching was done in the homes of the parents of the children. Most of the time this consisted of two rooms, like a large kitchen and a bedroom. The children of the town came and sat around a large table on which the rabbi who studied with them sat. He learned the *Alef Beys* with the new students, and with the others he studied reading. Older children were taught *Chumish* or *Tenach* and some were taught *Mishnayos* or *Gemorah.* The summer or winter season was divided according to the amount of enrolled students. For instance, if there was a total of forty students and the season lasted twenty weeks, each child's parents undertook to provide lodging for the teacher and space for studying for half a week per child. The salary of the teacher was also divided according to the number of children in the family. In this country, most villages are proud to show off their "one room school house," but in European countries this was the rule, one room being used for all the students regardless of their grade. The same room was also used by the parents of the children for other purposes as well, such as cooking, washing, sewing and many other household tasks. The room was used only for a week or two after which the school moved to the residence of the next child.

During the summer months things were not too bad. No matter where the teaching was done, it never took more than about fifteen minutes to get there. It was during the winter months that we encountered great difficulties. There were no sidewalks, since the streets were not paved at all. The rains started about the end of September, and lasted for weeks. The streets became muddy with the

mud being up to our knees. There were no lights in the streets. We usually were up at about six-thirty in the morning as we had to be in the study place at about seven at which time we started our daily activities. All the children said their prayers, each one reciting one chapter aloud until all the prayers were finished. We grabbed some food that we took along with us, and started out for the public school which opened at about eight o'clock. We all sat in one large room on long benches according to the grade that we were in. The young children sat in the first rows, the older ones in the next rows, and so on. The public school teacher taught us the usual subjects such as reading, writing, history, geography, arithmetic, etc. After about an hour and a half or so, we were given half an hour recess. If the weather was clear, we were permitted to go outside of the room; if not, we had to stay indoors. There were no toilets in the room. There were two wooden structures in the yard, one for the boys and the other one for the girls. These were used for toilet purposes.

After recess all the children returned to the school rooms to continue the above-mentioned subjects. At about 11:30 the morning session ended. The non-Jewish children as a rule went back to their homes. The Jewish children were not so fortunate, they had to go back to the Jewish school for their Hebrew studies. We studied there for about an hour and a half after which we ate the snack which we took along with us. At about two in the afternoon we returned to the public school where we studied till about 4:30. At that time school was over for the day.

The non-Jewish children and the very young *Alef Beys* children returned to their homes, but the rest of us went back to the Hebrew school to say our prayers. At this time, we finished whatever food we still had, which as a rule consisted of a slice of bread and an apple or another fruit or vegetable. Now the time began for the regular studies, each one according to the category he or she belonged to. We continued our studies till about 7:30 or 8 in the evening, at which time we left for home.

This was the hardest part of the day. The streets were dark. We used lanterns which we made from hard white paper. We dipped the paper in oil or chicken schmaltz, which made it transparent. On the bottom we had a metal plate with a place for a candle. On the top of the contraption, we had a string by which we held the lantern in one hand while in the other, we had a stick which was used as a support, and as a protection against the dogs, and many times as a protection against the non-Jewish boys who always started up with us. If the muds were

too deep, we managed to walk near the fences to which we held on. Many times, if the muds were exceptionally deep, we did not use the streets at all. We went over the fields in the back of the houses, where although the earth was also muddy, it was not too deep, because the grass was under the mud and this prevented us from sinking in. We generally arrived home at about eight o'clock at night at which time we removed our boots and bathed our feet, which as a rule were wet and half frozen. (Remember, there was no such thing as steam in the rooms.) The only heat that we had came from a stove in the room used for cooking. Late at night the fires went out so that our feet were cold most of the time. After having a hot meal, the only one during the entire day, and a little extra study, we were extremely tired and ready for a good night's sleep.

After the snow fell and freezing set in, we found the coming and going from the schools a lot easier. However, there was always the danger of slipping on the ice. We depended on our sticks on the bottom of which we installed a pointy nail which we used to stick in the snow or in the ice. Many of us used ice skates which we made ourselves from wood with a wire on the bottom, and with the help of the stick with the nail, were able to skate on the icy streets. Some of us made our own sleds which we used to ride on. It was the muddy seasons that we dreaded the most. But we managed pretty well. We were much healthier than the children of today even with all the comforts that they have. During the summer months things were much easier. During the months of July and August the public schools were closed, but not the Jewish schools. Since the days were longer, we did not have the problems of darkeness, muds, and cold. We were given recesses in the Jewish schools for about half an hour.

We used this time to run home to grab a bite or to play some games. In some villages there was a lake or a river and the recess period was a good time to grab a swim. Unfortunately, in our village there was no river or lake, except a shallow swamp near where the gypsies had their mud houses. Our parents did not allow us to use that water for bathing, although many of the gentile children did use it. The only time that we did use it was in the winter when we went skating there on our roughly manufactured skates. We also made holes in the water through the ice from which small fish sprang out. If we were lucky enough to catch some fish, we immediately ran home to give them to our mothers who cleaned them and cooked them for Shabbos. As a rule, we had no fish for Shabbos in the winter months. The lakes in the neighborhood were frozen solid and the peasants did

not go out to catch fish. At such times, our mothers usually made what was called *faltshe fish,* false fish, by using the white parts of the chicken that we had for Shabbos. The meat was chopped, onions and spices were added and then rolled into balls. This tasted like regular gefilte fish. We dipped our freshly baked challah which mother baked every Friday morning into the sauce and filled our stomachs with this delicious entree.

As for washing our bodies *Lekovod Shabbos* (whoever heard of taking a bath in the middle of the week, or changing shirts or underwear on any other day but Friday?), we went to the local *mikvah.* As a rule, the women went there on Friday mornings, and the men and boys in the afternoon. We soaked in the water for hours, dried ourselves, changed our shirts and underwear and came home clean. Our mothers used to caution us not to forget to bring back our used shirts and underwear, not to mix them up with the ones belonging to the other people, which happened very often. Many times we were unable to find our used shirt or underwear. Sometimes they were mixed with other people's garments, or even stolen. There used to be told the joke about a boy who came home from the *mikvah* without his old shirt. When the mother asked the son where the old shirt was, not wishing to call another Jew a thief, he replied, "Someone did exchange my shirt with his, but he forgot to leave his shirt."

In the cold winter months, we also wore heavy underwear called *trikos,* which was usually one piece and covered the entire body from the neck down to the heels. We wore this underwear for several weeks before we changed them or had our mother wash them. Most people did not possess more than one pair. This reminds me of an anecdote: A Yeshiva student was suffering from itching which bothered him very much. In desperation he decided to go to a doctor. As he was undressing and took off his underwear, the doctor, seeing and smelling his heavy underwear, told him, "Don't bother to go any further, just go home and change your winter underwear." Thinking that the doctor did not know what he was talking about, he went home. On the way, he met another student and asked him where he was going. His friend replied, "I have a terrible itch and I am on the way to see a doctor." The first student told him, "Listen, I will save you the money and the trouble. I am just coming from the doctor and he is crazy. He told me to go home to change my underwear, so let's give in to him. Come home with me and we will change our underwear." They did so, each one exchanging his underwear with the underwear of his friend. A few days passed. The boys met and each inquired about the itch from

the other. Both agreed that the doctor's advice was of no use. They decided to go back to the doctor and explain to him exactly what they did. The doctor upon hearing their story, burst out laughing, telling them, "I did not mean to change the underwear by putting on someone else's dirty ones; I meant that you should put on fresh and clean underwear."

There were times that the *mikvah* was not warmed for a few days. We found it hard to go into the ice cold water, and on such Fridays we cleaned up at home. Our mothers warmed a large pot of water on the stove, poured it into an old utensil and by dipping a piece of cloth with soap on it into the water, we washed our bodies the best way possible.

The last few pages gives you an idea of life in small villages in Europe in my youth. Bear in mind that my family was considered a middle-income family. There were many other families worse off. We owned a super market where all sorts of food items were sold and we therefore were never short of food. There was hardly anything that a family in the village needed that we did not sell. As I got older, I started helping out in the store whenever I had some free time. I very much liked being a storekeeper. Besides actually selling to the public, there was the job of preparing things to sell. For instance, the granulated sugar came in large 100 kilo sacks. I had to put a kilo or half a kilo in paper bags so that no time would be lost when a customer came into the store to buy some. The same thing applied to rice, nuts, pepper, paprika, tea, coffee, and all sizes of nails and hundreds of other items. Since I remember, I could never stay idle for long periods of time. This habit has remained with me to this very day. I must always have something to do to keep busy. I always say, "Should the time come that I have nothing to do, I would pay someone to give me some work."

Most of our business was done on a cash and carry basis. However, there were times when we did bartering business. The peasants brought in their merchandise in exchange for our goods. They would bring in chickens, vegetables, eggs, fruits — fresh or dried ones — wood products such as chairs, wooden spoons, etc. It was quite a task estimating the value of these items and at the same time being fair to both sides. My father taught me never to take advantage of anyone, but at the same time, to also look out for myself. If I made a deal with a customer, my father made me very proud by patting me on the shoulder and saying that I made a fair deal. After all, I was only about ten years old or less at the time. As I was a fair student in the Hebrew school or the *cheyder* as it was called, it was my happiest moment when

my father once told me, "When you grow up you will be good to *Got und tzu leit,*" meaning to G-d and to humanity, except that I felt that I was already grown up.

As we were seven brothers and sisters, my father was most careful not to cause any jealousy between us by giving compliments to one and not to the others. But I felt that he liked me and many was the time that he discussed matters with me. I remember an incident in particular. It was during the time when my father was toying with the idea of leaving the village and moving to a larger city. The question was where to move to. Our village was near three cities: Munkacs, Ungvar and Beregszaz. One day as we were walking together on the street, my father brought up the subject. Although my father was a *chasid* of several chasidic rabbis whom he frequently visited, he expressed the following thought to me. "Munkacs is a bit too chasidic; Ungvar is a bit too modern (there were aready two stores there that were open on the Shabbos); the city of Beregszaz was just in between, not very chasidic and not very modern. In his opinion he felt that we should choose the city of Beregszaz. He asked me what I though about it. Naturally, I agreed with him. In the village where we lived we had a general store. In a larger city it was customary to specialize in only one kind of merchandise. It was his opinion that it was the least risky to operate a business connected with food, like a wholesale food business. I readily agreed to his suggestion. (I had always had a weakness to the food business. This may be one of the reasons that brought me into the hotel business later on in life.)

The result of this discussion was that a year or so later, my father did buy a house in Beregszaz with the idea of operating a wholesale food business. We did not always agree on matters. My memory goes back to a particular incident that took place a few years later. While most of the business was conducted on a cash basis, there were many villagers whom my father trusted and gave them merchandise on credit. The amounts were entered in a book. Most of the peasants, after the harvest of their products, came into the store to pay their debts. However, there accumulated a long list of people who remained owing money for years without their making any attempt to pay. What is more, when they did have the cash, they patronized other stores instead of ours. The book was a thick one with a lot of pages containing the names of several dozen people who owed thousands of kronen. There was no system at that time to send out bills or a telephone to call people and remind them of their debts. The only way to reach them was to go and visit them. My father put all his hopes in

that book. His whole life's savings was in that book. One day when I was about twelve years old, my father entrusted the book to me and instructed me to go to the village and try to collect whatever sums I could, cautioning me to keep a close eye on the book, since a great fortune was entered in it. I started my route from the beginning of the village. After a few stops, I discovered to my sorrow that not much could be expected. I collected just a few kronen. Others offered me a few dozen eggs, a chicken or some other products which I decided to pick up on my way back. Some asked me to come back a few days later, while most of them seemed not to care at all. After visiting most of the people on the list, I made notations on the pages as to what my opinion was in each case. On the pages of those whom I was under the impression that they would never pay, I wrote the initials, *"fey, fey,"* which stood for the words *far fallen,* all is lost. Coming home tired and disappointed, I gave the book back to my father. He read the notations on the pages and when he came to the pages with the initials F.F. he asked me what was meant by it. I told him that according to my opinion the money was a complete loss, whereupon he became enraged and in great excitement gave me a slight smack on the face saying, "By you it is easy to wipe off a fortune of money, while by me, it means a loss of most of what I own." I felt bad about causing him so much grief but I could not help feeling that way. I was very sorry about the matter, but that was my honest opinion. The result of course was that most of the debts were never collected, especially since my father and I left the village for America eventually. But we will leave that for later on. In the meantime, I continued to try to collect whatever I could Most of the collections consisted of produce, like sacks of potatoes, corn and other vegetables. Not having any other means of transportation, I carried home the merchandise on my back.

As I was getting older, I started to learn *Gemorah* and *Tosfos.* The hired teachers were not in a position to teach the older boys, therefore, a few of us were sent to other and larger villages where the teachers taught us higher learnings. Another boy and I were sent to the next village called Nagy Dobrony, where a great *talmud chochom* by the name of Rabbi Sheftel maintained a Yeshiva for older boys from the nearby villages. The ages of the boys were from about ten years to after *Bar Mitzvah.* Here we had to do serious studying. The average boy had to have a knowledge of *Gemorah.* No one attended the public schools any longer. The entire time was spent on *Limudei Kodesh.* As a rule the day started at about seven in the morning. From seven to

eight we learned *Yoreh Deyah* with its *meforshim* (commentaries). The classroom was the very large *Beth Hamedrash* of the synagogue. About 35-40 students occupied seats along a large table. Seats were assigned at the beginning of the season and that was the student's seat for the whole term. The majority of the boys wanted to sit in front closer to the rabbi.

An idea occurred to me to sell the honors of the seats. (I presume that this is where I got the idea many years later of selling the *aliyos* (the honor of being called up to the reading of the Torah) in my various hotels. I recall that the *Rosh Hayeshiva* was not too enthusiastic about the idea. He thought that the places should be occupied according to age or capabilities, but when I explained to him that not all the students were happy about that arrangement, he agreed to my plan. We proceeded to do it my way, which worked out better. Everyone bought a seat where he felt he would be most comfortable. I bought my seat right next to the rabbi. In this way, I was sure that I would not miss out on anything that he said. Since most of the students were already *bar mitzvah*, we made our own *minyan*, with one of the students acting as the *baal tefilah*. We were finished with services at eight, at which time we had our breakfast.

"Having breakfast" was easier said than done. The students who lived in the village went back home to eat, but the boys from out of town were not so lucky. My first term there started in the spring. My parents lived in Kish Dobrony (Klein Dobrin) which was about two kilometers away. My mother woke me up at six in the morning. After I was dressed, she handed me two packages of food, one for breakfast and another one for lunch and snacks. As a rule it consisted of two slices of rye bread smeared with butter. She also sometimes gave us along a hard boiled egg or a slice of herring. When there was no butter available, we took along two slices of toasted bread, which was toasted on the hot oven (whoever heard of a toaster?), smeared them with *kokos*, a sort of rough margarine which I think was made from coconuts. My father brought these items from Budapest in order to sell them in the store. The *kokos* could be used for smearing on bread, frying and cooking. I remember the first time he brought it back to the village, everyone came running to see what it was. Lunch consisted of bread, maybe a piece of pickled herring, two slices of salami or a portion of chopped meat. (Remember we were not poor, and most of these items were sold in our super market). She sent along a fruit, like an apple, a pear, etc. for a snack to be eaten at about five in the afternoon. These fruits grew in our own garden. After *mincha* servi-

ces, I walked back to my village for supper and some sleep. This was the routine all week, from Sunday to Friday. On Friday we went home after lunch to prepare for Shabbos. Of course, we always took along our *Gemoros* to do some studying during the Sabbath. One Sunday morning I came back to school forgetting to bring along the *Gemorah.* When the rabbi saw it, he asked me, "What would you think of a soldier who went out on the battle field without taking his gun along?" It never happened to me again. This procedure went on during the summer months, which was not too bad. I did not mind the two kilometers that I had to walk morning and night.

The problem arose in the winter. It was very cold, always below zero. The snows were very deep, and the days were short. There was no way to walk from our village to the next one. The only thing that the out-of-town boys could do was to arrange for a place to sleep and somewhere to eat. It was the custom in all European Yeshivas where there was no public kitchen or a dormitory, to provide the students with these accommodations. Right after the Succoth holidays, with other boys, I visited the homes of the Jewish residents of the next town arranging for *teyg* (days). In other words, I arranged to eat in one home on Sundays of each week, whereas in the next suitable place, arrangements were made for Mondays and so on. This was the usual procedure. The Balei Batim expected it and were glad to accommodate the few boys. As a matter of fact, they tried to prepare special meals for the designated day when the "yeshiva bocher" was to come. Of course, not all "days" were perfect. While it was true that every *baal boste* wanted to have a few days during the week given to a *bocher,* it would have been a social disgrace for a woman not to be able to boast that she was privileged to provide food for a certain amount of students during the week. Not all of them were in a position to provide the best of foods. Each one of them tried her utmost to cook the best foods that she was able.

There were dozens of jokes circulated about these so-called *teyg.* For instance, there was the one about a poor woman who wanted to have the privilege of giving at least one day a week to a student. However, her circumstances did not allow her to serve elaborate meals. All she was able to serve was beans in one form or another. It was alright for the first few times, but after the student came for the fifth or sixth time and was served the same beans, before he began to eat, he put his head in his hands and concentrated. The lady of the house was concerned and asked the boy the reason for his deep

concentration. The boy replied, "I will tell you, the *Shulchan Ohroch* (book of Laws) says the blessing on food that grows from the earth should be *Boreh Pri Haadomoh,* we thank G-d for creating food from the earth. For food that grows on trees we are to make the blessing of *Boreh Pri Haeytz,* we thank G-d for creating food which comes from a tree; over food that comes from neither the earth or trees, we make the blessing of a *Shehakohl;* but these beans are already *krichen mir shohn arohs fum boch,* they are already creeping out from my belly and I am at a total loss as to what kind of a blessing I should make on them."

Another goes like this: It was the custom in Europe not to finish a portion to the last morsel on the plate, but to leave a small portion of food. The lady of the house that this particular student came to was not aware of this custom. Therefore, when she served him a regular portion of food and the student left a piece over, she surmised that he could not eat such a large amount of food. Therefore, when he came back the following week she just gave him a smaller portion. The student, following his usual behavior, again left some over. To the inquiry of the *ba'al boste* whether he was feeling well, the student replied that he was in very good health, and again left some food over on his plate. After a while, the woman, seeing that he was really a small eater, and not wishing to waste food, served him a very small portion of meat. The *bocher* looked at the very small piece of meat and turned it around with his fork from all sides. When asked by the woman what the trouble was, he told her, "Today we studied the *mishnah* about interest charges which we are not allowed to charge except under certain regulations. The *mishnah* explains that there is an interest called *neshech* and another called *tarbus.* We know that *neshech* means to bite, meaning that when we give money but do not give the full amount, yet expect to receive back the full amount, there is a piece bitten out from the full amount. The word *tarbus* is not very clear, but let us say it means to increase, that is, to give back more than the original amount. The *mishnah* therefore asks, *E'y'zehu neshech?* Which interest is called *neshech* and *V'eyzuh tarbus,* which kind of interest is called *tarbus*? Now looking at this tiny piece of meat, I am also asking myself, *v'eyzehu neshech,* which part shall I bite, *v'eyzehu tarbus,* and which piece shall I leave?"

Here I was, following the usual procedure and had arranged for my food requirements for the week-days of the winter months. My father arranged for me to sleep by a distant relative by the name of Reb Mordche Pollak. He was called "Pollak" because the family emigrated from Poland. Like most other families, their home consisted of

a large kitchen and a bedroom. During the winter, the kitchen was heated since the cooking was done there. But the bedroom had no heating and it was bitter cold. I slept in the same bed with Reb Mordche. We called him Feter Mordche. It took me about half an hour to come home from yeshiva and I went right into the bedroom. From the bitter cold outside and the icy cold in the room, I felt like a piece of ice by the time I undressed. Luckily my uncle went to sleep early and when I jumped into bed under the heavy featherbed, the bed was aready warmed up. Since I slept in their house, they had arranged to send one of their children, a little girl by the name of Ida, to live in my parent's house. She was so happy to stay in our home (where the board and lodging was so much better) that she did not want to go back to their house anymore. She remained with us as a mother's helper. My parents did not mind, and her parents were satisfied to have one less mouth to feed.

Personally, I was not too happy with this arrangement. It was too much to go three times a day to eat in the house where I had my "day," walk at least half an hour every night in the dark cold street to my lodging and arise at least half an hour earlier in the morning to get to the yeshiva. The following winter, my father made different arrangements. My closest friend was a boy by the name of Shlomoh Mermelstein. His father also had a store in our village, but on a much smaller scale. Mr. Mermelstein and my father were partners in the wholesale buying of merchandise in the larger cities. The merchandise was used for our own stores, as well as to sell to small storekeepers in the neighborhood. Our parents rented us a double bed by the *shames* of the village where the yeshiva was located. His one room apartment was right next to the yeshiva. There were about five beds in this room occupied by his family. There was also a table, chairs and a stove. The room was fairly warm, and since we did not have to walk too far to and from the yeshiva to our lodging, we found it very comfortable.

I also stopped eating *"teyg."* Instead, on Sunday morning, when I came from home, my mother prepared food for me for the whole five and a half days. She packed up a box with various kinds of food. I took several herrings, which I cleaned. Some pieces were left as schmaltz herring. I took out the milk from the herrings, skinned and washed them, adding a little vinegar and sugar, and rubbed them into a liquid, sliced up several large onions, put in a few spices, cut up the herrings and put the whole thing into a jar, pouring on the liquid. It was the best pickled herring that I have ever eaten. Then my mother made some meat balls, perhaps a piece of liver from a goose, a few pieces of

smoked goose meat, a salami, and a whole bread. I also took along a few eggs which I boiled or scrambled and I had meals fit for a king.

There was no need for a frigidaire. The food was kept on a window sill which was colder than any frigidaire. An apple and a slice of bread was a good afternoon snack. I also always had a bag of tea to make myself a glass of hot tea when I so desired. In the later part of the week when the bread was not soft any longer, I took slices and toasted them on the hot stove, smearing a little kokos and a touch of garlic on them and this was the best "before going to sleep" snack. A special luxury food was the *kochonah* or *pitcha* as is known in this country. Here, this delicacy is made from calves feet. In our section of Europe, it was made from the feet, heads, wings, pupicks and necks from chickens or geese, cooked in a sauce, poured into a pot, put on the window to freeze, and was used as a main meal. I liked this self service much better than the *teyg*.

Now that I have described the *gashmiyas* (the ordinary parts) of our lives, let us go back to the *ruchniyos* (spiritual parts) which were our daily studies. After breakfast, when we arrived at the yeshiva, our rabbi began the day with first learning the *Chovas halvovas* for about half an hour. Then the *shiurim* started. We learned two kinds of *gemorahs*, called the *shiur* and the *neyben shiur*. The main *shiur* was learned with all the "trimmings" like *Rashi*, *Tosfos*, and *Meforshim* (commentaries). The other *shiur* was studied with the *Rashi* and *Tosfos* only. We studied approximately two pages of each. These were repeated by the rabbi every day. Each one of us did our own repeating by ourselves or together with one another or a few boys. On Thursday afternoon, we were given the *bechinos*, the testing. It was expected that each student should be in a position to recite by heart any piece of these two *shiurim* wherever the rabbi chose to call on him. Most of us did know practically any part of the piece that the rabbi asked us. Fridays we were *maavir sedrah* and sent home early.

I was not a particularly wild boy, but neither was I an angel. There is a certain amount of mischievousness in every young boy and I was no exception. I did many things which my parents did not approve of, but nothing really serious. My mind was always working on accomplishing things, improving things. Sometimes they worked out favorably and sometimes not. If certain things turned out right, my parents complimented me and if not, I was punished. Many times, because I meant well, my parents reproved me and warned me not to do it again, or showed my brothers and I how it should be done.

Take the incident of the "rock pears." Towards the end of the summer, my brothers and I went into the forest and brought back sacksful of small pears that grew there in abundance. We brought them home, but the question was, where to store them? They came in very handy. We ate a lot of them and mother used them to make fruit soups. Without milk they were used as a fruit soup after meat meals and if milk was added it was a fruit borscht. First they had to be kept for a few weeks, so that they would become soft in order to be usable. We made several trips to the woods and thereby accumulated many sacksful of pears.

Among the many items that we sold in our supermarket, was ready-made coffins that we sold to the gentile customers when they needed them. These coffins were stored in the attic of our house. It was pretty warm in the attic since the sun shone on the roof. We thought of a brilliant idea. A coffin consisted of two parts: an upper and a lower part. We separated the coffins into two and filled them with the rock pears. When my father heard of it, he told us, "The idea is not a bad one, but you have to realize that a coffin has to be kept clean. When the fruits will start to ripen, they will crack open and the juice will cause the coffin to be stained and ruin it." The solution was to line the coffins with blankets and a layer of paper or cardboard, of which we had enough in the store, and then put the fruit in them. Every Friday afternoon, we went up to the attic to pick out the soft pears which we ate on Saturday afternoon and which mother used to make fruit soup and/or a borscht for Sunday breakfast.

I can think of another incident which was not approved. In our garden in the back of the house, we had rows of fruit trees. On long hot Saturday afternoons, we sat under the shade of the fruit trees. We were thirsty and yearned to eat some of the fruits. There were always some fruits that fell off the trees to the ground. Either they were ripe already, or the winds blew them off. We had our own signs and made up our own rulings. We examined the stem of the fruit. If the end was dark, it was a sign that they fell off the tree a day or so before and therefore they were not *muktze* and we were permitted to eat them. If the end of the stem was fresh, we could not eat nor touch them. After we finished all those that we permitted ourselves to eat, we wanted more. There were hundreds of fruits hanging down from the branches at our reach, but we could not tear them off on the Sabbath. After a hasty consultation, we decided to place our hands behind our backs, picked out a closeby hanging fruit and ate pieces of it without

touching it. Immediately the "operation of biting without touching" started.

We had our fill of fresh fruit *lekuhvod Shabbos.* What we did not think of at the time was, that by not touching the fruits, there remained the stems and pieces of plums, apples and pears hanging from the branches. The next morning as my mother went to the garden to pick some vegetables or fruits, to her amazement she noticed half or quarter pieces of fruit hanging down from the branches. She did not know what to make of it. She quickly came running to my father telling him what she saw. My father and our uncle, Reb Moshe Preisz who lived in the same yard, went down to the garden to examine the sight. They wondered who the culprit was. There were many cats and dogs around, but as a rule they did not eat fresh fruits. Besides, they as well as the rabbits could not reach the fruits. The cows did not go into the garden, as they were out for pasture. There were no bears or lions around. It was finally decided that it was our animals in the form of our children who were the culprits. After a hasty gathering of the children, we were asked point blank if we did it. Sticking to the rule of "one is not obligated to tell the truth, but forbidden to say a lie," we shamefully admitted our crime. At this time I cannot remember whether we were bodily punished or not. I think that because it was considered an original idea, and a funny one at that, we got away with just a warning not to do it again.

I do not want to burden you at this time with more incidents that occurred at that time of my life. I will just record two more that are worth relating. Three of us boys, my brother Sidney, may he live and be well, another by the name of Hershel (who was two years older in age and who passed away when he was about ten years old) and I, slept in one large bed in the kitchen. The bed was next to the door leading to the store. We were exceptionally noisy that morning. It was towards the end of the winter. The weather outside was becoming warm but there was still some snow on the ground. My father was in the store trying to add up a long list of figures for merchandise that a customer had purchased. He was standing near the door which was open so that some heat from the kitchen would go into the store. Because of the continuous noise from our room he was unable to concentrate on the long list of figures to add them up correctly, not ever having heard of an adding machine. Although he hollered several times for us to be quiet, it did not seem to help . After the customer left the store, father came into the kitchen admonishing us for our bad behavior. But it did not seem to make a great impression on us. Being that I was the

nearest, he grabbed me by my winter underwear, took me outside and for a few seconds dipped my behind into the snow, telling me, "Perhaps this will cool you off a little." He took me back to bed and tucked me in. My two other brothers, fearing the same fate, buried themselves under the heavy featherbed so that they were not seen by him. This is not as horrible as it seems, because practically every night we ran out to the porch to urinate from there into the snow.

I will relate one more incident, because at the time it created a minor sensation. It can be called a "tragic-comedy" and was the talk of the town for a long time. It was on a Purim. We all went to the synagogue for the reading of the *Megilah.* The snows began to melt and the muds were deep, reaching practically to our knees. It was impossible to walk on the streets without wearing boots. After eating the *Hamentashen* and other delicacies it was time for the traditional task of delivering *mishloach monos* to the families of the village. My mother prepared several plates of cakes and cookies, put a name on each plate and covered it with a fresh napkin. My two younger brothers, being too small, and the muds on the street being too deep, were excluded from being messengers for this purpose. My older brother Mayer (may he rest in peace. He passed away several years ago after I had brought him to this country) was the studious one. He was always sitting and learning. He also was not bothered with the task of delivering *mishloach monos* except in one case, and that was to bring a plate to a family by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Schulhoff, who were his *kvaters* (godfather and godmother). For this deed they gave him a handsome tip. Therefore, I was the one designated to the job. I was very glad to do it, because in each case, as I delivered the plate, the woman sent back her own cakes to my mother and gave me a tip as well.

In delivering *mishloach monos* there is a rule, *chok veloh yaavohr* that can never be broken, and that is that never, but never, will an older woman be the first to send a plate to a younger one. I do not know whether this rule is being enforced in any other country, but in our village it was a strict rule. Of course, at the time I had no knowledge of this unwritten law. As the muds on the street were deep, I had to carry a stick with me which I held in one hand so that I would not slip into the mud, or I used my hand to hold on to the fences. Therefore, I was not able to carry more than one plate at a time. I delivered the first plate, received a few pennies for my efforts and brought back the exchanged cakes to my mother. I picked up the next plate and trudged in the mud to the next designated place. It took about half an hour to

go and come back with each plate.

In my childish mind, not taking into consideration the consequences, something which seemed like a brilliant idea struck my mind. The thought was, "Why should I trudge back and forth in the deep muds with each individual plate which takes a lot of effort and is very time consuming. There were about thirty Jewish families in the village. Why couldn't I take the exchanged cakes that I received in one house and deliver that plate to the next Jewish family. Thus it would save me a lot of effort, time, and I would collect lots of tips.

I presume that the first two or three were women who were older than my mother was. Therefore, luck was with me and the project ran smoothly. My mother was known as a first-class baker. People were anxious to receive her cakes. I did not notice whether they were pleased with the selection. I was most anxious to continue my journey. I was not even interested in the pieces of cake that the women offered me privately. I collected my tip and the new plate and with a hurried thank-you set out for the next house. I reached the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Mermelstein. Here my luck seemed to diminish. I had previously mentioned that he was a partner with my father in some ventures, and she was younger than my mother. Therefore, she did not expect to receive *shloach monos* from my mother first. As a matter of fact, she had already sent her son, Shlomoh, my best friend, with *shloach monos* to our home. She was very surprised about the matter. She asked me whether I did not make a mistake and that I had brought her a plate intended for someone else. But as I insisted that I was sent to her with the plate, she had no choice but to accept it and gave me one of her own to deliver to my mother. Here my real troubles started.

In the same yard in a villa lived Mr. and Mrs. Schulhoff (my brother Mayer's godfather and godmother). When I brought the cake to her instead of my brother, she was shocked. She insisted to know why my brother did not bring the plate as he had been doing for the last few years. I do not remember what excuse I gave her, but she seemed very disappointed. I do not even remember whether she gave me a tip or not. She insisted that I tell my brother to come to see her the next day. I picked up the plate that she gave me and proceeded to the next house.

Here my troubles worsened. It was the house of the *shochet*, the slaughterer of the village, who was also the rabbi of the village. The *shloach monos* that was usually sent to him was different than any other one. Besides the regular cakes there was also usually a cash donation on the plate. Now I remember that a year before, my father and Mr.

Mermelstein decided to present the *shochet*/rabbi with a very expensive pair of shoes that they had brought back from Budapest. In order that he understand that the gift was from both of them, their son Shlomoh and I delivered the *shloach monos* at the same time leaving both the cakes and the shoes for him. Here I came with an ordinary plate of cake with nothing else on it. The *rebbitzen* asked me several times if I was sure that nothing had fallen from the plate. Assuring her that I lost nothing, she put a few cookies on the plate and sent me away.

My troubles were not over yet. In the same yard, was the house of the *shammus* of the village. I then took the plate with the cookies to his house. They also expected a gift or a donation besides the cake. Again I was asked the same question, whether I was sure that this plate was intended for them? The wife of the *shammus* was doubly astonished. (1) My mother usually fixed up a beautiful plate with cakes for which she was famous. Here the plate contained a few measly cookies, nothing like my mother's baking. (2) There was no gift or money donation enclosed. I clearly felt that the last two recipients were under the impression that perhaps there was something else on the plate that I either took for myself, or that I had lost it in the mud and did not want to admit it. Mumbling a good Yom-tov under her nose, she sent me home empty handed.

Here my scheme backfired. I had not covered even half of the residents of the village. All my great hopes of gathering a fortune of money were gone. As I left the house of the *shammus* I burst out crying. I had no alternative but to admit that I had made a terrible blunder and left for home. Immediately upon arriving there, I was ashamed to look my parents in their eyes. I fell on the bed and cried without a stop. After a while, I calmed down and had to admit my foolish blunder. My parents who were really worried about my being away so long, and seeing the condition that I was in, burst out in great laughter and sighs of relief. I do not remember if and what my punishment was. All I know is that my brother did not speak to me for weeks. The whole town was buzzing with the tragic comical news. I was ashamed to look into the faces of the people of the town for a long time after this incident.

During this time the first World War broke out. The actual fighting took place far away from us. Our village did not suffer anything out of the ordinary due to the war. If there were certain shortages of food or other commodities, our family did not feel it. My father was not taken to the war. He was working for the government in supplying them with various needed materials. On the edge of our

village passed a main highway running from Chap to Munkacs. It was on this highway that we first saw cars and trucks. They were carrying soldiers and materials. Many times, as officers and soldiers passed our village, they slept over in the houses of the villagers. As our house was comparatively nice, some of the officers were stationed overnight in our house. Being officers, they behaved very well. The ordinary soldiers who were stationed in the houses of the villagers, did not behave that well. There were rumors going around of their shameful behavior, most of which we did not understand at the time. If there were some Jewish officers or soldiers among them, they were placed in Jewish homes. We welcomed them, gave them our beds and fed them. Later on during the war, when prisoners of war were taken, they were distributed in the village. Our village received its quota of prisoners. They were Roumanians. We were given two or three to support. We placed them in a room which was used as a warehouse, consisting of wood and other household supplies. For their keep, they chopped wood, tended the garden, and did other chores around the house. I quickly made friends with them. They taught me to speak Roumanian and I in turn taught them Yiddish or Hungarian. Being too young at the time, I do not remember too much about the first World War.

One of a dozen *Sefer Torahs* that I brought to Israel

5

My *Bar Mitzvah* came out on Shabbos Chanukah, *Parshes Mikeytz*. It was not the custom for a *Bar Mitzvah* to read the Torah. If a boy was able to, he was called up to read the *Maftir*. This I studied by myself, but it was also expected of me to give a *Dvar Torah*. As Chanukah is not far from the beginning of the winter study period, I was a bit concerned that there would not be enough time for the *Rosh Hayeshiva* to teach me a *drosha* by heart. As soon as I came back to the Yeshiva after Succoth, I made sure to tell him on the first day of the season that I was becoming *Bar Mitzvah* and that he would have to teach me a *Bar Mitzvah* speech. He replied that he was making a mental note of it. As week after week passed without him making any effort to teach me a speech, I reminded him about it, but he kept assuring me that I need not worry and that there was still enough time. Finally about ten days before my *Bar Mitzvah*, he called me aside telling me that for the next few nights I should come to his house where he would instruct me in a *Bar Mitzvah* speech. As it was set for Sabbath night of Chanukah, the speech was built around the *Sigyegh* of *Kovsoh Zokok Loh*, page 21, b. in *Mesechtas Shabbos*. I am ashamed to admit that I did not keep a written text of it, for by now, I have completely forgotten the contents.

The actual day of my birthday was, I think, the Monday before that Sabbath. My father was away on that particular day on one of his trips to Budapest and returned a day or so before the Sabbath. He was not able to be present in the Yeshiva on the day that I was called up to the Torah. (Of course, he was back for the actual *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony on the Sabbath.) I don't know whether my father asked his partner, Mr. Mermelstein to be present in the Yeshiva at the time, or if he did it on his own account for personal reasons. He had a daughter of about the same age as I was. It was rumored that I would be a good match for her when the right time came. I presume that both thoughts were true. Mr. Mermelstein came to the Yeshivah that morning to my *aufruf*. Months before, my father bought me a beautiful pair of *Tefillin* which were written by the best scribe in Munkacs. I held on to them for many years, approximately for forty years.

On the Shabbos after, I was called up to the Torah in the shul in my village where I read the *Maftir.* After the services, a *Kiddush* was prepared in the shul. On Saturday night, a large *Bar Mitzvah* party was given in our house. Long tables were set up for this purpose. My parents served all kinds of food and drinks for all the people of the village. I delivered my *drosha.* As far as I can remember there was no custom at that time of giving presents to a *Bar Mitzvah* boy. Therefore, I do not recall whether I received any. (There were no fountain pens yet.) Again it was my father who brought the first fountain pens later on from Budapest to be sold in our store.

A funny incident happend in the Yeshiva afterwards. As I was already *Bar Mitzvah,* I was permitted to recite the prayers by the *Ohmod,* the podium. As is the custom, the one who officiates has to read aloud the last sentence of each chapter of the services. An exception to this rule is made by the *Krias Shemah* where the last four words read *ANI ASHEM ELOYKECHEM EMES,* I am G-d, your true G-d. In this particular instance, only the last three words are said aloud. *ASHEM ELOYKECHEM EMES,* G-d your true G-d. Listening to the prayers for many years, I knew that there is some difference in this case, and that only the last few words are read aloud. Not having the experience yet (as a matter of fact, some *siddurim* do have a dot before the word *ANI*), I proudly announced the four words, *ANI ASHEM ELOYKECHEM EMES,* I am G-d, your true G-d. Having my back turned towards the rest of the congregation which consisted of the boys from the Yeshiva, I therefore did not know whether any of them noticed my error and if it made any impression on them. However, after the services, the rabbi said, "Today, we had the privilege of hearing the services from G-d himself. Our cantor loudly announced that he is G-d himself by saying, 'I am G-d, your true G-d.'" This time all the boys burst out in great laughter. I tried my best to explain that I did not concentrate as to what I was saying at the time. It was passed off as a joke and was soon forgotten.

Now that I was already a "man," it was felt by my rabbi and my parents that the time had come for me to attend a regular large Yeshiva, further away from home. At that time, the city of Ungvar which was without a chief rabbi for many years, decided to engage the rabbi of Chust, as their spiritual leader. So, the famous Rabbi Reb A.Y. Greenwald was engaged as the spiritual leader. (His brother was the Tzeylemer rabbi who eventually came to America and settled in Williamsburgh where he organized the *Kehillah Arugas Habosem.* He recently passed away.) Since he operated a yeshiva in Chust, one of

the provisions of his contract stated that he would be permitted to organize a large Yeshiva in Ungvar. He was not in favor of the students eating *teyg*. His reasons, I presume, were manifold:

(1) It was a question of hundreds of students. There may not have been enough *Balei Batim* to supply them all with *teyg*.
(2) Ungvar was a modern city. The rabbi did not relish the idea of hundreds of *bachorim* walking around the city.
(3) Being a modern city, perhaps he was not sure that all of the residents of the city kept strictly kosher homes.

In order not to embarrass anyone, he insisted that a *menze* or public kitchen large enough to feed all the students be erected. About a year before, the Fakter Rabbi was sent to the United States to gather funds for this purpose. He was an excellent speaker and with eloquent speeches he was able to collect large sums of money in the various cities that he visited in America. When he returned, a very nice building was built on the Kapisher Gasz. The building was ready for use a few weeks after Passover. All the out-of-town *bachorim* received their meals in the large dining hall of this building.

My older brother, Mayer, and I were taken by our father to this Yeshiva. Our father found lodgings for us on the same street. I remember that my friend Shlomoh Mermelstein and I occupied a small dark room without windows. My brother who was five years older than I was, had engaged another room for himself in another place. He was already a *talmud chochim* at that time. As a matter of fact, there were some students in the Yeshiva who did not do too well at the *Bechinah* (the test) and in order to remain in the Yeshiva, they were obligated to engage an older *bochur* to tutor them in the *Gemorah* which we were studying. The parents of the younger boys were glad to pay my brother a specified amount for this service. This gave him an extra income. I being younger, was not yet in a position to do that. I was glad that I was able to manage on my own, not requiring the help of a tutor. Later on in the season I found out that there was a demand for teachers to give lessons to children not yet in the Yeshiva, to those who were attending the local Hebrew schools and who were in need of extra tutoring. So, at the ripe age of thirteen, I gave lessons to some of these children in their homes.

The public kitchen served only one main meal a day, the meat meal, at about one in the afternoon. The meal consisted of a large bowl of soup with rice. In the same deep bowl there was put a piece of beef. This, together with a large piece of bread, filled us up. For supper each

boy could take along a piece of bread, an apple or other fruit that we were able to buy in the market, and this sufficed for that meal. The same applied to breakfast. Everyone was able to buy a roll and a glass of milk. Besides, every parent sent their son a food package every once in a while.

After the kitchen opened, a small notice was placed on the bulletin board asking for a volunteer to help out in the kitchen dishing out the meals. You don't have to guess as to who tore off the notice and ran to the kitchen to volunteer for the job. Me, of course. As I wrote before, I had a weakness to work around food, which eventually led me to become a hotel keeper. As no one else applied for the job, so the job was mine. Here I was like a fish in water. Not only did I go into the kitchen during dishing out time, but I was there most of the day when I was free from my studies. I was surrounded by all kinds of food. There were large chunks of boiled beef which I helped to slice. You can be sure that I was never in need of food for myself at anytime.

My brother Mayer was always immersed in studying. He did not care and did not know what and how much he was eating. There was an opening between the kitchen and the dining hall. I gave out the portions to the waiters who came to pick them up, through this opening. I made sure to find out who the waiter was who served my brother and when he came to pick up the tray intended for that table, I slipped in an extra piece of meat into one of the plates. I asked the waiter to see to it that this particular bowl reached my brother. For being good to this waiter when it came to his own portion, he obliged me by giving this particular portion to my brother. One day a committee of local people came to the dining room during meal time to see that everything was in order. They happened to pass the table where my brother was sitting and noticed the extra piece of meat in his bowl. They asked him why he had two portions of meat in his plate. Whether he really did not know, or pretended not to know, my brother replied that he knew nothing. Whatever he was given, he ate. They asked the waiter the same question. First he pretended not to be aware of anything. However, after a little investigation, the waiter had to tell the truth that a boy in the kitchen who was dishing out the food asked him to do it for his brother. They came into the kitchen and gave me a bawling out and warned me not to do it again, or they would see to it that I was removed from the job. I knew that I was very much liked by the kitchen staff. They would never let me leave them. Besides, I also knew that this same committee may never come back again, so I listened to them like to the snow of last year, and continued

to do the same thing until the end of the season. In this way I passed my first season at a regular Yeshiva.

For several years before, my older brother Mayer hired himself out as a teacher in various villages. For the next winter, I decided I would do the same thing. During the Holy Days and Succoth Holidays, I brought up the subject to my parents. They did not want to hear of it. I was not even fourteen years old. Who would want to engage such a young boy who was only a child himself? But I pestered them so much that finally they agreed to give in to me, being sure that no one would hire me anyway.

Right after the Succoth holidays, I packed a valise, walked the 14 kilometers to the nearest train station of Chap and took the train to Ungvar. I found the place in the market where teachers were being hired. In a short while two men came to me and asked whether I really was serious in hiring myself out as a teacher? When I answered yes, they figured that as a young fellow, they would be able to hire me for a low rate. After a few questions pertaining to my knowledge in Hebrew studies, I advised them that I already studied in the large yeshiva here in Ungvar. We came to terms about the price, which did not bother me too much. The main thing was that I was a teacher and was entirely on my own just like my older brother.

They took me to their horse and wagon and in a few hours we arrived in a village which was even smaller than my own. The name of the hamlet was Chometz near Brezne. I was as proud as could be. There were only a few Jewish families in that village. There were twelve boys altogether, with the oldest one being twelve years old. He was just about a year and a half younger than I was. The highest study that I had to teach them was the *Chumish,* all the way down to some who needed instructions in *Alef Beis.* The procedure was the same as I described in a former chapter when we engaged a teacher in our village, except that there were fewer students, with less knowledge.

The houses of the parents of the children were used as the study halls, each one approximately for two weeks per child. Of course, I had my lodging with the families. I either slept in the same bed with one of the children or they put up a cot for me. The food was nothing to brag about. I ate the same food as the rest of the family. My first job was in the house of a store-keeper. The second period was in a house of a man who was a *meykler* (a go-between, who arranged deals between people), and the third was in the house of a widow whose sustenance consisted of riding the very narrow and small Brezner Bandel, a miniature train which traveled daily between Brezne and Ungvar. She or her twelve

year old son brought back large containers of whiskey which was sold to the peasants by the glass. The food and lodging in these three places were not too bad.

The fourth place was with a family whose income came from two cows that were milked twice daily. The man took two cans of milk and brought them with this same train to Ungvar where he sold the milk. This last place was a pretty poor one and so were the food and lodging. I did not mind it too much because it was the end of the winter already and my mind was on collecting my wages and going back home. The work involved was not too difficult. To this very day I like to teach people. The children had to attend public school so I was not really occupied the whole day. What did I do in my spare time? You guessed it. I helped out in the store, or helped the widow in the bar.

I wanted to be remembered by the children after I left. I urged them to study by heart the *Modeh Ani,* the *Krias Shemah,* the small *Mohdim* and the *Berich Shemeyh* in their spare time. Some of them did not relish the idea as it took some time away from their playtime. The parents shrugged their shoulders. Most of them did go along with the idea. I felt that I did not know how much they would remember of the other studies, but if they would learn these things by heart, it would remain with them for the rest of their lives. Many years later, I met one of my students in this country. His name was Abramowitz, the son of the milk dealer. He told me that he did not have an opportunity to do much studying in his life, as his parents were not in a position to send him to the large schools, but he remembered what I had taught him, and especially the things that I made him learn by heart.

There was a rich family by the name of Solomon who did not join the other families of the town in the hiring of the teacher. They had an older son and a little girl for whom they engaged their own teacher. One day, while I was in the small synagogue, I met the teacher. Who do you think it was? None other than my brother Mayer. He had it made to order. He received a good salary, and worked very little since the two children also attended public school. He had his own fancy bedroom and was served the most delicious food cooked by a professional chef. In my spare time I spent some time with him in this house where I was most welcomed. I partook of some of the food and cakes that they served.

This rich man was a charitable man and a *chusid* (disciple) of the Ziditchover rabbi. My father was also one of the followers of this rabbi. One day, the rabbi happened to pass through this village. When he found out the name of the village, he recalled that he had a very

important *chusid* there. He had the driver of his carriage stop, and went in to visit Mr. Solomon. The man was overjoyed by this great honor. The news spread rapidly throughout the village. Everyone came to see this great rabbi, to ask him for a blessing. Naturally, I was among them. My brother and I told him our names. The rabbi immediately remembered our father. After spending a little time there, Mr. Solomon was at a loss as to how he should reward this great personality for the great honor that he bestowed upon him. He took out his wallet and offered the rabbi to take all of it. (It was stuffed with thousands of kronen.) The holy man smiled and said that he did not stop there in order to collect any funds. Mr. Solomon insisted and so the rabbi had one of the men who had accompanied him take out one of the bills. This made a great impression on me at that time. I think about it many times. I made it a point to tell my father about it when I came back home, and he was delighted.

The winter soon passed. About two weeks before Passover, my brother and I returned to our homes. From the wages that I earned I was able to buy myself a nice outfit of clothing for the Passover holiday. I was very proud to know that I was able to do it with my own money. My parents were also proud of me and considered me a grown up man.

For the following summer, my brother and I went back to the large yeshiva in Ungvar. Now, as an experienced teacher I undertook to tutor one or two younger students of the yeshiva. I also gave some private instructions in the city. The public kitchen operated the same as before for the meals during the weekdays. Like the summer before, each student found a place where to eat on the Sabbath by himself. The accepted practice was to go to the most orthodox synagogue known as the *Klaus* for services, not the large synagogue of the city. The *Rosh Hayeshiva* insisted on this, in order to be sure of the *kashruth.* The students lined up at the exit of the large room, and as the *Balei Batim* left the *klaus,* they took along a student with them for the Sabbath meals.

On one particular Friday night, it so happened that I was the last one in line. (Something unusual for me.) The rest of the *buchirim* who were ahead of me had all been invited, and I remained without an invitation. I was not too concerned, because I always had some food in my room, or I could walk to the public kitchen where I could always find some food in the ice boxes, but it would not be in the spirit of the Shabbos. As I was standing there, a very plainly dressed man came

over to me, saying, "Young man, I see that you were left without an invitation. As a rule I do not take a *bucher* for Shabbos. I am a man of limited means, but I will not let you remain here. Come with me, my wife and I will manage to feed you. We will share our food with you." Naturally, I accepted his heartfelt invitation. He took me to his home which was located on a side street in one of the poorer neighborhoods of the city. He explained the situation to his wife who smiled at me saying, "I am very delighted to have you with us and to share our humble meal with you." It was alright, but I recognized that some of the food consisted of food which was usually reserved for the next day. I understood that they were using a part of their next day's meal tonight in order to feed me. After the meal, I thanked them for their kindness. I told them that for the next day I would find myself another place where to eat. They did not insist on my coming back. As a matter of fact, they seemed to be relieved.

The next day I stood alone in the line by the exit of the klaus. Another man similar to the one of the day before came over to me and invited me for the Sabbath meal. The meal was not an elaborate one, so before they had an opportunity to invite me for the *Shelosh Seudah* meal, I told them that I would not be back for that meal. They too did not insist on my coming back. I thanked and left. I prepared the *Shelosh Seudah* meal myself from the reserve food that I always had in stock in my room which I had bought or which my parents had sent to me.

During the *nine days* of the first summer, the management of the public kitchen thought that during this period they will serve only dairy or parve meals. They really were not equipped to serve dairy. They tried for one day to do so, but not having the pots, pans, plates, etc., they made a fruit soup and some kind of a main dish. Somehow the meal was not satisfactory, especially since some worms were found in the soup which was made from fresh fruit. When the *Rosh Hayeshiva* was told about it, after a hasty meeting, it was decided to make a *siyum* every night to be able to serve meat meals as usual. We all felt very peculiar since none of us ever ate meat in the nine days. But if that was the ruling, no one minded. As a matter of fact, we ate meat during the whole period including *Erev Tishah B'Av* and the night of *Tishah B'Av*. And so the second summer passed away.

I made sure that the following Friday nights I would be among the first ones in line in the klaus, to be assured of an invitation for the Sabbath meals. These two summers were the only ones when I attended a regular yeshiva. All my additional Hebrew education had to be done on my own. As a matter of fact, I never graduated from a

public school either and definitely not from a high school. This summer was also the last one that I spent in Europe. Now a new chapter in my life began, as will be described in future chapters. I kept up my Hebrew studies by myself by reviewing all that I learned before, and new things. My brother as usual, hired himself out as a teacher for the winter.

My grandfather and grandmother from my mother's side lived in Drenyef or Deregnyo. They had eight children, four sons and four daughters. At this time, four sons and two daughters were already in America. My mother was one of the two daughters still in Europe. We received mail from America regularly. Once in a while there was an American money order enclosed. I also remember that once in a while we received a clothing package from them. They wrote that they were doing fairly well. Some were in business, while others were working on jobs. This was in the early twenties.

The situation in Europe was not too good. After the First World War, what was formerly Austria-Hungary was divided into various countries, e.g. Austria, Czechoslovakia, Roumania, and a few other countries. The section where we lived first became Czechoslovakia and then Put Karpata Rus. It was somehow connected with Russia. New laws were issued every day in the public schools. There had to be a period set aside for teaching the Russian language. The signs over the stores had to be changed into Russian. Anti-semitism began showing its ugly face. First there was a rule that all monies be changed into Czechoslovakian funds. later on, Russian monies began to appear. Inflation was growing from day to day. Jews were systematically pushed out of their businesses. Government stores were being organized here and there.

I do not remember whether the suggestion came from our aunts and uncles in America, or whether the idea came from my parents or grandparents, but it was suggested that we seriously think about leaving Europe for America. My father gave up the idea of moving to Beregszaz as originally planned. He sold the house that he had bought there.

The climax came when we lived through a tragedy that changed our lives completely. My father made several trips to Budapest to buy various merchandise for our supermarket as well as to sell to the smaller general stores in the neighborhood. We had accumulated a large stock of yard goods in our store. Many of the rolls of material had been in the store for several years. The buyers of the village got

tired of looking at the same material for so many years. My parents decided that it was high time to sell all the rolls of material and exchange them for a smaller stock of a completely new line. A merchant from a nearby larger city was sent for. He bought up the whole stock for a fraction of its real value. With this money, plus the money that was realized from the sale of the house in Beregszaz, plus a large amount of money from loans made to my father by the local storekeepers, preparations were made to leave for Budapest to buy a new stock of yard goods and other merchandise needed for our store and the neighboring merchants.

This great sum of money (there were no checking accounts in those days by which monies in one's possession could be deposited in banks and checks could be drawn on those monies) was hidden under the mattress. The news of father's departure was not a secret.

During the night, a group of bandits broke into our house. At gun point, threatening our parents' lives and the lives of the children, they forced my parents to give them all the money. They also cleaned out the house of all valuable items including all of mother's jewelry. They also took most of the clothing, linens, silverware and whatever else they pleased from the house. My mother fainted from the great excitement. All the children woke up and cried. It was a real panic. The next day the police from the neighboring larger villages and cities were called in. Since the bandits all wore masks, we were unable to identify any of them. My mother became sick and was bedridden for several weeks afterwards. She was terrified and was afraid to go to sleep. We had to engage a gentile man who slept in the room with us for many months as sort of protection.

Of course, since all the monies were gone and the house cleaned out of all valuables, the bandits did not return again to our house. However, bandits did break into many other houses in our village as well as in other villages. It was during this period of time that the decision to leave for America was seriously made.

The idea was for my grandparents who were getting on in years, and who had not seen their children in a long time and had never seen their grandchildren, to leave first. They were too old to undertake the trip by themselves. It was therefore agreed that my father would accompany them. We also agreed that one of the older children would go along. My brother Mayer did not care for the idea. My brother Sidney was too young. I was getting older and in a few years, would be taken to the army. Therefore, in a year or two, I would not be permitted to leave the country. Thus it was decided that the four of us,

that is my grandparents, my father and I would leave first, work and earn some money and then send for my mother and the rest of the children.

We advised our uncles and aunts in America to send us affidavits. In a few weeks, the affidavits arrived and we started to work on the papers to get the visas. It took weeks to arrange everything in the next village of Nagy Dobrony where there was a notary. After the robbery, we were practically penniless. We started to liquidate the store with all the remaining merchandise. From the income, father paid back all the monies that he had borrowed to do the shopping in Budapest. We rented out the store and also the rooms to a woman on a long-term lease. The rental was to be paid to my mother. We took two other rooms that we formerly used as a warehouse and remodeled them for living quarters for the family.

When the travel papers were completed, they were sent to Prague. It was here that the American Ambassador had his office. Everyone wishing to enter the United States had to pass a thorough physical examination. We received instructions from the American Consul to go to a certain city in another part of the country, which was a day's trip. The place where we were to take our physical examination was located in a military barrack. The date set up for us was between *Yom Kippur* and *Succoth.* The day after *Yom Kippur,* the four of us made the trip. We were placed in the military barracks. Fortunately, we all passed the physical examination.

From there we took a trip to Prague to see the American Consul and to make arrangements for the tickets for the boat. For some reason, my father and grandparents were allowed to stay in a hotel once we arrived in Prague, but it was ordered that I should go and stay in another military barrack, and so it was. We spent the nine days of *Succoth* in Prague. During the *Chol Hamoed* we arranged all our business with the consul and bought our tickets as well. After everything was arranged, I was permitted to leave the barracks. We spent the second days of the holiday together in the city. The date was set for our departure. We were to leave from the port of Bremen in Germany.

Finally the time arrived for our departure. On the day that we took a wagon to the train station, practically the whole village, Jews as well as gentiles, followed our carriage. My father was born there and so were all his children. We were loved by everyone, and all of them were sorry to see us leave them, which would probably be forever. With tears in their eyes, they all shook hands or kissed us.

We took the train to our grandparent's house in Drenyef, to help

them with their final packing. By this time they had sold their house and those belongings that they were not taking along on the trip. The monies that my father had, was left for my mother, for her and the children to live on. The money for the trip came from my grandparents. (Of course, later on I repaid them every penny that they had advanced on my behalf.)

We left for Germany several days later. There we checked into a hotel until we were taken on the boat train to Bremen where we took the boat. It was in the winter time, during the month of November. The boat trip took about ten days. It was a rough trip. We were sick most of the time; as a matter of fact, even when we felt better, we were unable to eat the food on the boat since it was not kosher. Our food consisted of baked potatoes, herring, vegetables, etc. We finally arrived in the New York harbor.

As was customary in those days, we were taken from the pier in New York City by a small boat to the infamous Ellis Island, which was also known as "Treren Inzel," the island of tears. It was so named because it was here that families were re-united, the tears being tears of joy. While everyone was hoping to be released the same day and taken to the homes of the sponsoring families, it seldom worked out that way. With a shipload of passengers to be examined individually and the same for the sponsors, it did have to take more than just a few hours. The immigrants and the relatives were given to understand that it was the normal procedure. We were permitted to see our families and talk to them through a wire partition. Our relatives left us, not being able to be of any help at that time.

Two of our relatives came to Ellis Island by car. They were in the wholesale baking business and brought a sackful of freshly baked rolls along with them. They handed it to a guard to turn it over to us. The sack contained about one hundred rolls, which seeemed like too many at the time. However, as it turned out, they came in very handy because we were detained there for about seven weeks. We never really found out the real reason why we were kept there for such a long time. It seems that it was because it was the end of the year, and the country that we had come from had already used up all their numbers for that year. It made no sense then and it makes no sense to this day, how a thing like that could happen. The numbers were assigned to us at least half a year or more before.

Our relatives immediately got in touch with their congressman who worked on our case by making a trip to Washington, D.C. It was decided in Washington that we would receive the first numbers of the

New Year. Although everyone entering this country at that time had to pass many medical tests while they were still in Europe, as soon as they arrived here, they had to go through the same procedure. Many of the immigrants did not pass the severe examination, and were sent back to Europe. That is another reason why the island was named the "Island of Tears" for the tears that were shed when the people were forced to return to their former countries. We were assigned to sleep on bunks, like soldiers, in large dormitories. While we were there, locked up, we were treated as virtual prisoners. We were permitted to go out for fresh air to an enclosed porch for about an hour or so a day. If not the fact that our relatives visited us three times a week and brought us food, newspapers, books, etc., we would have gone crazy. Once a week, on a Sunday, we were taken to a large room where a rabbi arranged to have religious services for us. The non-Jewish immigrants were taken to another room where a priest performed their services.

As for myself, it did not bother me too much. My father who was middle-aged, also managed to get along. The great pity was on my grandparents who were well advanced in years. For them it was very hard. Their only consolation was that soon they would be released and would join their children and grandchildren. I asked my relatives to bring me English newspapers and with the help of a Yiddish-English dictionary, I was able to learn a lot of English words, even sentences. When, eventually we were released and entered the country, I was able to understand some of the words that people spoke to me. The food was plentiful, but since it was not kosher, we were limited as to what we were able to eat.

After several hearings by the officers of the Immigration Department, we were released about the end of January of the following year. We were taken to a house in Williamsburgh, in Brooklyn, New York. The address was 234 South 2nd Street, where my two tantes lived. All the brothers and one sister of my mother are all gone, except one sister. The youngest one of the family by the name of Tante Helen, may she live and be well to 120 years, lives now in Long Island, as there are hardly any Jews left in the particular section of Williamsburgh where she once lived.

After just a day or so of resting, we were anxious to start working earning money, so that we might fulfill our hopes and dreams of taking my mother and the remaining children out of Eruope. Our family, who were in the baking business, immediately provided us with jobs. My job was that of keeping the bakery clean. The building of

the bakery consisted of a store and a storage place or distributing place. The actual baking was done in the basement below the store. That is where the dough for the bread and rolls was prepared and where large ovens for the baking were. After the breads and rolls were taken out of the ovens and were cooled off, it was my job to bring the merchandise upstairs to the store where a small amount of the product was sold to the retail trade. More than 95% of the goods were picked up by drivers to be delivered to the stores. My job was also that of separating the small pieces of coal from the ashes to be used again. This was done with a gravel.

The aunts and uncles were very nice to me. They paid me a net wage of $15.00 per week, plus room and board, which was considered a very good salary at that time. My father was given the job of counting the rolls and breads and placing them in sacks according to the orders left by the drivers.

They operated several delivery trucks. The drivers worked on a commission basis. The merchandise was sold to the stores for cash. After making the deliveries, the drivers came back and paid for the merchandise that they had taken early in the morning and left their orders for the afternoon deliveries. The stores received their goods twice a day. The bakery operated twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

There was more than enough food, the problem was the room. It was the period when many immigrants started coming from the other side of the ocean and therefore there was a shortage of rooms. The room that I slept in was in a two-family house where my two aunts lived. It was called at the time, a railroad flat. The small kitchen which was on the side of the apartment led into a dining room, which led into a dark bedroom and into the master bedroom. The room that I slept in was a narrow room off the steps. It had one double bed. The bed was used by three different people in succession, my uncle Louie, the husband of my tante Hannah, my father, and I.

Each of us worked a different ten hour shift, six days a week. When one worked, the other slept in the bed which we shared, with the exception of Friday nights, when neither of us worked, and we slept in the bed together. We both worked steadily and pooled all of our earnings. We were trying to save enough money for steamship tickets for the rest of the family, still living in what was then part of Russia. Of course, it didn't quite work out as we planned, but that's a story for later chapters. My father left just a small portion of our earnings for clothing and other necessities. All the rest went straight into the bank.

After a few weeks on the job, I became pretty experienced, so that after I finished the assigned work, I had a little time left on my hands. I began watching the bakers doing their jobs, which consisted of mixing the flour with water and oil to make them ready to roll the dough into bread and small rolls. I sat down next to them and followed them to see what they were doing. Soon, I took the large chunks of dough, placed them in the cutting machine, and smoothed them out flat in the machine by pressing down the top of the cutting machine. It cut the whole piece of dough into the right sizes, which I made into rolls. The bakers sitting on the bench were amazed to see how soon I learned that part of the trade.

When my aunt Hannah came into the place, they told her that I was pretty handy in making the rolls. Later on my aunt told me that if I would want to learn the trade of a baker, she could use her influence so that the union would take me in as a member. By working as a regular baker my salary would be about $45.00 per week, just three times as much as I was earning at the present time doing a job in which there was no future. As I paid attention to what she said, and showed an interest, she immediately told me that being a regular baker, I would have to work on the Sabbath. She soon added by saying, "The job that your father is now doing is a very important one, but knowing that under no circumstances would he work on the Sabbath, I am substituting for him. Late on Friday night, I walk all the way from South 2nd Street in Williamsburg to Greenpoint to do his job (she did not ride on the Sabbath), which of course, I could not do in your case. So before you give me any answer, think very clearly if you want to undertake the job of working as a regular baker or not." Without hesitating for one minute, I told her that I was really very thankful to her for going out of her way to promise to get me into the union and offering me a position which would give me an income that I never dreamed of, but there just was not enough money in the world to make me work on the Sabbath or on a Jewish holiday.

She replied, "I knew that this would be your answer. G-d bless you. By all means stick to your decision and you will see that the L-rd will help you and you will succeed in any other line where you will be able to observe the Sabbath." She was a very fine woman and I really liked her very much. For many years after, when I was working at other jobs, no matter how busy I was, I always managed to visit or phone her every once in a while. Now, that she passed away, I visit her grave, and the grave of uncle Louis, uncle Adolph, and the rest of the family regularly.

6

Travelling to and from the bakery and working a ten hour shift left me no time to attend the night schools which were then available for immigrants, nor did it allow me the time to continue my Hebrew studies. Since I felt that I desperately needed to continue my education, and because I could see no future at all in my present job, I gave up the job in the bakery a week before Passover. Of course, I reached such a momentous decision only with the approval of my numerous aunts and uncles.

We had a fairly large family in America, mostly related to us through my father. My three "uncles" were actually not even related to us, though; they were the children of my grandfather's third wife. I had never known my real grandmother, who had passed away before I was born. Buba Brandel, my grandfather's wife, had lived with my grandfather only two houses away from us. After my grandfather's death, one of my brothers or I would sleep in her house, so that she should not be alone. We spent many hours keeping her company, and when old age came upon her she moved into our house. She had three sons who had moved to America before her marriage; they knew of and appreciated our family's kindness to their mother. These were my "uncles."

We decided to spend Passover week with the whole family, at the home of my uncle, Mr. Lawrence Schwartz. He had a large house on Fulton Street in Brooklyn. The front of the ground floor was a hardware store where my uncle eked out a living, and in the rear was a large apartment. The second floor had many roomy bedrooms, so there was room for all three uncles and their families, as well as my father and I. Since we were not totally satisfied with the kashrut, my uncle made certain that the whole house was thoroughly cleaned. He took complete sets of dishes, pots, pans, and utensils from his store, and brought in all of the food from Williamsburg. We went to the nearby Dean Street synagogue for services, and spent a lovely holiday together. It was the first time that all the three families had gotten together to spend a religious holiday under one roof.

During *chol hamoed* we visited our many cousins who lived on nearby Myrtle Avenue and Tompkins Avenue. My first question to all of them was, where can I find a job? Uppermost in my mind was the desire to work in a place where I could observe the Sabbath. The unanimous opinion was that there simply were no such jobs available. One of my cousins told me that he was working in a meat market on 13th Avenue in Boro Park which was ostensibly closed for the Sabbath. They simply pulled the shades down on the windows, and inside worked feverishly preparing the meat which truck drivers had furtively brought in the early hours of the morning. When the stars appeared in the sky, the window shades were pulled up and there was the meat, ready for the customers.

My cousins advised me to carefully watch the classified ads in the "Morning Journal," however, they did not hold out much hope that such a job would appear. I heeded their advice and religiously scanned the classified section. One day I saw an ad for an experienced helper for a strictly kosher meat market. The address given was 14th Avenue and 45th Street (the store still exists today at the very same location). Early the next morning I journeyed there from Williamsburg.

I was greeted by a short gentleman wearing a yarmulke. He introduced himself to me as Mr. David Klein. As soon as he uttered his first words, I felt that my battle was halfway won, for in Mr. Klein I recognized a "landsman," a fellow Hungarian.

I told Mr. Klein that I was interested in his job, and his first question was what my experience was. I had to admit that I had none. To every question which he posed I was forced to answer no, I didn't know how to do it. His final question was if I rode a bicycle. When I admitted that I had never done so, he told me, in his Hungarian sing-song: "My dear young man, not knowing anything at all in the line, how can I give you this job?'

Almost in tears, I answered: "Mr. Klein, you must give me the job. I am new in this country, and inexperienced. I will never work on Sabbath, even if it means starving. Your store is one of the few places which is truly Sabbath-observing. I have no other place to go."

The kind old gentleman listened to me without interruption, and then said: "Okay, I see that you are in earnest, so I will hire you. I will teach you how to do your job. My children can help out while I train you. My son will teach you how to ride a bicycle. But please, don't cry."

Mr. Klein had owned a store on Lewis Street, in the Lower East Side of New York. When religious people had begun to move to Boro Park the Horowitz-Margareten family, who were related to him, had

moved there as well. They had persuaded him to leave the lower East Side and join them in Boro Park. (At the time there was only one other strictly kosher Sabbath observing meat market which was operated by a family by the name of Schlesinger who had their store on 16th Avenue near 54th Street.) When it was found out that a new strictly kosher and Sabbath observing store opened up in the neighborhood, he received telephone calls from as far as 58th Street and 8th Avenue, and in Flatbush from as far as Cortelyou Road and East 8th Street, past Ocean Parkway, for orders to be delivered.

A bicycle was needed for that. Mr. Klein offered to pay me the sum of $8.00 a week. When he asked me where I lived, and where would I have my meals, I told him that up to that time I had my room and board in Williamsburgh with my family. It was soon clearly seen that the $8.00 per week which was all that he could afford to pay me as a beginner, would not go very far, after paying my room and board. Mr. Klein suggested that when his wife (they lived on 45th Street) would bring him coffee in a pitcher and a buttered roll for breakfast, she would do the same for me. For the meat meal which was served for supper, I could come to their house and eat with them. As far as sleeping was concerned, that was also readily solved. There was a large room in the back of the store. A cot was placed there and that was my bedroom for a few years while I worked in their store. During the day, I bought myself some fruit, a bottle of milk, a roll, etc. I learned how to ride a bicycle which had a basket tied to the front of it, in which I placed the orders to be delivered in the neighborhood.

I also learned quickly how to do everything in the store. I collected the weekly bill and got tips when I delivered orders. When a bill came to a figure such as $15.50, the housewife gave me $16.00 and told me to keep the change. After my expenses of buying clothing, washing, and some food, I did not have too much left, but the tips that I received I saved. I took this money to the bank where it was safe and where it was also accumulating dividends. When I saved together enough money, I gave it to my grandparents as payment for the expenses that they advanced for me for the trip to this country. After they were fully paid, I started saving money which I gave to my father so that he would be able to pay for the steamship tickets to bring my mother, sisters, and brothers to this country. Of course, it did not work out that way, but this we will write about as we go along. After a while, I found out that there was a night school not too far away, on 14th Avenue and 40th Street. I started going there every night to study whatever lessons they had for newcomers. Soon, I was able to con-

verse in the English language.

During the whole week, working long hours (from about seven in the morning until about six o'clock in the evening), going to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Klein for supper, attending night school (which started at about eight o'clock and ended at about ten thirty), I did not have much time to do Hebrew studying. Every afternoon the store had to be cleaned up, but on Friday afternoons, I had to make a general cleaning, wash the floors and put on sawdust. The walls had to be washed and cleaned, all of which took several hours, so that at night I was quite tired. After eating the Shabbos meal which was pretty late, I just fell into bed and had a good sleep to make up for the whole week.

On Saturday mornings, naturally, I was able to sleep late. After the noon meal, I again slept for a while, but there was still enough time to study for a while until *Mincha* time. This was when I did some studying in the *Beth Hamedrash* of the Sefardische Schul on 14th Avenue and 45th Street. My biggest pleasure was to listen to Rabbi Finkelstein who was the *shammus* of the synagogue. He was a great *Talmud Chuchim,* and a great *Maszbir.* His specialty was teaching *Perek.* He was a real Litvisher Magid and was an expert in explaining the meanings of the *Mishnos* that make up what we call the *Perek* that we learn every Shabbos afternoon during the summer months. When I was laying on my cot at night and thinking back to what I had heard from Rabbi Finkelstein as he was teaching the five or six people in the *Beth Hamedrash,* I thought to myself, "Oh, G-d, if I would be blessed by You, that someday I should be in a position to sit and learn *Perek* with people (as I was teaching small children in the *Cheder* in Europe), I would be the luckiest man in the world. On the other hand I said to myself, "You *Am Ha'aretz* (uneducated person), where do you have the *Chutzpah* (nerve) to even think such things?" But one can dream, can't one? Now, I thank G-d that my dreams, with the help of G-d, came true. With His help, I lived to see the day when I sat in front of hundreds, perhaps as many as five hundred people at a time, teaching them the *Perek* on Sabbath afternoons while operating the famous Pioneer Country Club in Greenfield Park, N.Y.

I meet hundreds of people today who remind me of the classes which they attended to listen to me. Some of them even remind me of a *Devar Torah* (word of Torah) or a story that I related. At their request, I began to write down the contents of my lectures. For a time my brother Mayer, *Olov Hasholom,* who was with me in the hotel for several summers, wrote down the things I said. I later translated the writing into English. By this time, I was already writing a weekly

column in the "Jewish Press" and felt that it was time that I begin writing a *Perek* column in the "Jewish Press."

Let's go back to the early years when I first arrived in this country. After I settled the matter of a job, earned money, saved some money, and attended night school to learn English, I felt it was high time to improve my Hebrew studies. This was much harder to do than I first thought. The first thing one needs is a *Chavruse* (people of your own age who are interested in learning the same things that you are, those that are available at the same time as you). This was almost unavailable, but I looked around very seriously.

One of the customers to whom I delivered orders was a family by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Armin Traub. They lived on 43rd Street, corner 12th Avenue, in the Boro Park section. Mr. Traub came to this country many years before he was able to bring his family here to join him. His intentions were to bring the family over from Hungary just as soon as he would earn enough money for the expense of the trip, fix up an apartment, etc., as many husbands did at that time. The first World War broke out and everything stopped until after the war. He held many different jobs in order to support himself as well as to accumulate funds for the trip. Eventually, he became a life insurance agent for the Travelers Insurance Company. As a matter of fact, he sold me my first life insurance policy. I remember him very clearly to this day. He was a heavy set man with a Franz Josef beard parted in the middle, very distinguished looking. His family had just arrived from Europe. I believe that they came from Szolosh.

Mrs. Traub was a thin and frail woman. From her talk, I immediately recognized that she was Hungarian, as she too recognized my accent. She was a very fine woman. She invited me to have Friday night meals with them. I was very lonely for a family life-style Shabbos. The Klein family where I spent all the other Sabbaths, were also very nice, but Mr. and Mrs. Klein came to this country many years ago. Their children were already born in this country and did not speak Yiddish at all. As soon as I finished the meal, I left their house, since I had nothing in common with them. When I got to my room in the back of the store, I laid down on the cot and fell asleep undressed, crying for loneliness and yearning for my mother, sisters and brothers. I was still a child.

I gladly accepted the invitation from the Traubs and for the first time in many months, spent a Shabbos like I was used to at home, eating *Heimishe* Hungarian meals, singing the *Zemiros* that my family

and I sang back home. They had several children. The one who was closest to my age was Menashe with whom I became very friendly. We are close friends to this very day. He was the first real religious boy that I met in this country.

They did not let me go back to the back of the store to sleep on the cot. I remained there and shared the bed with my new friend, Menashe. We slept very little that Friday night. We were up talking the whole night about our lives in Europe, our learning in the schools and Yeshivos and about our lives here in America. He encountered the same hardships as I did finding a job not having to work on the Sabbath, which at the time was practically unheard of. As a matter of fact, before meeting Menashe, I did not meet another boy who was a *Shomer Shabbos.*

He found a job on Ludlow Street on the lower East Side, where some of the stationery stores there closed on the Sabbath but were open on Sundays instead. He was a shipping boy and salesman, working very hard and long hours. I remember him telling me that in another section of New York, namely, Park Row in the financial district of the city, there were also stationery stores paying more money for the same work for shorter hours. The pay in that neighorhood was fifteen dollars a week, while he was only earning about eight dollars, working longer hours, but the stores in Park Row were open on Saturdays and closed on Sundays.

Menashe became a life insurance agent for the Metropolitan Insurance Company, where he worked all his years until his retirement. Through Menashe I met another boy by the name of Abe Beer, who lived at 1440-47th Street in Boro Park. He had a job in a wholesale dry goods and notion place which was closed on the Sabbath. Still, he had hardship getting off Friday afternoons to reach his home in the winter time. But he left on time anyway, to be home in time for Shabbos. He had a sister Mollie, whose parents owned the three family house at 1440-47th Street. Menashe moved into that house where he is still living. Later on, Mollie, Menashe, Abe, and his wife Anna, and my first wife and I became close friends and visited each other often. Mollie passed away and Menashe remarried and he and his second wife moved into the apartment where they now live.

A while later, I delivered an order to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Katz who lived on 52nd Street, also in Boro Park. Mr. Katz originally came to this country before the first World War from what was formerly Hungary. He was delayed in bringing his family to America because of the war, but eventually did so. His four sons went

through the same procedure as the rest of us. The oldest son, Emil, went into the trimming business, importing various trimmings and laces from Czechoslovakia and other European countries. His two younger brothers, Sam and Abe, were closer to me in age and I therefore became close friends with Sam, with whom I am still very friendly. They joined Emil in the business and thus were able to observe the Sabbath. Sam and his wife Martha live in Flushing, Long Island. They send in donations to the Pioneer Milk Fund regularly and we meet often at affairs as well as at hotels. Later on he went into the drug line.

Through the above-named friends, I developed friendships with a few other boys. They were all Sabbath observers. They were also looking to meet with their own kind of boys.

In a few weeks, we were a nice small group of boys, all the same type. We were looking for a little Yiddishkeit and a chance to study Torah during our spare time which was usually on Saturday afternoons. We met Saturday afternoons in various synagogues and did some studying. Soon we were ten to twelve boys. We decided to organize ourselves into a *chevrah,* and so the *Chevrah Bachorei Shomrei Shabbos* came into existence.

I became the treasurer/secretary and collected monthly dues. I remember how thrilled I was when I was authorized to print letterheads and envelopes with the heading *Chevrah Bachorei Shomrei Shabbos* and on the left side the name "Leo Gartenberg, Secretary/Treasurer." The little group grew slowly. I sent out bills, collected dues, opened a checking account and deposited the monies.

I called a meeting and proposed that we rent a place of our own where we could meet to *daven* and to study on Saturday afternoons. We found a place in the *Beth Hamedrash* of the Lubavitcher Shul which was and is still located on 12th Avenue in Boro Park. We found a retired rabbi who was very happy to be our teacher. From that point on, we met at least once a week, on Saturday afteroons and holidays. I bought fruit, sodas and cakes which we ate after the classes. After that we had *Mincha* services and the *Sheulos Seudoh.* As an officer of the *chevrah* I had the distinct privilege of preparing the *Sheulos Seudah* meal which included the cleaning of the herring (which I did not enjoy doing, but did it anyway). We sang *Zemiros* and listened to a *Devar Torah* from our rabbi and from each other. At that time, a committee of rabbis came from Europe to organize a branch of the *Agudath Israel,* in America. We joined them.

This was during the first summer that I worked in Boro Park. I

was still working on the same job. Every once in a while, I received a raise in salary. I made extra money in tips. The following Passover, I spent the entire holiday with the Traub family. When I told Mr. Klein that I would not be with them for the holiday, but with my friends, the Traubs, he told me that I should take some meat and chickens to them as part payment for my staying with them. I had to persuade Mrs. Traub to take some money from me as payment for my stay.

The winter months were hard on me. Because of the heavy snow, I was unable to use the bicycle and had to deliver the meat orders by foot in a large basket. I had to work late hours and also went to night school. The week before Passover was especially hard since the orders were larger than usual. At that time, people did not know about going away to hotels for Passover. Everyone stayed at home. Parents invited their children to spend the holidays with them. They needed large orders of meat and poultry. There were no freezers or even frigidaires at that time, just ordinary ice boxes (bear in mind that I am writing about the middle twenties); therefore, people were unable to stock up with supplies much before the holidays as there was no room in the ice boxes for everything. All the ordering was done just a few days before the holidays.

I did very well financially. Mr. Klein paid me extra for the hard work and the long hours. The customers gave me larger tips, but the work was hard and tiresome. I was therefore glad when the holidays finally came around. I remember that I had a difficult time staying up till the end of the *Seder* ceremony. I fell into bed like a dead one and slept most the time during the holidays.

The butcher and meat stores were not operated as they are today, where the average retail store closes on Friday afternoons and does not open again until Monday. With frigidaires and freezers, women can order their meat supplies for several weeks in advance. The store that I worked in, like all the other stores, closed on Friday afternoon, opened on Saturday night, and as a rule was open at least for half a day on Sunday. I had to be in the store during all this time. On Sunday afternoon, when the store closed earlier than usual, I went to see my father who woked in the bakery in Williamsburgh and spent a few hours with him.

During the winter months, I met a family by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Spiegel. They, together with a couple by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Gutman were in the resort hotel business in the Catskill Mountains, in the New York area, in a village called Hunter, New York. The

hotel was called the Hunter House. It was a kosher hotel, patronized by prominent guests who sought kosher. It was not far from Albany, New York. In those days when the hot summer days came around, people left New York City to spend the summer away in the country, unlike today, when people go away for a week or ten days, or only for a weekend. Their children came out to visit them on weekends and at the same time to visit Saratoga Srpings, which was nearby, to go to the horse races.

They asked me to work for them for the summer months. They offered me a salary of $180.00 for the summer, plus room and board and the round trip fare. In those days there was no such thing as deductions, so $180.00 meant the full amount. The salary was more than twice as much as I was earning in New York. I was quite tired from working the whole year, and I felt that the fresh country air and ample hotel food would do me a lot of good. I remembered that during the two summer months, business was very slow and I felt that Mr. Klein would not mind if I left for that time, and he would be able to save himself the salary which he was giving me. He agreed reluctantly, feeling that since his younger son was off from school during the summer, he would be able to do my job.

I first took the B.M.T. West End line to Times Square. There I took a trolley car to the end of 42nd Street, to the Hudson River. Then I took a boat to Albany, N.Y. From there I took a train to Hunter. I left early in the morning and arrived very late in the afternoon. The work was not exceptionally hard since the guests did not expect to be served fancy menus. The meals were plain, but plentiful. The staff had their own dining room and took all the food that they wanted. I particularly liked the various rich cakes that were baked on the premises by a Hungarian baker. I became very friendly with the chefs and the baker and always offered to help them whenever they so desired. In return, I was always supplied by them with all the food and cake that I wanted. At that time I was tall and skinny and did not have to watch my diet. In general, people were not so calorie minded as they are today.

The hotel was located just across the street from the local synagogue. Whenever there was not a *minyan* in the hotel, I went to the services there. I was often sent to the altar to act as cantor. I also had time to do some studying. I normally studied by myself, but many times I was asked to be a teacher and study with a group.

The summer went by pretty fast. I remember one incident in particular. It was on a Sunday. The hotel was very busy with extra guests who came to visit their families. One table was short of a

busboy. The head waiter approached me and asked if I would mind helping out at that meal. I readily agreed. He told me what I was supposed to do, like fill the glasses with water whenever they were empty, take off the dirty dishes, and put them on a nearby tray, etc. After the meal, one of the guests came to me, thanking me for the good service I gave the table. I do not know whether he thought that I was the regular busboy who served his family the entire week, but he handed me a $5.00 tip. To say that I was flabbergasted, would be putting it mildly. Imagine a whole $5.00 bill!! It was as much as I was earning for half a week's work in the city. In those days $5.00 bought as much as $50.00 buys today. I was hoping that the opportunity would present itself again, but it never did happen.

After Labor Day I returned to New York where my old job was waiting for me. During the following winter Mr. Klein decided to retire from the business since he was getting on in years. He sold the store to a Mr. Martin Katz (who was a brother to my friend, Sam) and his partner Mr. Flaxman. Mr. Katz was unmarried, and therefore I had my meals with Mr. and Mrs. Flaxman, who lived in Boro Park on 47th Street. After a while, as they became better acquainted with the customers, and being that there were two of them, I felt that they did not need me. Since Mr. Klein retired, many of his friends and family shopped in a different store. There were the Schlesinger Bros who had their strictly kosher butcher store on 16th Avenue. Other stores also opened up in the neighborhood. The strictly kosher stores charged a higher price than those on 13th Avenue who were selling kosher meat, but not strictly kosher and Sabbath observing.

Today it is the custom that when a whole piece of meat comes in from the slaughterhouse, it is immediately taken apart, the veins removed and made kosher, sliced into portions and placed into a showcase on a plastic tray with the weight and price clearly marked on the package. Being that the meat is packed in plastic and the showcase is a frigidaire, the meat does not change in color. In those days, the cattle were slaughtered on Fridays, delivered to the stores on Saturdays, taken apart by the storekeepers on Saturday nights and put into an ice box in large pieces. On Sunday it was sliced up for the customers. All the meat that was not sold on Sunday, remained until Monday when it had to be washed, because it was three days old.

I remember early one Monday morning, I was still laying on my cot in the back of the store. Suddenly, I heard water leaking from somewheres. I jumped out of bed to find out where the water was coming from. I saw no water coming down from anywheres. I fol-

lowed the noise, and went to the front of the store, where I saw Mr. Klein standing on a chair (he was a short man) pouring water from a bucket on a large piece of meat that was hanging on a hook from the ceiling. The water was dripping into a pail, with most of it falling on the floor. He explained to me that meat which is more than three days old from the time it was slaughtered, became *oyver* (past its time) and cannot be used for cooking unless water is poured over it to refresh it so that the salt can take out the blood. The butchers on 13th Avenue, did not bother as a rule to do that, or if they did, they sprinkled the meat with a little water with a small whisk-broom. Many customers who did not want to pay the higher prices, did their shopping on 13th Avenue, where they saved a considerable amount. Anyway, as there seemed less use for me, I took another job on 14th Avenue with the Zisselman Bros. Here my salary was already $32.00 per week, plus extras. However, there was no place for me to sleep in the back of the store, neither did they supply me with meals. I found a place nearby with an elderly couple who supplied me with room and board for $8.00 a week.

After I finished the English studies that were given in the night school, which was more or less on a public school level, I decided to go into higher learning, more or less on a high school level. There was a private school on Delancey Street, in New York, called a preparatory school, where for a fixed sum they taught you the high school subjects five nights a week. I enrolled at that school which I attended for a few months. However, I found it physically impossible to continue. I finished work after six o'clock at night, by the time I finished supper it was after seven and I had to take a train to New York, all the while doing my homework on the train. School began at eight and lasted till ten thirty. Then I had to take the train back to Boro Park and by the time I arrived at home, it was after midnight. I was already in the store at seven in the morning and worked hard all day. It was just too much. I was sleepy all the time. Driving a bicycle on the streets with all the traffic was not easy. Thursday nights were particularly hard since I was working longer hours. Eventually, I had no choice but to either give up my job or quit night school. It was a serious decision that I had to make. I was almost eighteen years old. It was time to think about *tachlis*, to decide what to do with my life. I had no intentions of remaining in the meat line as a business. The only reason that I took the job in the first place was because I was able to observe the Sabbath. The stores did not have electric machinery, everything was done by hand. The poultry did not come in plastic bags or even koshered. The

hours were long. I thought that perhaps it was time to look around for something else.

The question of not having to work on Saturdays became a little easier. The immigrants who came to this country after the war, learned trades and went into various businesses. Most of them were religious. There was especially one business into which many of the newcomers entered. It was the manufacturing of men's neckwear. In this particular business, not much capital was needed to begin operations. An individual just had to learn the trade, buy a sewing machine, or rent one, and for a dollar bought a turning stick. For several more dollars he bought an electric iron and he was in business. A business could be opened by renting a store or even working in one's house or in a basement. Manufacturers who bought the silks, cut them up and many times sent out the material to contractors. The contractors went to the factories and brought home the cut-up materials, along with the linings that went into the ties. They sewed up the materials on their small sewing machines, took a lining which they placed on a long stick which had a small pointy nail on its head, took the tie that had been sewn on one side, put the lining on the nail as well as the tie and pulled it down the stick. The tie was pressed and then packed and returned to the manufacturer. A small contractor worked alone or with his wife helping him. The man who sewed up the tie was known as an operator. The wife was ususally the turner, and either one of them was the presser. If he was equipped to do a lot of work, he also took in extra help. Ties were made on a piece work basis, payment was for the amount of ties one operated, turned, pressed or packed. The work could be done at any time, and there was no reason for one to have to work on the Sabbath. There were special places where you could learn the trade. At that time I decided to learn the tie business. The busiest period of the year was in the fall until the Christmas holidays.

After *Succoth,* I left Boro Park, moved to New York and took a room on Clinton Street for which I paid $10.00 a month. I went to see a Mr. Wincelberg who had a little contracting factory at 137 Pitt Street across from Pitt Street Park. The understanding was that I would pay him $50.00 for which he would teach me to be an operator. I would work without pay for four weeks. After that, I would receive pay on a piece work basis. The idea was that the four weeks would be over much before the season ended, and I would then start earning money. The rumors were that a good operator was earning as much as $100.00 per week.

It did not work out exactly as planned. There were many excuses for the delays, e.g. the machine was not ready, the teacher was not there, the material did not come in, the machine broke, etc. I claimed that I had paid him the $50.00 as soon as I came into his place, and that it was not my fault that he was not ready for me. It did not help. The four weeks passed and he claimed that I was not experienced enough to make the ties satisfactorily. By the time I was, according to him, ready to produce, the winter season was practically over. I had no chance to make any real money that particular season. I was not discouraged too much; there would come the spring and other seasons afterwards. After I was accepted by Mr. Wincelberg as an operator, I remained working there as a piece worker. It slowed down and I worked there whenever there was work to be done. Sometimes there was work for a whole day and other times we worked for only a few hours a day, depending on how much raw material came in from the manufacturer. I began earning a little money. The rate of my pay was much lower than other factories paid.

It was not easy to get a job elsewhere, because: (1) It was after the busy season. Factories did not hire new workers; (2) The large factories were unionized and did not take in any workers who were not members of the union.

All of us tried to become union members. The union, although they charged monthly dues for membership, were not anxious to take in any new members. They claimed that there were too many workers and not enough work available. In order to become a member of the union, one had to pass a severe test to prove that he/she was experienced. In order to pass the test, one had to come to the office of the union, put down a certain amount of money for the test and also to cover the cost of the material which might be spoiled while taking the test. I did so and was told that I would be notified when the test would take place.

When a large factory was slow and had none of their workers working, it was designated as the place for the test. When I was notified to come to take the test and arrived at the shop, I was scared. The small places that we had worked at up to now had three or four machines which we worked by foot. However, here there was a line of perhaps a hundred or more machines which were driven by power, not under individual control. The noise was tremendous. As they were not anxious to make us union members, we were given work that we had never done before. We were given bow ties to make, which we had never learned to do before. We tried our best, but it did

not work out too well. None of us from this large group passed the test. We were told to come and try again after about a half year later. I went back to my job and worked there whenever work was available. I kept my room on Clinton Street and took my meals in kosher restaurants that were located on the lower East Side.

In the factory where I worked by Mr. Wincelberg, there was another worker by the name of Max Rosenberg. His father and several of his brothers had a sweater business, but since there was not enough work for all of them, Max decided that he would learn the necktie business. His machine was across from mine. We talked about many things and became friendly. One day, he invited me to join his family for a Friday night supper. He was a religious man. He washed his hands before eating and *benched* after eating. He wore a *talis koten, yarmulke,* etc. I accepted the invitation. On Friday I went to the synagogue with him to pray and later joined him for supper. He and his wife lived on Lewis Street, also on the lower East Side.

When we were about finished with the meal, a man came in who was introduced to me as Rav Yerachmiel Ringler, a middle-aged man with a small beard. We talked about many things. He also came to this country before the First World War. He came from Poland from a place called Shebershin. He left his wife and three children in Europe with the idea of bringing them here as soon as he had established himself. As had happened to thousands of others, since the war had broken out, he had lost contact with his family. He worked at various jobs to sustain himself and to save enough money to bring out his family. Later on he became the sexton of the synagogue known as the *Sheyris Yisroel* on Columbia Street. After the war ended, he brought his wife and family here. One of the children, a boy, drowned in a lake in his home-town so that only two children, both girls, came out with his wife.

We ate arbes (chick peas), cake, and drank tea, etc. He told me a *Devar Torah.* I told him a *Devar Torah.* After a few hours (it was a long winter night) we left. He lived on Columbia Street on the corner of Rivington Street. I lived further away on Clinton Street. He walked me home. On the way we were discussing Torah matters. He was a *Talmud Chochim.* It was interesting to talk to him. During the week while we were working, Mr. Rosenberg told me that I made a very good impression on Rev. Ringler, and that he asked Mr. Rosenberg to invite me to Rev. Ringler's home for next Friday for the Sabbath meal. He told me that the man had a daughter my age, whom he would like me to meet.

My mind was not on marriage, since I was only eighteen years old. I had not as yet established myself in business, nor did I have a solid job. It was absolutely too early to consider any serious matter in relation to marriage. I told Mr. Rosenberg all this. He kept after me all week, telling me no one was rushing me into a marriage. He said, "Rev Ringler is a learned man, you admitted as much to me. What will it harm you to meet and become friendly with a nice family where you can spend a few hours once in a while. Is it so interesting to be in your room on the fourth floor to the rear every Friday night" Finally, I reluctantly accepted the invitation. It was the chapter of *Boy*. Later on we kidded each other by saying that on *Parshes Boy*, I, a boy, came to their house.

It was true that I was lonely with no family. The friends that I had made during the last few years were all in Boro Park. I had made no new friends during the short period of time that I was living in the new neighborhood. There was an organization called *Bachurei Chemed*, but the boys were all much older than I was.

After the services on Friday night, I went to the Ringler house. The apartment consisted of three rooms, a kitchen, dining room and a bedroom. It was very clean. Mrs. Ringler was a great *Baal Haboste*. She served a fine meal, better than I was accustomed to eating in the restaurants where I took my meals. We each made a good impression on the other. We sang *zemiros* and said *Devar Torah*.

The older daughter for whom they were looking for a *shidduch* was named Gitel or Gitele, the younger one was Ethel. I later found out that Ethel was sort of engaged to a boy by the name of Joe Fuchs, with whom she had been very close since she was quite young. As I understood it, she never went out with any other boys. Joe, who was a few years older than Ethel, was ready to get married and settle down. He lived nearby, and was already established in the installment business. He was doing pretty well. I spent a few hours with the family and then left for my quarters. Rev Ringler walked me part-way home. For reasons that I explained before, I did not take the matter too seriously. Mr. Rosenberg kept on talking to me about the matter, and I kept telling him that I was not ready as yet. However, we did go out once in a while.

During the Passover holiday, when my father was off from his bakery job, he was invited to visit the Ringler family. He liked them and so after Passover we agreed to become engaged, with the idea that we would wait to get married. After the *Shevuouth* holiday, it was agreed that since there were two daughters getting engaged, there

should be an official engagement party or *tenohim* celebrated. As there were *Mechutanum* to be invited on both sides, it was decided that both engagements should take place at the same time. A hall was hired on Clinton Street, where the affair took place. My father had decided at this time not to bring out the family to America, but rather, that he would return to Europe. He planned to buy a house there as well as a business in a large city and remain there with the rest of the family. That was his decision and so I had nothing to say in the matter. It was one of the reasons that I agreed to make the engagement in a hall. He was to leave for Europe shortly, and therefore would not be present at the wedding. And who knew at that time whether we would ever see each other again.

As it turned out, my father did come back to this country about two years later. He lost he monies that he took along from America. One day, after we were already married a short while, I received a letter from my father saying that he decided to come back here and that I should send him the required papers and a steamship ticket. I immediately did so. He came back here in 1929, spent about two years here, accumulated some money and went back to Europe. He soon became ill there, something about an enlarged heart. He was advised by his doctors to make a trip and spend a few weeks in a sanitarium in the Tatra Mountains. After a few weeks, when it was seen that they could do nothing for him, he was sent back home where he passed away a few days later. He was only about sixty years old. By that time, my parents already lived in a place called Radvanka, right across the train tracks and the railroad station of Ungvar. He was laid to rest in the cemetery of Radvanka.

Soon after, I began taking out my family. My brother Sidney was the first one to come, followed by my sisters and my mother. For a while, until they settled down, they all moved into our four-room apartment. When we went to the boat for my mother, and we spotted her on the deck, she showed us two metal cans that she had carried with her all throughout the entire trip. We could not imagine what she had there, until when she finally embarked, she told us that she heard that there was a shortage in chicken or goose fats in this country. She bought two geese and from them she made two gallons of fat which she dragged with her on the trip, remembering to enclose in each can the broiled liver. Which European would not pay any amount to be able to eat a liver that comes from a fat goose? We had a job convincing her that the reason we did not accumulate much chicken or goose fats, was because doctors claimed that it was not too healthy to use chicken

fat. In this country we use vegetable fats and oils.

My former wife, may she rest in peace, got a job in a place where they were manufacturing ladies undergarments. She was well-liked in the place which was located on Grand Street. Although the place was open on Saturdays, she was made an exception to the rule and was permitted to take Saturdays off. As a matter of fact, she was made a forelady. Ethel did not have such luck Ethel told me:

1. She started to work while still too young to get a working permit, so she used the birth certificate of her older sister.
2. She took a job on Monday and when Friday afternoon rolled around, told them that she would not be in the next day because it was Saturday. They told her not to come in on Monday either, but to come on Tuesday and get her salary for the few days that she had worked.
3. If she said nothing on Friday and did not work on Saturday, on Monday she had to find an excuse why she did not come in on Saturday. When she ran out of excuses, she was fired and had to start looking for a new job again.

When Gertie (which was my late wife's name in English) brought home her pay, she always gave the envelope to her mother. She retained a few dollars for her small expenses and the rest was kept by her mother to cover the expenses of room and board, clothing, etc. We were therefore very much surprised when one day her mother brought in a bankbook showing a balance of over a thousand dollars and gave it to us. She said that she kept very little of the money from Gertie's pay; instead she put most of it into the bank. It was a large sum at the time and we were very pleased. From that point on, we put both of our salaries together in a savings account. Her mother refused to take any additional money from her.

I did not do so well financially. It was during the summer months, at which time there was no work in the necktie industry. I got a job with a neckwear contractor who in order not to be bothered by the union, opened a factory in Hoboken, New Jersey. Since I was still living on the lower East Side, I had to take a train from Delancey Street to Canal Street. There I took a train to Times Square and from there a trolley car to the Hudson River, where I took a ferry across the Hudson River, then a bus to Hoboken, New Jersey and there I had to walk several blocks to the factory. Five kinds of transportation each way with the trip back and forth taking about five hours a day. The

salary was very small. When he had no work, I worked in New York at belts, caps, hats and anything else that I was able to find. Most of the monies that I had earned in the years that I was in this country, I gave to my father. When he was about to leave for Europe, Gertie said, "We are young; your father is leaving, he will need all the money that he can get in order to start a new life there. Let us give him all the money that we have to take along with him." So we did. It came to about $2000 (including the $1000 that Gertie's mother had given her).

While my father was here, he and three uncles of mine were persuaded to buy land in Staten Island. The salesman who sold them the property told them that soon a bridge or a tunnel would be built which would connect New York with Staten Island and that as soon as they would start building, the land in Staten Island would go sky high and make them very rich. They agreed and bought several blocks of land near Hyland Boulevard undertaking to make payments of $100.00 per month or $25.00 per person. My father was the treasurer and while he was here he collected $25.00 from each uncle, added his own $25.00 and sent the entire amount to the real estate company. He asked me to take over his share which was about $400.00 and to continue making the installment payments. (I eventually paid him back the $400.00.) He wrote over his shares into my name and I kept on collecting the monies and sent it in to the White Company, who were the real estate company. I cleaned out my entire savings.

At first I thought that the decision to build a bridge or tunnel to Staten Island would start soon and great profits would be realized from the sale of the land. It took many years before the Verrazano Bridge connecting Staten Island with Brooklyn was finally built. The bridge is located in the part of Brooklyn known as Bay Ridge near Boro Park, Coney Island, Flatbush, etc. The road connects with the Belt Parkway which also connects with the highways going to Long Island and Manhattan. The value of property in Staten Island has gone up ten-fold or even higher. Land there is being sold now by the inch.

It is a pity that we dropped the payments on the land. I was very sorry that my investment and that of my family was lost. I had no choice. One of the investors started to be lax in sending in his share and so not having the full $100.00, I was unable to issue the check to the real estate company. What should or could have been done, was for the other three partners to take over the payment of the $25.00. They did not care to do so and the whole business fell apart. Today the wives are all sorry. The husbands passed away some time ago.

My father left for Europe. He bought a house in a suburb of the city of Ungvar. The family left the village of Kis Dobrony and moved. The property was a garden style apartment house with ten tenants. My father opened a bakery with a partner, an experienced baker. It did not work out profitably. I am not sure what the problems were, but eventually the bakery was closed and most of the money that my father had brought back from America was lost in that venture.

Back in this country, the winter season began. I was already an experienced neckwear operator. I got a job and was doing fairly well. I was a fast worker. In time, I became known as the fastest worker in the trade. I was able to make 150 dozen ties in a day, working overtime. The price paid was about 16¢ per dozen and at the end of the week I ended up earning about $120.00. If this would go on for the entire year, it would have been fine, but the neckwear business is very seasonal. As a rule, the spring season started in January and lasted till about April, and it was a slow season, since the demand for ties was small. The work was shared and many times there was only work for several hours a day. The summer season was even slower; people as a rule do not wear ties in the summer. During the summer months, the contractor brought in handkerchiefs or ladies scarves to hem. This gave us a few hours of work a day. The pay was very small. Some of the operators did not come in at all, but looked for other work to do.

During this time, my future father-in-law, was offered a position as Sexton in a large synagogue that was being built in the East Bronx. It was on Washington Avenue near Claremont Parkway. When I use the word "offered" I do not mean that he was asked to come and take the position. The custom at that time was as follows: A small synagogue with a few members decided that there was a need for a larger building in the neighborhood. They called their members together. A committee was appointed to look for a suitable place to put up the building. They found such a place on Washington Avenue, but now a problem arose. Where could they get the money to pay for the lot and to build the edifice. The synagogue had a little money of its own, and each member was willing to donate a specified amount, or perhaps give a long-term loan. All these funds were still not enough to start the project. An architect was called in who drew up the plans for the building. An advertisement was placed in *The Morning Journal* stating that they were looking for a sexton and a rabbi as well, who would be willing to put in a certain sum of money as security into the project. The word "security" was misleading. What it really meant was to give

them the money to be used towards building the synagogue. It was true that the sexton collected monies from the worshippers who paid their dues or gave donations, but that was a small amount in comparison to what was required as "security." My future father-in-law saw the advertisement, as did dozens of other candidates. An appointment was set up for him to meet with the committee.

He asked me to go along to the meeting with him. Apparently, he did not want to go alone as it involved a large investment, and he thought that I could be of some help to him. We met in the house of one of the members. We were shown the impressive drawings. The building would be large enough to accommodate several hundred future members. They gave us figures showing us great sums of money that they anticipated getting from various sources. It looked very impressive. My future father-in-law was to receive a certain guaranteed amount as salary, plus a commission on everything that he collected. They wanted a large amount as "security," but we settled for $5000.00. My future in-laws scrapped together everything that they had in savings and borrowed the rest from friends and relatives. A lawyer drew up the papers and the money was handed over to the committee. They did the same in reference to hiring a rabbi, who paid in the sum of $8000.00.

They immediately started to put up the building. Besides a synagogue, the ground floor was to be used as a *Beth Hamedrash* where services would be held during the week. The larger section was to be used as a hall for weddings, bar-mitzvas, etc. The Hammerman Caterers were engaged for this purpose and they too put in a large amount of "security," much greater than either the sexton or the rabbi. The building was being built at a fast tempo.

One day Joe and Ethel took me aside. They asked me what my plans were in relation to setting a date for my marriage. I explained to them that our plans were not definite yet. In that case, they were wondering, if I would object to their getting married first. I was surprised at first, because why should I object? They explained to me that being that it was customary for the older sister to marry before the younger one, I may have an objection. I assured them that it was perfectly alright with me. They were married shortly thereafter in a hall on the East Side, and took an apartment in a section of Brooklyn known as East New York. At that time it was a good Jewish neighborhood. The apartment was on Sutter Avenue and Hendrix Street. The neighborhood has since changed drastically. I do not believe there are any Jews living there presently. It is inhabited primarily by colored and

Spanish people. Joe had most of his customers on Long Island, this was not too far from his home. He had a car and built up a "route." I was very friendly with Joe and Ethel and we visited their apartment very often.

During this period, I met a man by the name of Mr. Manuel Lukacs. He was quite a bit older than I was, married, with a wife and two children, a girl and a boy. He was a neckwear operator. He worked in one of the larger factories, uptown. It was a union shop and therefore the pay was much higher than I was getting in a non-union shop. He had saved up some money. He and his family lived in midtown in New York, someplace on 68th Street and Fifth Avenue. There was a synagogue there and the rabbi was a Rabbi Drachman, who was a famous rabbi at that time. Mr. and Mrs. Lukacs were acting as sort of supervisors of the synagogue, for which they received a rent-free apartment. We took a liking to each other. Hearing that I was a good and fast necktie operator, he suggested that we go into the necktie contracting business. The place that he worked at also gave out merchandise to contractors to finish.

I liked the idea, and so at a tender age of nineteen, I went into business with him. The investment was not too large. We rented a place on the fourth floor of a building on Delancey Street, near Clinton Street, on the lower East Side. At first, he and I worked alone. I was the operator; he did the pressing of the ties; and his wife worked as the turner. The cut material was brought in from the manufacturer in large suitcases, and when the product was finished, was taken back and new material picked up. When the season came around and more merchandise was offered to us, we took in additional help. At first, we worked on what was known as machine-made ties, where the whole tie was sewn by machine. When we got a reputation as good contractors, we were offered to produce hand-made ties. In this operation part of the operation is done by machine, but the whole length of the tie is sewn by hand. As a rule, this operation was done by women. They usually took the work home where it was done in their spare time. We engaged them as sub-contractors for this part of the operation. When the hand-made ties were returned to us, Mr. Lukacs pressed them. We hired additional pressers, operators, turners, and women to make the hand-made ties.

We decided that perhaps it was time to go into the manufacturing of ties for ourselves. We would engage salesmen who would go out and sell the ties at a commission, to men's stores and especially to department stores. For this type of operation, there was a need for a

larger place at a more prestigious address, someplace up-town where buyers from out-of-town would come to. We rented a place on 23rd Street near Broadway. We contacted the silk houses who sent in their salesmen to show us their new samples of silks. They wanted to see our financial statement in order to give us the usual sixty day credit. As our financial statement was not too impressive, they gave us a limited line of credit for thirty days, or part cash and the remainder in sixty days. We did not give up contracting, so that we were quite busy.

The truth is, that personally, I was not too enthused about the manufacturing end of our business. Somehow, I felt that we were going too fast. At that time, there was a necktie market on Allen Street, where one rented a store with shelves and counters, where the ties were displayed in the windows and on the counters. The customers were store-keepers who came to buy a few dozen ties at a time. Many times, if you had the right merchandise, and a reasonable price, buyers from out-of-town would come downtown to buy their ties. The rent and other expenses were much lower than uptown, and the goods could be sold at a lower price. However, Mr. Lukacs, being the proud Hungarian that he was, got it into his head that in order to succeed, one must do it the right way and that meant up-town. I being younger, and also easy-going, reluctantly gave in to him.

Soon the union found out that Lukacs and Gartenberg were doing a fairly good business, engaging about a dozen people. One of their officers paid us a visit, examined our operation, spoke to the workers and left. A few days later, we received a telephone call from them in which they asked one of us to come up to their offices to do some talking. We were not happy about the matter, but if one is asked by a labor organization, one does not play around — you go. A date was set and being that only one of us was asked to come down, Mr. Lukacs insited that he be the one.

I had an aunt, the wife of my mother's brother, whose name was David. Her name was Tessie. She passed away in her eighties. She was a real nice person and was very good to my father and I when he arrived in this country. I spent many a day with her and her husband and their two children, a boy and girl. The boy was named Murray and the daughter was Beatrice or Betty. Murray was in the war in Korea. He was in an aircraft with other soldiers when his aircraft fell into the ocean when it was shot down by the enemy. His body was never found. As a matter of fact, a chapter of the Jewish War Veterans was organized in his memory. It is located in Bensonhurst under the name of "Sgt. Murray Liebowitz" Post.

This *tante* once told me that when she was very young and very pretty, she met a Mr. Gottesman at one of the Hungarian balls. This Mr. Gottesman was much older than she was, and was the secretary of the Neckwear Union. He became infatuated with her. He suggested that she go to school, become well educated, and he would then marry her. She took it as a joke. She was young and wanted to enjoy life and not be bothered going to school. They remained friends even after she married my uncle Dave. When she found out that I had become a neckwear operator, she told me that if I would ever need a favor from the union, I should go to see her friend, Mr. Gottesman. He would help me if I would tell him that I was her nephew.

Once, when I was looking for a job, I did go to see him. I did not have much experience yet, and was not a member of the union. He replied that when I would have more experience and would become a member of the union, he would see what could be done. Mr. Lukacs was about to see the members of the Joint Board of the Union. I had my *tante* call Mr. Gottesman on our behalf, to ensure that we were going to be treated fairly. He told her that there was nothing to fear, that the officers were only doing their jobs, which meant to organize all the neckwear shops in New York City to become union shops. There was nothing that he could do. He assured her that no bodily harm would befall us.

When the night of the meeting came, I accompanied Mr. Lukacs to the building on 15th Street. He went upstairs and I stationed myself across the street, where I could see Mr. Lukacs talking to the people. After a while, I was greatly relieved to see Mr. Lukacs leave the office. I immediately went over to him to ask him if all went well. He assured me that everything was perfectly alright. All they wanted was to organize our place into a union shop. In a few days, an officer came to our shop, took everyone's name and in a few days all the workers became members of the union, including myself. After all, what was there to lose? The union did not have to supply anyone with a job. They collected dues from everyone. The workers received better salaries and other benefits as well.

The synagogue in the Bronx was finished. My future in-laws moved to the Bronx. They took a large apartment with three bedrooms. It was decided that I should not remain on the lower East Side, but to move in with them. A very short time later, we were married in the new hall of the synagogue. We had 400 people at the wedding which included Gertie's family and friends, my family and friends, and practically all the members of the synagogue. We remained living with

my in-laws, since the apartment was very large.

Our necktie business was not running as well as was to be expected, just as I feared. Since the shop was now unionized, we had to pay a higher rate for our workers, but the manufacturers who supplied us with the raw materials, had no desire to give us a raise on the finished products. Little by little, we stopped taking work from them. Now we were more dependent on our own manufacturing. We sold the merchandise to retail stores who were very slow in payment. The salesmen who sold the merchandise wanted their commissions as soon as the orders were delivered. We gave the stores sixty day's credit, but the sixty days became ninety and one hundred and twenty. The silk houses wanted their money on time.

In order to raise the money, we were forced to turn to what was known as "factors." A factor is a banking concern who advances monies on outstanding bills. In other words, as soon as we sent out an order, we sent a copy of the bill to the factor on which we received our money immediately. They sent out a notice to the customer that when payment would be made, instead of sending the money to us, the money should be sent to them. The only problem was that they charged a high interest rate, two or three times charged by ordinary banks. We were not able to borrow money from a bank at regular interest rates because we did not have a strong financial statement.

I did not want to aggravate my partner by telling him, "I told you so," but he realized that we were too much in a hurry to go into business for ourselves, not having enough capital. Above all, many of the stores to whom we sold our ties declared themselves in bankruptcy when the Christmas season was over. Either they went out of business or made setlements with their creditors. Every week, we were called by their lawyers to come to a creditors meeting at which time a settlement was made. Most of the time it was for about 25% of the original bill.

A few weeks before the Christmas holiday, Mr. Lukacs came in one day with a happy smile telling me that a niece of his became acquainted with a girl in school whose parents opened up a store on 14th Street. It was a large store selling men's shirts, underwear, ties, etc. She made an appointment for Mr. Lukacs to go see her father to try and sell him our ties. Mr. Lukacs went there promptly the next morning and sold him a large order. As usual, it was on a sixty day credit basis. A week or so later, we received a telephone call, that he was in need of more ties. This went on a for a while. Before I looked around, the man owed us several thousand dollars. It was the kind of

business we had always hoped to do, but the bills became a little too much for us to carry.

I called this to the attention of Mr. Lukacs, and he told me that we could not stop now since the man may turn to other suppliers. It bothered me a lot. I went there myself, explained to the man that our concern was too small and so we just could not advance so much to one customer. Even the factors did not want to accept so many bills from us anymore. The man said that he realized our position and he did pay a few of the older bills, but those were only for a few hundred dollars each. We kept on giving him merchandise, waiting for him to pay us the larger bills shortly. As we did not receive any payments a day or two after Chirstmas, I went to see him again. Imagine my chagrin when I saw that the store was closed and a "for rent" sign was posted on the door.

I came back to the shop and told Mr. Lukacs what had happened. He actually started crying. He admitted that I was right all along in this case, and that we were too hasty in rushing into the manufacturing business, trying to compete with the other manufacturers in the area. We should have remained on the lower East Side, taken a store on Allen Street, and so on. The result was that we had to liquidate our business, sell out for cash the little merchandise which was still left, settle with the factors and silk houses and we were out of business.

Well, I was still a young man and my wife who had given up her job on Grand Street some time before, and had joined our business during the winter season, began looking for other jobs. I had pity on Mr. Lukacs. He was getting on in years and was not readily accepted for work in factories. It was after the winter season anyway, and there was not much work available. I told Mr. Lukacs to take two machines and many other supplies from the factory, plus the small rolls of silks that remained after the season, find a small place somewheres, cut up the merchandise, work them out for ties and sell them to peddlers. All this I gave him as a present. He was very thankful. He rented a small store near his home, did all the work by himself and that kept him busy for many months. Doing favors to people is in my blood, thank G-d.

One of our manufacturers who used to give us cut up merchandise to contract, decided to move away from New York City. In order not to be bothered by the union, he moved far out to Long Island, where he opened a shop engaging local non-Jewish help whom he taught the trade.

By this time we decided to have our own apartment. We moved to

East New York near Ethel and Joe. We were closer to Long Island from there than we would have been living in the Bronx. We went to see Mr. Bowen, who was the owner of the factory in Long Island and applied for work. He readily accepted us. For a long time, we took the Long Island train on Pennsylvania Avenue in Brooklyn, and made the long trip to Long Island daily.

Mr. Lukacs worked up all the small remnants of silks that I had given him and sold the ties to peddlers from which he made a modest living. His wife, Regina, also helped him in the business. When the peddlers became tired of buying the same material all the time, Mr. Lukacs went to the silk houses and bought remnants or samples from them. One day, I received a call from him to come and see him. He explained to me that he would like to buy some material for the coming season, but being that his wife was ill, he had to spend some time with her every day. He also had to visit the silk houses, do the cutting, operating and pressing all by himself. He just could not handle it alone. He could not hire outside help, since he did not have the money for their salaries. Therefore, would I do him a favor and give him a few hours work every day or several times a week and he would pay me after the season. What could I do? The man had a sick wife, he had to make a living, so I agreed.

For several days a week, on my way back from work in Long Island, I continued on to Penn Station where I took a train to Lexington Avenue and 70th Street. I walked over to the store, let myself in, ate a sandwich and worked all alone on the material that Mr. Lukacs had prepared for me. A few hours later, I took a train to East New York arriving home approximately at ten or eleven o'clock at night, ate supper and went to sleep. In the morning I had to get up early to go to my regular job. This went on for quite some time. The pay that Mr. Lukacs owed me came to about $375.00. After the season, he told me that he was very sorry, he just could not pay me since his wife's sickness cost more than he had anticipated and he just was not in a position to give me the money due me. He handed me a letter in which he wrote that he admitted that he owed me the sum of $375.00, which he promised to pay *Le Kesheyarchiv,* meaning when he would be in a position to pay and that I promised not to take him to court or to a *Din Torah. Mazel tov!!* I took the letter and put it away among my other personal papers and never really had the intention of asking him for the money. He got a job in a factory where he worked for many years. His wife passed away, he remarried, and several years later they moved to Netanya, Israel.

The next time that I saw him was sometime in 1965. The Schechter family and my first wife and I were in Tiberias, on our way back to Tel-Aviv. We heard that the Klausenberger rabbi was in Kiryat Sanz to visit the project that he built on the outskirts of Netanya. I knew the Klausenberger rabbi with whom I had done some rescue work in Paris in 1946. We stopped in Netanya and decided to spend the Sabbath with the rabbi. We sent our wives back to the hotel in Tel-Aviv, and we remained there. We slept in Mr. Lukacs's house and after supper we walked over to Kiryat Sanz to the "Rabbi's table." We did likewise the following day.

During the time that we were there, Mr. Lukacs told me that he had decided to spend his remaining years in Israel. He bought his small apartment in Netanya with the few thousand dollars that he had saved up in America. He brought along all his furniture, clothing, etc. from America and he was living on the $108.00 that he received monthly from social security. Since that time, with an approximate increase of about 10% every year, his income has gone up every year. For two elderly people living in Israel that was enough. As a matter of fact, he told me, "What do we need? In the morning before I go to synagogue, I take a cup of coffee. After praying, we learn our daily *shiur*. By the time I come home, it is about 10:30. I eat a slice of *kuchen* (danish) which my wife bakes, or a slice of toast made from the white bread which she bakes. Twice a week I buy two chickens from which my wife makes a fricassee or she stuffs the neck with the white meat, or she makes *falshe* fish (the white part of the chicken is ground into chopped meat and made into balls which looks and tastes like stuffed fish). She boils or roasts the other parts of the chicken and with vegetables, this takes care of us for the whole week. She bakes her own cakes (what else does she have to do?). We buy some vegetables and two bottles of milk and our shopping is done for the week. In the afternoons, after taking a little nap, I go back to *shul*. I come back at night, have a coffee or a fruit, listen to the news on the radio and go to sleep. So you see, my social security is enough for me to live on."

I did not see Mr. Lukacs again for about ten years when he came to visit me in Jerusalem. This time he had a request. Being that he owed me the sum of $375.00 for about thirty-five years, would I be so kind and tear up the letter of debt that he once gave me? I promised him that upon my return to America, I would do so. He passed away recently. I think he was about ninety years of age.

Back in New York we were still working in Long Island at neckties. However, the neckwear union found out about this factory, came

there, and tried to unionize the place. The owner refused. The place was picketed for a while, so we had to leave. Eventually, the owner gave up the place and either moved out of the New York area, or went into another business. We came back to work in New York and being that we were members of the union, were given jobs in various places.

Towards the end of the winter season, the Wall Street crash occurred. I wasn't acquainted with the stock market. Everyone "played the stock market," I was told. Stocks were bought with a down payment of 10%, the rest was placed on what was known as margin. My co-workers, as soon as they received their weekly salary, ran to their broker's office and bought stocks. Fortunes were made on paper. Some people neglected their jobs and businesses as they claimed that there was more money to be made in the stock market. I did not want to hear about it (I only wish that I would have stuck to that resolution later on in life).

After the crash, the spring season in the neckwear line was to begin and business was bad. Stores were closing up one after the other. People who lost everything in the stock market did not buy new clothing, especially ties. Most people could not pay the rents for their apartments, nor buy food for their families. We worked a few days a week, barely covering our expenses. Before the Passover holidays there was no work at all. We had invited my father to spend the holidays with us.

About ten days before the holiday, I saw an advertisement in the *"Morning Journal"* looking for someone to work as a butcher in a meat market on Pitkin Avenue, not far from where we lived. I promptly went there, got the job, and made a nice salary. I remember that the night before Passover, I did not go home at all, but worked right through the night for which I received extra pay. I remember that my hands were swollen from over thirty-six hours of chicken plucking. I had to wear leather stripes on my wrists in order to be able to continue working. I took home a large sum of money. My father was with us for the entire holiday which we celebrated very nicely.

When we moved to Brooklyn, I went to attend services at the Young Israel Synagogue which was a few blocks away. The members were very nice to me and they invited me to be their cantor once in a while. I became friends with Mr. and Mrs. Max Goldblatt who was in the hardware and electrical supplies business. We did a lot of business with him when we were in the hotel business later on. I also became friends with Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Schechter with whom I remained very close for many years.

My brother-in-law, Joe Fuchs, *Z"l,* went for religious services to a *shtibel* nearby. The place was known as the Hendrix Street *shtibel,* which was among the first Chasidic type of *shtibel* at the time. As my brother-in-law, Joe Fuchs prayed there; he also took me along a few times. The members asked me to join them. I found that the Young Israel synagogue was a little too modern for me. I started to go to the *shtibel.* The first thing that I did was to organize a Talmud class which I was teaching every Saturday afternoon for a group of people.

While living in East New York, I became friendly again with Rabbi Rubin (known as the Doliner Rabbi). (His son Rabbi Pesach Rubin is the cantor in the Shomrei Emunah Synagogue in Boro Park.) The Doliner rabbi rented a large hall on Blake Avenue. I came there several times while we lived on New Lots Avenue. I remembered him from years before. When we lived in Williamsburg and I was the *Baal Shachris* in the Zeirei Agudath Israel on Rodney Street, I walked from there to East New York to be a *meshorer* (a helper) in his choir where he was the *Baal Musaf* in the Lubavitch Shul on Pennsylvania Avenue. As a matter of fact, when later on I became a *Baal Musaf* for the High Holy days in our various hotels for about forty years, I used his beautiful *nusach.* He immediately made me the president of his synagogue and I went to his shul. On Friday nights, some of us went to spend time in his house and listen to his *zemiros* and *Devar Torah.* Other Friday nights, we invited a group of our friends to spend Shabes in our house, where we sang *zemiros,* studied the chapter of the week and partook of the special foods that we prepared. We spent several pleasant years in East New York which was at that time a very nice religious neighborhood.

With Teddy Kolek

7

Months before, I met a Mr. Strickberger, who was a general agent for the Columbian National Life Insurance Company of Boston. He approached me, asking me to become one of his agents. I was always ready to listen to any proposition which would give me a legitimate income. I met him and his partner, a Mr. Israel Blau, in a restaurant in New York. The firm was known as Blau & Strickberger.

They explained to me what the life insurance business was all about. They told me about the commissions that were being paid from the first year's premium and what was being paid if the policy remained in force for nine additional years. The commissions were between 35% and 50% from the first year's premium and 5% from the next nine year's payments. They applied for an insurance license for me, gave me a few applications and a rate book and I was in business.

The first policy that I sold was to one of my co-workers, Hymie Schiowitz. At that time, the shop that I was working at was located in the Bowery. It was a contracting firm, "The Sosis Company." His wife, Rose, also worked in the shop. Now and then I sold a policy which gave me an extra income.

It was not easy, since people did not take out large policies, at least those people that I knew. The usual policy was for a $1000.00, 20-year endowment, which meant that a young person paid in about $850.00 over 20 years, and at the end of 20 years he received back the full $1000.00. He also received some dividends. If a person passed away before the 20 years, his beneficiary received the full amount.

I had to convince my perspective clients that it was actually a forced savings by which he would get back his money with a profit, and be insured at the same time. The commission on this type of policy was the lowest. It paid ony 35% of the first year's premium. Other types of insurance, like straight life which was lower in price, paid more commissions, but I had a hard job to sell, since it showed only a small profit if they wanted to cash in the policy after twenty years, although for the same premium they were able to buy more insurance. People always claimed that they wanted to collect the money

while they were still living. I heard this remark all the time.

I decided to explore the life insurance plans and sell a policy known as endowment at age 60 or 65, which meant that being a person undertakes to pay premiums for a longer period of time (the average person that I dealt with was in his early twenties, nearer to my own age), I was able to give him a $2000.00 policy for the same premium as he would have to pay for a $1000.00 contract. This policy gave a man more protection and paid a 50% commission. I told my client as follows, "You are ready to take out a $1000.00 policy for 20 years; when the policy expires you will have $1000.00. What will you do with $1000.00 when you are in your early forties; it is too late and too little to go into business with. At that age, either you are in business already, or not interested any longer. If you are in business, you will bury the money there. If you are not in business, you will probably buy a new set of furniture; but if you take a larger policy for a low premium at your young age, when it matures at age 65, you will have all your money back with a nice profit and use the money towards retirment. When you will be at retirement age, you will be able to put the money to better use." As a rule, people accepted my idea. I became known as the insurance agent who sells insurance to protect the family while they are young and helps the insured to retire at the right age.

Most people had not heard about the Columbian National Insurance Company and were reluctant to buy insurance from that company. They only knew about the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, because of the tall building with the clock which was located on 23rd Street, which they saw, or the New York Life Insurance Company which had their offices in a building on Madison Avenue. They paid better commissions and gave better conditions, but both companies wanted the agent to work for them exclusively. However, I had in mind to also go into general insurance. People called me to buy insurance on their cars, furniture, their stores, etc. For that type of insurance one had to be a general insurance broker. I therefore stopped doing business with the Columbian Life Insurance Company, and started doing business with the Prudential Life Insurance company, located in Newark, New Jersey, who at that time was the second largest life insurance company (Metropolitan was the largest). Today, Prudential is the largest insurance company in the world.

Since most people already had enough life insurance, I concentrated on general insurance, to sell fire insurance, automobile insurance, burglary insurance, plate glass insurance, jewelry and fur

insurance. For this I needed a license. I had to pass a severe test, given by the State of New York two or three times a year. Most applicants failed the test the first or the second time. It was the custom to enroll in an approved school who gave a course in general insurance. The course took several months. I did not have the time, as I was still working full-time in the necktie line. The little life insurance that I sold, I did in the evenings after a day's work.

I decided to do it on my own. I visited the various insurance companies, picked up all the booklets that they had on insurance, and bought some books on insurance. Every spare moment that I had, I devoted to studying them, made notes, learned all the rules and requirements. I made up sample plans on every type of casualty insurance, with questions and answers, as though it were a real case. When I came up with the answers, and felt that I knew how to handle each situation, I decided to apply for one of the tests. What could I lose? The average applicant failed the first or second time around, so I would also fail, but at least I would have an idea of what it was all about. I went to take the test, paid my license fee of $20.00, which is the fee for a one year license, filled in all the questions about various types of insurance, and handed it in. Imagine my pleasant surprise, when about ten days later I received in the mail my insurance broker's license. Now that I was a full-fledged insurance broker, I was in a position to do business with everyone that I knew, since there is no one, be he a businessman or a worker, who is not in need of some kind of insurance.

I immediately printed up business cards, and handed them out to everyone that I met. Eventually, I started getting calls from friends and acquaintances requesting insurance. I remember printing up a blotter advertisement, ball point pens were not in use at that time, stating, "Honesty is the best policy." I began to specialize in insurance analysis, which meant that I studied the insurance that my client had at present, I made a list of all his possessions, reviewing the present value of the contents of his home, and put down the replacement value. As a rule, ninety percent of the time, it showed that most people were under-insured. Generally the same policy was renewed year after year.

If a man was in business for himself, operated a store or factory, I had him make an inventory of the contents of the store or factory. After the analysis was made, I compared the required insurance to the coverage that he was presently holding, and made my recommendations. I also suggested coverage for burglary insurance and plate glass

insurance, which most businessmen did not carry. I also inquired whether he had any fur or jewelry which he needed to insure. After I made a whole insurance plan, it was up to the client to decide whether he wanted to increase his insurance or remain with what he had.

I placed new insurance clients on my list by giving them service and advice. They also recommended their friends to me, so much so, that I rarely had to go out to solicit new business, which is known as cold canvassing. I was kept busy by seeing people who were recommended to me by former clients.

I did all this analyzing and insurance selling while I was still working at ties. Being that the neckwear business was so seasonal, there were days that we had to share the work or days that there was no work at all, I had time to see all my prospective clients. When the season was on, I had to work full-time and even overtime. I was not able to go and sell insurance, unless someone insisted that I do so immediately. This made it hard on me.

The factory where I worked was on the lower East Side; I lived in East New York; and the people that I had to see in reference to insurance were located in various parts of the city. At such times, I had something to eat in New York, travelled out to wherever the client lived, and naturally that meant that I arrived at home very late. I grabbed a bite, went to sleep, got up early the next morning and went to work. However, this could not go on for a long time; and again the question arose, what to do? Do I continue working at ties, or do I go into the insurance business? I was already earning a fair income by selling insurance. It seemed to me that I would make out better in the insurance business. Working all day, and being up late seeing clients left me tired and sleepy all day.

My decision came very soon after. While working on the sewing machine one day, being groggy from lack of sleep, my finger touched the needle and it went into the tip of my finger. It was not serious. I put on a bandage and continued working. At that moment my decision was made. I was leaving the neckwear line. I told my employer, who realized my position. The first chance that I had I said good-bye to the neckwear business. That was in the year 1932.

From that time on, I devoted myself to the insurance business exclusively. My business spread to all parts of New York, Brooklyn, and Long Island. I soon realized that traveling by train, would be too time consuming. Therefore, I decided to buy a car. I went to an auto driving school and took several lessons in driving. When the instructor of the driving school felt that I was ready to take the test, he

arranged for it. He told me not to be too disappointed if I did not pass the first time, as most people did not. It may take two or three tests to pass. I took the test. The inspector did not give me any indication whether I passed or not, but a few days later, I received the driver's license in the mail.

Now that I had a driver's license, I had to go out to buy a car. I was recommended to a Mr. Schonfeld, who happened to be a cousin of a friend of mine, Mr. David Schonfeld, whom I met while working in the necktie line. We became very close with him and his wife Margaret and are still very good friends. We worked together in the Benevolent Society of the Agudath Israel for over forty years. I bought my first car from his relative. It was a used Ford. I paid $150.00 for it. As I was not satisfied with it, he exchanged it for a new Chevrolet for a total price of $675.00. Once I had a car, I was able to see more people.

As a rule, my daily routine was as follows: I left my home at about ten or eleven in the morning, drove to downtown Brooklyn where the Prudential Insurance Company was at 185 Montague Street. I made my office at the general insurance office of the Philip Charles Agency at 162 Montague Street. Mr. and Mrs. Charles provided me with a desk and telephone in exchange for my placing all the general insurance through them.

Mr. Charles originally came from the city of Kapitschinitz, Poland. As a young child, he was very close with the Kaptischinitzer rabbi, *Z"l.* However, when he came to this country he drifted away from the Jewish religion. When the rabbi came to this country, Mr. Charles went to see him, but they were already too far apart. After that first visit he never went to see him again. He was very respectful to me personally. I invited them to my home for dinner many times. He always put on a skull cap out of respect to us.

The service that they gave me came in very handy. They took care of my phone calls, except on the Sabbath, they did not answer my phone. They lived in the same building where the office was, and when a phone call came in for me, they immediately took care of whatever had to be done, such as placing the insurance, reporting the losses to the companies, etc. Insurance premiums must always be paid on the 20th of the month on insurance that has been written two months previously. He, being the underwriter himself, had an extra ten days to pay the premium. If I did not have the money by the 20th of the month, he gave me a ten day extension, plus many other advantages.

I was also well-liked by the manager of the Prudential Insurance Company, Mr. Quinn. He gave me many "leads." If the office was advised that someone passed away, he would send me to the bereaved family to fill out the forms and eventually to deliver the check to them. Many times, this would lead to write new insurance for some of the members of the family.

The company advertised in newspapers and magazines about a baby book that they were giving away free to parents of new-born babies. The book contained very helpful advice and suggestions. Readers of the advertisement sent in the attached coupons to the office requesting the book. Instead of sending the book by mail, the book was given to an agent to personally deliver to the family. While there, the agent talked "insurance." Quite often, I was given these books to deliver especially if the request was from a Jewish family. I managed to deliver the book on a Sunday, because, as a rule, the father was home at that time. Most of the requests came from young couples who had just had their first child. I spent a little time explaining the book to them, and while talking, managed to bring in the subject of insurance.

We discussed the following: (1) To take out insurance on the life of the father. Now that he had more responsibilities, he had more obligations to his family. (2) To take out insurance on the new-born child to help put him through college when he became of age.

I generally made a good impression on the father. As a rule, I did write insurance on the father or the child. Being that I was also a general insurance broker, it gave me the opportunity to discuss other kinds of insurance with them and to analyze their needs.

I remember one particular incident. I delivered a book to a couple by the name of Fuchs. They lived in a fine neighborhood in Flatbush. The man was connected with a photo finishing business. He and two partners had a plant on Fulton Street, not far from Montague Street. They employed several people who with their cars visited drug stores or stationery stores where people brought in rolls of films to be developed. These salesmen brought in hundreds of envelopes which were developed and taken back to the place from where they were picked up. I wrote a policy on Mr. Fuchs' new-born child, and some time later, he bought a policy for himself. As I became more friendly with him, he invited me to meet his partners and his salesmen. Eventually, I took over all the general insurance on his plant, wrote life insurance on the lives of the salesmen and partners, insured their cars, homes, etc., so much so, that about 10% of all my insurance business came from that source. All due to delivering a baby book.

I wrote enough life insurance that, at the end of the year, I qualified to attend the annual convention of the Prudential Insurance Company, which was taking place in one of the large hotels in Atlantic City, New Jersey. It was a large convention attended by about a thousand agents of the company. The company engaged a special train in New York, which took us to Atlantic City. Although I took some food along with me, the manager asked me to attend the meal in the dining room and order only such food as I would be able to eat, such as raw vegetables, fruits, etc. He wanted me to be present when certain announcements and speeches would be delivered. I ate the right kind of foods, but I wore my hat while eating. After the meal, the manager came over to me and said that the management of the hotel told him that I had worn my hat during the meal, and would I refrain from doing so at the next meal. When I told him that it was against my religion to eat without a hat, we agreed that I would take my meals in my room.

In the insurance business, like in any other kind of business, customers may be misinformed. In order to persuade them to become clients and profits be made on them, insurance has to be explained to them. I remember a very clear case whereby a couple by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Bernath Freundlich were very badly misled by a life insurance agent who was a good friend of theirs. This agent sold them life insurance. I met them while they lived on Throop Avenue in Brooklyn, New York. Mr. Freundlich was in the butter and egg business. They had a store on Throop Avenue where they sold all kinds of groceries, specializing in fresh butter and fresh eggs. Mr. Freundlich had a truck from which he delivered butter and fresh eggs to private people in Brooklyn and in New York. About twice a week he made a trip to Flemington, New Jersey where he bought cases of fresh eggs from an auction place, buying them direct from the farmers. He brought them, candled them (examined them for blood spots which he threw out), placed the eggs in dozens and sold them direct to his many customers.

I sold him insurance on his store, on his truck and his private car. I knew his life insurance agent and therefore I never tried to sell him life insurance since I was a friend of his agent. He has already passed away several years ago, still I will not mention his name. May he rest in peace. Mr. and Mrs. Freundlich and I became exceptionally close to each other. We are friends to this very day. Eventually, they moved to Boro Park where they bought a two-family house on 53rd Street and

16th Avenue right next to the synagogue. Later they moved to Israel near Haifa.

When Devorah and I were in Haifa several years ago, he came to see us in our hotel, took us with his car to the place where they lived where Mrs. Freundlich prepared a beautiful lunch for us. After spending a few hours with them, Mr. Freundlich brought us back to the hotel in Haifa. They never sold the house in Boro Park. Their daughter Margaret lives in the house and when Mr. and Mrs. Freundlich come to this country which is very often, they live in the house for several months at a time.

Well, this Mr. Freundlich kept on asking me why I did not try to sell him life insurance, to which I replied that being that I knew that he was very friendly with his life insurance agent, I did not want to interfere. Still he kept asking me for rates on insurance. He was interested in the usual twenty year endowment policy, which means that he should be able to get the full amount in twenty years plus the dividends. He was interested in a $10,000.00 policy.

With the $10,000.00 policy which he already took out from his friend a few years ago, he would have a total of $20,000.00, plus about $3,000.00 in dividends. Not a bad amount of money to retire on. Just to satisfy his curiosity, I took out my rate book and told him that at his age it would cost him about $450.00 per year which would mean that it would cost him about $9,000.00 for the twenty years. He would get back a full $10,000.00 plus the accumulated dividends. He started to laugh at me, saying that I made a mistake because that rate was wrong. For the same $10,000.00 policy that his friend wrote for him, he was only paying something like $340.00 a year. The insurance was written by the New York Life Insurance Company. Every agent has a booklet where every insurance company is listed, giving the rates for all kinds of insurance plans. In that booklet, it showed that the New York Life Inusrance Company charged more for a twenty year endowment policy, the reason being that they promised a higher dividend per thousand. He was insisting that he paid a lower sum and while he had his policy in his vault in the bank, he did have his checkbook where the stub showed the premium that he recently paid was the amount that he told me. My answer was, "Either you have a policy which is less than $10,000.00 or you have a different plan than a twenty-year endowment policy."

By checking further in the book, I came to the conclusion that he was sold a $10,000.00 twenty year payment policy, which means that the man bought a $10,000.00 life insurance plan which in case of death

pays the beneficiary the $10,000.00. After twenty years, he will not receive the $10,000.00. He will stop paying the premiums and he will remain insured for the full amount for the rest of his life. Should he want to cash in the insurance at that time, he will get back the cash value of the policy, as written out very clearly in the cash value table and with the accumulated dividends, he will get back approximately HIS money, meaning that the money he paid in during the twenty years. That is what is meant by the expression, "You will get back your money," but not the $10,000.00. It is a good plan because it means that a person undertakes to pay the premium in his young age and not be burdened with payments all his life.

The result was that he took out his policy from the vault in the bank and when I saw him the next time and he showed me the contract, I showed him immediately where it is clearly written, "Insurance payable at death. Premiums payable for twenty years." Of course he called his agent to come and see him. When the agent came, they had a big argument. Mr. Freundlich claimed that he was cheated. He was told that at the end of twenty years he would receive the full $10,000.00 plus the accumulated dividends. The agent claimed that he told him that with the cash value of the policy and the dividend, he would receive all the monies that he paid in. I was sorry that the argument started through me. Eventually, the matter would have been discovered anyway, because at the end of the twenty years, Mr. Freundlich would expect the full sum of $10,000.00, while in reality, he would receive only about 75%, or more or less what he paid in.

Why was this done in the first place? Let us place the agent in the category of *"Kaf Zechus."* (scale of merit). He sold the man the most insurance, for the money that he wanted to pay, but he was misunderstood. It can be that it was done on purpose. He sold the policy by purposely misleading him, because it was to the agent's benefit. This goes on every day. A man will buy life insurance as per agreement with his agent, then a few years after he has paid in a certain amount in premiums, another agent will come around and persuade him that it is the wrong plan for him. He will make the insured give up the insurance, make him buy a new one. In every case, the insured is being misled. Primarily, all insurance companies issue the same kind of insurance and charge about the same premiums. If the insured is really convinced that the old plan is not suitable for him, he does not have to take a new policy. He loses the premiums that he has already paid in. He is now older and therefore is charged a higher rate for the

new policy. The former agent should take the contract back to the company and change the plan to whatever plan is more suitable for the insured, rewrite the policy to the new plan getting credit for what he has already paid in, and adjust the premium accordingly, and using the former age.

I can go into many incidents like this. I will bring up just one more case that I remember very clearly. I dealt in the grocery business with a Mr. Alex Eisner. He was a small jobber in the grocery line. We bought some items from him for the hotel business. It was right after the Second World War. His son was in the United States Army. While there, he was given a $10,000.00 life insurance policy as all soldiers were given. The plan was a "Whole Life" plan meaning that the cost was the lowest of all plans. When he returned and saw that he had to pay the premiums all his life, he was not satisfied and wanted to cancel the insurance and make a new one with the idea that he should collect the insurance during his lifetime. His father, knowing that I was in the insurance line, asked me to come and see the son, and write him a new policy that he wanted. I was busy in the hotel business, so we decided that he would wait for me to see him when I would return after the summer.

When I finally did come to see him one evening, I studied the contract very thoroughly. The insurance rate was very low, much lower than any private insurance company would charge for a similar plan. It was no wonder. The contract was written by the government of the United States, paying no commissions to a life insuranc agent, paying no taxes to the government, and having no particular expenses, etc. I also noted that they clearly stated that after coming out of the army, the insured could continue the insurance on the same plan for the rest of his life, or if he wished to change the contract to another kind of insurance which has an earlier maturity, meaning that he can collect the full money whenever he wishes, he can do so by simply advising the goverment of his plans. They would change the insurance from the original age and charge him a new higher premium according to their rates which is so much less than a private life insurance company would charge him for the same kind of coverge. Now, how can an honest insurance broker tell an insured to cancel such a contract, go to a new company, write a policy at his older age, and overpay hundreds of dollars every year?

I told him what is to be done. I took the policy from him, got in touch with the government insurance department who rewrote the contract to the plan that he wanted whereby he saved a fortune of

money. He and his father were simply flabbergasted with my actions. They thought that I was crazy. Here I had a chance to make a few hundred dollars in commission and I simply threw away the chance. However, I felt that I was obligated to do what the Torah tells us: *"V'Usisoh Hatov V'Hayoshor,* And you shall do that which is good and correct." Not what is good for your own benefit, but what is also good for your neighbor. A person has to look into a mirror and see his face for many years to come, and be convinced that he did the right thing at all times.

I remember an incident that happened once while I was driving my car on Sutter Avenue in Brooklyn, New York. I was stopped by a policeman for some minor violation. I claimed that it was not by fault, while he said the usual, "Tell it to the Judge." That is exactly what I did. When I sent in my summons, I pleaded NOT guilty. As is usual in such a case, when the time for my appearance was called, the policeman also had to appear. We recognized each other. When we were told to sit down and wait for our next, we sat down on the last bench. As there was not enough seats available in the court, we had to sit next to each other. We started talking and he asked me what my business was. I told him that I was an insurance man, specializing in insurance analysis. I asked him what insurance he carried and as he told me the amounts of each insurance policy that he carried, I realized immediately that he was very much under insured. By the time that we were ready to appear before the judge, I had sold him the insurance policy that he was lacking. I do not remember what happened to the violation, but in the meantime, I picked up a new client.

I was now a full-fledged life insurance and general insurance broker and did fairly well. In the year 1934, someone recommended me to see a Mr. Jacob Schechter who at that time lived in Brownsville, in order to write a fire insurance policy on his household goods. I came to see him and as soon as we started to talk, I recognized from his accent that he was a landsman. He came to this country from Roumania, which was formerly Maramorosh, Hungary. He had been living in Cleveland, Ohio and had just recently moved to Brooklyn. He was a tailor by trade and worked on the lower East Side. The house was not richly furnished and we agreed that a $1,000.00 fire insurance policy would be sufficient.

While other brokers, as a rule, sent in the policy by mail with a bill attached, I did not do so. Although the premium was only about $7.00 a year, I made it my business to deliver each policy personally and that way I became better acquainted with the client and eventually wrote

more insurance. The commission was only $1.05, which did not really make it worthwhile to make a special trip to collect the premium, but it was a good beginning for future business. When I delivered the policy to Mr. Schechter, he told me that he did not have the $7.00. He was sorry that I had made the trip, but that he would pay me at a later date. Well, I made several trips before I collected the $7.00. Mr. Schechter gave me $1.00 or $2.00 at the most each time I visited him. Even with the price of gas at 19¢ a gallon, I used up more gas than the commission which I made. We became very friendly and I took a liking to him and to his family. I had not collected the premium in full by the time the money had to be paid to the company. Therefore, I advanced the money in order that the policy not be cancelled.

During one of my visits, he told me that he had rented a house in the Catskill Mountains which had fifteen rooms and a public kitchen. He intended to use two rooms for himself and his children, and wanted to rent out the rest of the rooms to others. The profits would cover the cost of his rooms and the expenses involved. He asked me whether I would be interested in renting a room for myself and my wife and perhaps recommend others as well to rent rooms there.

For the three previous summers, we had rented rooms in the mountains where we spent the summers. The first one was in Ferndale, New York. We spent the summer there with Mr. and Mrs. David Schonfeld, the Septimus Brothers, Mr. Aaron Seif, and others. The second summer, we rented a room in Woodridge, and the following summer, in Ellenville.

In Ferndale, our summer landlord was a Mr. Basch, who rented an old run-down house for his family, and rented the remaining rooms to the above-mentioned subtenants. We did not go to see the rooms before we gave a deposit as we knew Mr. Basch personally. He assured us that everything would be in the best of shape. When we got there, we found a real *chorban* (disaster). Nothing had been done to make the rooms liveable. It was too late, we had already given him the deposit, and some of us had already paid in full. The rent was about $30.00. The grass was not cut, the roof leaked, the gas burners which each family had for their use, was not connected. We did our best and put things in shape ourselves and tried to make the best of it. We were all friends and we had a good time.

The second summer, we did not leave the renting of the rooms to chance. Dave Schonfeld and I took a ride up to the mountains to see the rooms. They were just as the owner, Mr. Jacobowitz, had promised us. We spent a delightful summer there. The good part of being in

Woodridge was that the house was very close to the village. It was very convenient for shopping and of course close to the synagogue. We had no problems about services on the Sabbath.

The third summer, when we were in Ellenville in the Pearl House, we had an extra advantage. A small lake was just a few blocks away on Route 209. As a matter of fact, there was a high waterfall which very refreshing. We faced a tall mountain while sitting on the porch of the rooming house, which was about two miles away. We were told that there was an ice cave in the mountain which had ice in it all the time, even on the hottest summer day.

One day, Dave and I became very brave and adventurous. We decided to climb the montain to this ice cave ourselves. We would start out by walking right across the fields, reach the mountain and climb up to the top. We were young and had the time and the energy. We were told by the rest of the tenants to bring back enough ice to fill up our ice boxes.

One morning, right after breakfast, we started the hike. It took us about two hours to reach the top of the mountain. It was real nice up there. There was a lake up there and also a lookout from where, they claimed, several states could be seen. We eventually found the cave which had a makeshift ladder which led into the large hold that was the entrance. We climbed in all the way. It was nice and cool there, very refreshing after the long climb. Truly there was ice all around us. Now, of course, the place has become an attraction for tourists. They have an admission charge to enter the grounds to see the lake on top of the mountain and the ice cave. At that time, it was unknown, visited by only a few people.

We managed to break off a large chunk of ice, packed it in newspaper and brought it back with us to the rooming house. The descent was much easier than the ascent. Most of the ice melted in the heat of the sun, but we did have enough left to prove that we had climbed the mountain and saw the ice cave. We were considered heroes to have undertaken such a feat. At the present time they have paved roads to lead up to the mountain and so you can drive up there. After forty-five years or so, every time I pass Route 209, I look up the steep hill and say to myself and mumble the well-known song: *"Vus is gevyen is geveyn, und is mehr nishtah, Shon awek yene tzeit, yene shu."* Whatever was, was, and is no more. Those times and those hours are away already. But that is life and thank G-d for the present time.

For the fourth summer, our new friends, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob

Schechter suggested that we join them. The place was in Loch Sheldrake, very close to the famous summer resort of that time, known as the Evan's Hotel, in the middle of the village, on the beautiful Loch Sheldrake lake. The rabbi of the synagogue, Rabbi Hecht, was also a *schochet* and was a landsman. He is not here anymore and his son has taken his place. We found the place very convenient and so we took a room there. The price was, I believe, $35.00 for the entire summer. We started the season early. We went out there for the Shevuouth holiday. We spent a nice Yom Tov there.

I don't know for how much Mr. Schechter rented the whole house for. If he rented the rooms for $35.00 a unit, it meant that he received $500 for the whole house. He gave the owners only a small deposit, because I remember that right after the holiday, he went to the nearby village of Hurleyville to see a lawyer about finalizing the deal. Being he considered me an agent, he asked me to accompany him to draw up the contract. As usual, he had no money, or very little with him. I gave him the $35.00 rental fee, and with this he paid the lawyer. He paid the rental on the house as he collected the rents from the tenants. There was no reason for my former wife (may she rest in peace) to rush back to New York. The owners of the building were staying up there and so she remained with them. The Schechters had to go back to the city, this being the month of May, their children still had to return to school. They asked my former wife to show the rooms to potential customers and to rent the rooms to them. Since I had my insurance business, I also had to return to the city and went back to the mountains for weekends. Since I had a car, I took Mr. and Mrs. Schechter along with me.

I failed to come out for two weekends. The Vishiver rabbi, Rabbi Mendel Hager, came from Europe at that time. He came to collect funds for a yeshiva that he was building in Vishive in Maromorosh. I was recommended to him and became his official chauffeur. We spent one Shabbos in Passaic, New Jersey. A group of Chasidim from Brooklyn and New York came along with the rabbi. We were put up in the houses of the members of the community, but the meals were served in the hall of the synagogue where a lot of the members from Passaic came to be with the rabbi, to be present at the *tisch* (table) to listen to the rabbi's Torahs and eat from *sherayim* (part of the good food which the rabbi had tasted) as is the custom by chasidim. He was an excellent speaker. The next morning he gave a lecture in the synagogue where the appeal was made. People came to the Sabbath meal, Sheulos Seudos, and later to a *Melave D'Malke.* A week or so later I took him to

Philadelphia, Pa. where the same procedure was repeated. In Philadelphia we received a telephone message that the rabbi's father, the Vishnitzer rabbi passed away. As he was one of the children who was in line for the new rabbinical position, he left for Europe a few days later. (He was not chosen to be the Vishnitzer rabbi. I presume another brother was either designated by his father as the future rabbi, or that he was chosen by a general vote.)

Two of the rooms at the summer place were not rented. I believe that Mr. Schechter was not anxious to rent them. He had other plans. He wanted people to come as guests, with room and board. It started with two people from his shop who came for the weekend as paying guests. When I came to pick up Mr. Schechter on Friday to take him up, he also took along these two men. On Monday, when I took them back to the city, Mr. Schechter told me that he had agreed with his wife that for the following weekend he will bring four people, since there were two vacant rooms, and as long as she was cooking for her family, she just had to cook a little more, and at the same time it brought in an extra income. Mrs. Schechter was an excellent cook and baker. It was customary for Mr. Schechter to bring guests to his house all the time for a *kiddush* or a Sabbath meal. She would always prepare a little extra food knowing that her husband would surprise her with a guest or two. Later on in the season, instead of only a weekend, two or three people from the factory remained for the entire week. Mrs. Gartenberg, not having anything special to do, offered her assistance to Mrs. Schechter in the cooking and baking. Mrs. Schechter, besides being the perfect cook and baker, specialized in baking apple and Hungarian kraut strudel. People just could not get enough of these.

Mr. Schechter had business cards printed, giving the name and address of the place and distributing these cards all over. In order to make sure that people would know where it was, besides the address, he also added the words, "next to the Evans Hotel." We had a laugh, when once, he went over to see Mr. Evans at the hotel and told him, "See, I am advertising your hotel." Mr. Evans smiled. The hotel was well-known at that time, and was in no need of advertising on Mr. Schechter's small business cards. Mr. Schechter asked him whether as a repayment for his advertising the hotel he would agree to let the people from the rooming house come to the social hall once in a while. Mr. Evans agreed that during the weekends, Mr. and Mrs. Schechter could come, but that the rest of the people could only come in during the week when the hotel was not busy.

And so it began. From about the middle of the season, there were always a few guests at the rooming house. I brought most of them up in my car. I charged the nominal fee of $1.00 a trip, just to cover the cost of gas, etc.

One of the guests who came with me every Friday, was a Mr. Joseph Schechter, *Z"l* (He was the father of the present Rosh Hayeshivah of Yeshivah Chaim Berlin.) "Joe" as we called him, had a very good voice, a real *Baal Tefilah.* He and I sang the whole way going to and coming from the mountains. He was a furrier by trade, and I usually picked him up at the shop someplace on 36th Street near 7th Avenue. We became very good friends until he died an untimely death in his best years. It was a real tragedy to his family and all his friends. He was very active in the Young Israel movement.

My small Chevrolet was always packed with travelers and their bags. Mr. Schechter always took along some food which was needed for the "business." I had to put things on the running boards and fenders of the car as well as the roof. There was no room for a needle in the car, yet we managed to pick up a watermelon on the road. The watermelons always ended up on the lap of Mr. Jacob Schecther.

I will never forget one particular incident. Since the car was already packed full, and Mr. Schechter and another passenger were sitting next to me on the front seats, we could not buy a real large watermelon. When it came time to cut up the watermelon, Mrs. Schechter, as a rule, had the honor of cutting it up. One day she exclaimed, "No matter how thin I slice the watermelon, by the time I have distributed it to the paying guests, the Schechter children, the Gartenbergs, and the rest of the tenants, there is only the tiniest end piece left for me. The day will come when I will buy the largest watermelon available, and eat the whole melon all by myself."

I never forgot the incident, until many years later in the Pioneer Country Club, where we bought 30-40 melons for every Sabbath. Jack Green, as the salad man, was cutting up the melons to serve to about 800 guests and 200 help, I noticed an exceptionally large melon. I put the melon aside, and at the end of the Sabbath meal, when our two families sat down to our table to have our meal served to us, I took this large melon, cut it into two halves, placed them on a large tray and wheeled it in a dish wagon into the dining room. I stopped next to Mrs. Schechter (may she rest in peace) and made the following announcement, "Now listen everybody. No one is to touch this melon, both halves are for Mrs. Schechter and she will be the only one to finish every last bite of it. This is to redeem the vow that she made many,

many years ago that she would eat the largest available melon all by herself, to make up for the deprivations that she suffered when she only had a tiny end piece for herself." Everyone, including Mrs. Schechter burst out laughing. After all the laughter, Mrs. Schechter, with tears running down her face, told me, "My dear friend, the world says, *Men ken leyben, nohr men lohst nisht.* Now that G-d has helped us, and we can afford the best in the world, where do we take health and strength to enjoy it?" She was already quite ill at the time and could barely eat anything. But I never forgot her statement that she had made twenty-five years before, and I felt that I would make her happy by reminding her of the better times that we had now.

And so the season went on. Mr. Schechter was the buyer. Mrs. Schechter was the cook and took care of the rooms of the paying guests, Harold Schechter was the waiter and the Gartenbergs helped out wherever they could. I don't know what they earned. I presume that they made some profit, because Mr. and Mrs. Schechter were anxious to continue the business. The two women got along very well, being together all the time, just like two sisters. Mr. Schechter used to say, "All my life I wanted to be a *machnis ohrech,* a welcomer of guests, just like my father was. I remember that as a child , I accompanied my father, taking kosher food to the Jewish patients in the hospital of our city, inviting guests to our house for the Sabbath meals. Of course, at that time, we did not charge any money. Here in this business, we do have to charge a fee for two reasons. The expenses are too great, and we need the money to prepare food for the next guests." As far as I myself was concerned, every poor man who came to our village, knew that by the Gartenberg family, there was food and lodging awaiting them at all times.

At the end of the season Mr. and Mrs. Schechter approached us and suggested that we go into business together with them for the next summer. We readily agreed. We therefore began looking around for a larger and more suitable place. I do not remember how we found the next place, whether through a real estate agent, or through some other connections. The place was the Hochdorf Farm in Ferndale, N.Y., not far from the Grossinger Hotel.

The farm had 32 rooms, a large community kitchen and a dining room. It also had a glass enclosed porch. We were afraid to turn all the rooms into a boarding house. We decided to rent out about half of the rooms for so-called *koch aleyn* business, meaning that the tenants would do their own cooking on prepared gas ranges and use the kitchen tables. A section of the kitchen would be used to do the

cooking for the boarders. The enclosed glass porch would be used as the dining room for the boarders.

Of course, the two women would be the cooks, bakers, and chamber maids. Mr. Schechter and I, both of us who had to go back to the city, he, to his shop where he held on to his job of being a tailor on ladies coats, and I, to take care of my insurance business, but instead of coming out on Friday afternoons, we would try to come out on Thursday nights. We prepared all the food that we could on the previous Sunday, and the rest, we would do when we came out on Thursdays. We named the place the Gartenberg and Schechter's Garden House.

Early in the spring of the following year, we had posters printed which we placed in the windows of stores, advertising the place. We made up visiting cards, which we gave to everyone that we met. Right after Passover, we drove up in my car to the place very early Sunday morning and stayed until late in the afteroon in order to fix up the place and make it ready for the season. For Shevuouth, we had a few guests.

The tenants of the rooms started coming out first during the month of June. The price for room and board for a week was set at $16.00 per person. Daily rates for a weekend was $3.00 per day. The owners of the farm, Mr. and Mrs. Hochdorf lived in a cottage on the premises, taking care of the farm which had several cows, chickens, etc. According to our agreement, they had to provide us with linen, blankets, etc. The dishes, pots and pans, and silverware we had to buy ourselves, as they ran their house as a rooming house and did not have these things. We also had to rent dining room tablecloths, napkins, and other items. Having worked at meats before, in New York, it came naturally to me to be the shopper of the meat and poultry which we bought in a wholesale house in Liberty which I prepared for the two cooks. Before we left for the city, Mr. Schechter and I prepared the groceries, fruits and vegetables, etc. Other things like bread and milk products were delivered for the tenants as well as for the boarding house, by the local dealers. That is how we began to operate the eventual famous Gartenberg and Schechter hotel business.

The Hochdorfs had a son in Brooklyn, who was in the cleaning business. His two daughters, Blanche and her sister came out to the farm to stay with their grandparents. We became acquainted with them. When we were busy, they helped us in the business, working in the dining room. Eventually Harold Schechter married the older daughter, Blanche. During the time that we operated our various

hotels, Blanche became very active in the business. The business caught on very fast. We were liked by the public. There were times when we had no rooms to satisfy all the inquiries from guests who wanted to come out and stay with us. At such times, we rented additional rooms in the neighborhood.

My younger brother, Sidney, had worked for many years as a butcher boy in Brooklyn. For the summer months, he worked in the same capacity in the Ehrenreich Hotel in Ferndale, New York. In his spare time he came to help us out and show us how things were done in the Ehrenreich Hotel, at that time a famous kosher hotel in the mountains, which had been in operation for many years. It was patronized mainly by members of the Young Israel movement. At the time, it was considered a very nice hotel. It had a swimming pool, a social hall, where the guests were given entertainment every night. They had their own band of music, etc. My brother showed us how to prepare a meal, and how to serve a meal; how to trim a table to look like a banquet table; how much food to put on a plate, not too little and not too much.

As we were far from the village of Ferndale, we had to arrange a place to have daily prayer services. The dealers in Ferndale and Liberty began to give us merchandise on credit, so that we were able to operate the business. We were open until after the Rosh Hashanah holiday. When we closed the business for the season, Mr. Schechter and I took our credit book and visited every dealer. We paid everyone the balances that we owed them, paying by check. As a matter of fact, it was the first time that Mr. Schechter had the opportunity to sign checks from a book in the account that we had opened at the beginning of the season in a bank in Liberty.

When we settled and paid all the bills, we saw that we lost the sum of $6.00 for the season. At the moment, it seemed to us that something was wrong. After all, we were quite busy, and at times, we had to refuse people for lack of space, as we had no rooms left and we were unable to get any rooms at the neighboring farmers or rooming houses. Of course, that was only for a few weekends.

I will never forget that on a particular weekend (it must have been the weekend of *Shabbos Nachmuh*) we were so busy that we gave up our own private rooms which we gave to customers to whom we had promised lodging a long time ago. As we had no place to sleep, all of us, including the Schechter children, went to sleep in the barn. There was plenty of fresh cut hay, with a very pleasant smell. It was late at night, because we had to see that the dishes were washed and packed away.

The food that remained was stored away in the small frigidaires that we had, so that we did not mind where we slept for the few hours that were left. The minute that we hit the hay, we were fast asleep. Imagine my astonishment, when a little while later, I was awakened by the feeling that my face was being licked by a warm large tongue. I was half asleep, but still very anxious to find out who was licking my face. We were all sleeping separately. The males slept in one section of the barn and the females in another section. Stretching out my hand to feel who was licking me, I noticed that it was one of the farmer's cows who became hungry during the night and came to eat some hay, finding a soft object like my face, started to lick it. Naturally, I jumped up and chased the cow away. When I told Mr. Hochdorf, the farmer, about the incident, he said that I should consider myself lucky that I was not actually bitten by the cow, and that it was not one of the women or one of the children who were licked, as they would have become terribly frightened and would scream aloud.

When we told some people in the village that after such a terribly hard summer, with our families working so hard, we did not make any money, but on the contrary lost a few dollars, they all thought that we did exceptionally well, because as a rule, all beginners lose even more money in the first few years of their operations. In fact, we really did not have to lose any money. We would have made a few hundred dollars if not for the following unpleasant incident. That particular year, Labor Day and Rosh Hashonoh came out together. Labor Day as usual was on a Monday and that day was also the day the New Year began. Some of the season tenants who wanted to be home for Rosh Hashonoh, notified us before that they would leave the place on the Thursday before. This gave us practically three quarters of the rooms which we were able to rent out as room and board rooms.

A group of dentists from Brooklyn, heard about our place and decided that they would like to spend the long weekend with us. It would mean almost a week, from Friday afternoon to the following Thursday morning. They wanted a small quiet place, with good food at a reasonable price. If I remember correctly, they were seventeen couples and some children. A total of more than forty people. I think that it was more guests than we ever had in the place at one time. The price that we agreed on was about $20.00 a person for the whole time. The income was to be about close to a thousand dollars. All of us worked very hard. We even engaged some extra help to have everything in the best of order. We cleaned the rooms, bought extra linens, more dishes, silverware, plenty of food, arranged for the best of menus, etc.

As usually happens at that time of the year, as soon as the meal was finished on Friday night, a rainstorm broke out with a lot of loud thundering and lightning, which blew out all the lights. The dentists, as we found out, were about to sit down to play cards for the evening. As the lights went out and may take hours to fix, they came to ask us to light up lots of candles all around the place, so that they could start their card playing as soon as possible. Mr. Schechter and I became enraged and yelled out, "What, on the Sabbath we should go and light candles! And what is more, you intend to be *mechalel Shabbos* and play cards on the Sabbath and perhaps on the Rosh Hashanah holiday as well? Never will we agree to that."

A few of the dentists became even more enraged, and with a great temper hollered out, "Well, why did you think we came here, to sit in your synagogue during our whole stay here? We wanted a kosher place, and we heard that you serve good meals. We don't mind going to synagogue for a short period of time, do a little of praying, and listen to the blowing of the *shofar*. But do not expect us to say *tehilim* all day. It is our hard earned vacation. We want to have good meals, relax, play cards, take our cars and go for rides around the country side and right now, we want to play cards, so please let us not stay in the dark. Bring us lots of candles for the lobby, so that we may start our game. We are wasting precious time."

Of course, we told them in very clear language that we would not stand for all of their requests, and we walked away. Some of them went out to their cars, and left their families in the dark. They rode away. A little while later, they returned and advised us that they had found other accommodations and that they were leaving immediately, and that we should present them with a bill for the dinner that they had. Of course, we did not give them a bill on the Sabbath. They left and told us to send them the bill to their homes. There was nothing else for us to do, but to accept the whole matter as a part of our strict religion. As a matter of fact, we were satisfied that it happened right at the beginning of the Sabbath and the approaching Rosh Hashonoh holiday, as it would have caused us a lot of aggravation to have our Sabbath and Rosh Hashonoh disgraced. So, it turned out that not only did we not make a profit of about $600.00 which would have been great for us, but we lost $6.00. We were left with lots of food that we could not use up as it was the end of the season, and we had only about a *minyan* in our synagogue for the Sabbath and the New Year holiday. That was the end of the first season of the Gartenberg & Schechter hotel business.

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Finishing the season in the Garden House, we decided that we would continue the business the next summer. It was agreed that we would look for a better place. No more rooming houses with so-called *koch aleyn* guests, and also regular hotel guests. The two were not a good combination. The new place should also have a social hall (in those days it was called a casino) where we would have a band for playing music and a place for entertainment.

At that time, my brother Sidney, came to tell me that he decided that he would go out of the meat and poultry line and that he would like to join me for the next season in the hotel business. He was engaged to be married to Ruthie Klein. As a matter of fact, it was I who arranged the *shidduch* for him with Mr. and Mrs. Philip Klein. They were in the necktie manufacturing business. I was recommended to them to write some insurance. I liked the family and their daughter Ruthie. I thought that it would be a good match. I felt responsible for Sidney. I brought him out to this country. He lived in my house. However, I was pondering whether Mr. and Mrs. Schechter would agree to a third partner in a small business, and should they agree, would it work out. We therefore decided to part on friendly terms.

Having agreed to do so, Sidney and I started to look for a suitable place. We were recommended to a small hotel, also in Ferndale. The name of the place was the Roxy Hotel located on the mountain which was known as the Upper Ferndale Road, on a steep hill across the bridge in Ferndale, after you make the first right turn. The place had about thirty guest rooms, a nice lobby, a cheerful dining room and a fairly new social hall. The owners were a Mr. and Mrs. Berkman, who were already an elderly couple and anxious to retire from the hotel business. We liked the place and rented it for the summer. During the winter, Sidney and Ruthie were married. After Passover he gave up his job.

We started to advertise the place, printing brochures with pictures of the place and describing the facilities that the hotel offered. The Schechters also rented a hotel similar to the one that we had

taken. While I wished them the best in the world, after all, we were friendly and had nothing against each other, the only reason why we separated was because I did not believe that our set-up would work.

I was very surprised when he rented a hotel on the same road as we were located, just a few minutes away from us. Therefore, many people who knew both of us, some patronized him while others patronized us. But since we were located so close to each other, I felt that some people would patronize neither one of us, in order not to make either one of us angry or embarrass us. But I could not tell them anything. I rented my place much before he did, and had already put a large deposit on the hotel. But we remained friends. As a matter of fact, in the month of June, when neither of us had enough people to make a *minyan,* we went to his place for services or they came to my place. Naturally, after the services, the guests from the other hotel were invited to remain for the *kiddush.*

Right after Passover, we began looking around for a staff who would work at the hotel for the summer. We engaged a Mrs. Hecht, a well-known chef, as our cook. As a second chef and baker, we engaged her daughter-in-law. Our sister-in-law, the wife of my brother, Joseph (her name was Manya), who I had just brought over from Israel, took care of the rooms. My brother Sidney, took care of the meat department, plus other shopping. Ethel, my sister-in-law, took over the concession, selling candies, sodas, etc. I went into New York for a few days each week to drum up business.

As a head waiter, salad man and entertainer, we engaged one man for all three jobs. He was a Jewish actor who worked during the winter months in the Artef Theatre in New York, but was also experienced in being a waiter, head waiter and salad man. My former wife and sister-in-law, Ruthie, helped everywhere. There was enough work for everyone. As some guests came with small children, we also hired a counselor to take care of them. When we needed extra help, like an additional waiter or a bus boy, we took them on as we needed them. Our rates were increased to $20.00 per week and about $4.00 per day for weekends. A four piece band was engaged to play music and give concerts.

Our combination head waiter, waiter, salad man and actor performed on the stage, either as a one-man show, or by recruiting amateur actors and actresses from the staff or from the guests. He put on good shows which the guests enjoyed a lot. My brother Sidney and I, besides doing all kinds of odd jobs, were also used as actors every once in a while. Remembering the *Purim Shpiel* acts that we as children

put on on Purim in Europe, we also did these acts either as a two-man team, or joined Mr. Freilach in his productions. He was an expert make-up artist. He had the usual make-up box that was being used on the stage of the theatres in New York.

He took a liking to my acting, and soon, he and I performed on the stage regularly. We put up short skits on various subjects which we made up ourselves, mostly about happenings at the hotel, and believe me, plenty of things were happneing at the hotel, about which many shows were written. He also wrote plays from current happenings in America and in Israel. He was an expert in putting on beards and mustaches on our faces, so that we were able to imitate almost everyone.

Years later, when we engaged well-known acts, paying them thousands of dollars, many of our guests remarked that they enjoyed better the home-made acts that we put on in the first years of our hotel operations. There were nights when we put on shows by using the talents of our staff and guests who were able to sing and dance, say jokes, or give lectures. This was the usual procedure even in the larger hotels. People were not spoiled by watching the professional shows now performed on television. They found the shows that we made up much more entertaining than those put on by the professionals.

This Mr. Freilch was connected with an Art Theatre or as we called it in Yiddish, a *Kunst Theatre,* nothing vulgar. Any little skit that we put on was artistic and high class. For instance, we put on a piece from the "Jazz Singer," in which Al Jolson appeared in those days. When we put it on in our hotel, I appeared as the father, the cantor. I was fixed up with a beard (I was sort of a cantor myself; I was the official cantor in our hotels, and officiated as the *Baal Musaf* for over forty years) in the production that we portrayed in the hotel. I also sang the *Kol Nidre* with the accompaniment of our four-piece band. The band consisted of very talented performers. They were young students who had graduated or were attending the Julliard School of Music.

To this day many people who patronized us tell me what good times they had at our hotel. For instance, Mrs. Wohlberg, the wife of Rabbi Harry Wohlberg, the famous rabbi of the Shomrei Emunah Shul in Boro Park, now retired and living in Far Rockaway, told Devorah, my wife, that she remembers the artistic and comical shows that we put on in our casino. Among our guests we also had a Rabbi and Mrs. Kutler. He was the rabbi of a synagogue in Bensonhurst. Rabbi Kutler gave us very high-class lectures in English. When Rabbi

Wohlberg who spoke more of *Devar Torah* on the chapter of the week, he, I believe, spoke in Yiddish which was very interesting and accepted by the guests. All in all, our small hotel became one of the most famous hotels of that period.

Other hotels in the same size category in the Catskill Mountains were, the American House on Route 17 in Ferndale; the Kantrowitz Hotel in Woodridge; the Kleinberg House in Woodridge; the Weinreb Hotel near Liberty, and a few others. They attracted elderly people, while we were getting the younger crowd. Larger established hotels were the Pine View Hotel in South Fallsburg, and the Ehrenreich Hotel in Ferndale. Many of them are already out-of-business at this time. These were the strictly kosher and *shomer shabbos* hotels. Among the larger and more modern hotels that attracted a different clientele than those who patronized the above-mentioned hotels, were the Grossinger Hotel, the Concord Hotel, which had just about started their business, and the Flagler Hotel.

The old Mrs. Grossinger, the mother of Jennie, with her husband, started the hotel business in the Catskill Mountains. On the advice of his doctor, for reasons of health, they bought a small farm house near Liberty, a neighborhood which was popular at that time as a good place for people who needed the high mountain air, and for those who were looking for a kosher hotel in the mountains. Mrs. Grossinger was a strictly religious person and was trusted for *kashruth* and thereby attracted religious customers. We are going back about seventy years or so.

I remember that when Mr. Schechter and I opened the first of our hotels, the Garden House, which was within walking distance to Grossingers, not having yet a *minyan* in our hotel, we walked over to Grossingers, hoping to find a *minyan* there. It was aboout 9:00 a.m. When we came there and went to their synagogue, we were told that they had a *minyan* which started at about 7:00 in the morning. They had just finished their services, and were having breakfast now. Mr. Schechter and I, and one or two of our guests who came along with us, started to pray by ourselves. Somehow, Mrs. Grossinger found out about our presence there. At the end of the praying, a waiter came down with a large tray of herring, whiskey, cake, etc., with a message from Mrs. Grossinger saying that because she did not feel too well, she could not come down to welcome us for honoring her with our being there, that we should make ourselves at home and make *kiddush* before we walked back to our hotel. We thought that it was a very nice gesture.

I met Mrs. Grossinger a few years later on *Erev Yom Kippur* in the town of Ferndale. When we came to Ferndale, and operated the Empire Hotel, we found out that there was once a *mikvah* in Ferndale, but it was neglected for the last few years, and was not being used. As there was a need for a *mikvah*, we gathered monies in our hotel to repair the *mikvah* and make it usable. When on *Erev Yom Kippur* morning I came down to Ferndale to check whether the *mikvah* was ready for use, I met Mrs. Grossinger speaking to the *shochet* of the town with whom she was friendly for many years. Mrs. Grossinger said that when she found out that the *mikvah* in Ferndale was restored, she came to use it, as her mother used to go to the *mikvah* on *Erev Yom Kippur*. I introduced myself and thanked her for her kindness to us on that Sabbath a few years ago.

There were many problems in the hotel that summer. This hotel already required a full staff with salaries, rooms to live and the usual problems connected with help. I remember one time when Mr. Freilach who was the main waiter and Mrs. Wachs, the cook, had an argument — something about a portion for a guest, or about a double portion that he wanted to give to a guest, but which she refused to give him, so it started an argument. After the meal, Mrs. Wachs came over to me and told me that she wants to quit the job unless I immediately fired the headwaiter. She was a stubborn Hungarian woman and insisted that I should give her an immediate answer. She took off her uniform and gave me a final ultimatum; it is either her or the headwaiter. Both, she as chef, and Mr. Freilach who occupied three positions, waiter-headwaiter, saladman and comedian, both were important people in the hotel. Who should be the one to be fired? We decided that being that she gave us the ultimatum, while Mr. Freilach was willing to stay on with or without her, it should be Mrs. Wachs who should be paid off. So here we were in the middle of the season without a cook. She also took along her daughter-in-law, who was the second cook and baker.

There were no cooks available in the employment agencies in the mountains, so on Monday morning, I left for New York to visit hotel employment agencies about finding a cook. It does not happen easily. All good help are engaged before the summer season. Seldom can one find a good cook without a job in the middle of the summer. A day or so later, I did find a woman who was ready to undertake the job of cook and baker, but she could not leave New York immediately. She would first be ready on Thursday afternoon. I called the hotel to inquire how

they were making out, and to tell them that I was bringing out a cook on Thursday night. They told me that they were doing the best they could and that they were eagerly awaiting the cook so that she may prepare the food for the Sabbath.

I started out on Thursday afternoon. I lived in Williamsburgh, the cook lived some place in the Bronx. By the time that I arrived at her home in the Bronx, driving through the heavy traffic, it was already towards evening. By the time we arrived at the hotel, it was already very late. I expected to get a good argument from all. As soon as we arrived, the first thing I did, was to run into the kitchen. When I got there, there was no one around. I looked around and saw that there were pots and pans full of cooked food for the Sabbath in the frigidaire. Plenty of cakes were freshly baked and stored in the pantry frigidaire. Inquiring from the night man as to where everyone was, he told me that everyone was in the casino watching the show. After the show, I was told that everything went on normally during the week. Not being sure that I would bring a cook, and if I would, what would she be like, they all got together and prepared for the Sabbath. My former wife was already a pretty good experienced cook. There was Ruthie who helped along. My sister-in-law, Ethiel Fuchs, and the other sister-in-law, Manye, also helped along. Mrs. Klein, the *mechuteyneste,* Ruthie's mother, a *baal haboste* of long standing, also pitched in. Between all of them they took care of everything. The new cook turned out to be good and finished the season cooking and baking, with the rest of the family helping her out.

This summer, again, the *Rosh Hashanah* holiday was close to Labor Day. We remained in the hotel until after the holiday. Enough guests booked for the holiday so that it paid for us to remain open. My brother Sidney was the *baal shachris.* The *mechuten,* Reb Fischel Klein was the *baal koreh.* I was the *baal musaf.*

The hotel was quite good for the operation that we needed. The only thing missing was a swimming pool. We discussed the matter with the owner, Mr. Berkman, about building a pool. However, he was not too anxious to make the investment. During the past summer, we rented the privilege of a pool at the Upper Ferndale Country Club, which was within walking distance. The hotel went out-of-business and was bought by Camp Agudah where they built up a very nice and large camp for children. The arrangement was pretty good, but our guests were not too happy about it, claiming that it was too far and that by the time they came back, they were all perspired.

So, it was time to look for another hotel that would have a swimming pool on the premises. When we figured up the income and expenses of the hotel, we found that we lost the sum of $350.00 for the season. We would have probably made out better, if we would have had a swimming pool of our own. The Schechters who had no pool in their rented hotel, also used the pool privileges at the Upper Ferndale Country Club. They also began looking for another hotel, which they found in Kiamesha Lake, so that there was no question, but that we too must find a hotel with a pool, not to be outdone by the Schechters, whose hotel had its own pool.

We found such a hotel; the Paramount Hotel in Hurleyville, which not only had a swimming pool, but also a lake for rowing. The swimming pool was fed from the overflow waters of the lake. That was already an advantage. We would not have the burden of paying for the water bill that the city of Hurleyville charged for the use of water. However, the pool was pretty cracked and needed a new bottom. Also, the floor of the social hall was sunken in one place and needed repairs. The owner of the hotel was the rabbi and *shochet* of the town. He rented the hotel to us at a fair price with the understanding that the cost of the repair of the swimming pool and the social hall was to be assumed by us. This was really a blind article, not having the faintest idea of what these repairs could cost. We decided to rent the place anyway and take our chances. So here we were, in the construction business already.

Right after Passover of the following year, as the snows melted, we went out to the new hotel to examine the repairs that were needed for the swimming pool and the sunken floor in the social hall. We contracted builders to give us estimates as to the costs. Their prices were very high, running into the thousands of dollars.

We were fortunate however, for when we went to the local employment agencies to hire help for the maintenance of the hotel, we met a man by the name of Bill. He claimed that he was an expert in cement work as well as in carpentry work. We immediately hired him for the summer. The going price was $25.00 per month. We promised him a bonus, if he would stay for the summer. As a rule, these handymen were drifters going from job to job. As soon as they worked a few days and had a few days salary coming to them, they took some money on account, so that they could go to the village and get drunk. If you refused to give them money on account, they quit and you were more or less obligated to pay them off, although they could be told to come back and pick up their money on pay day. But who wanted to

start up with them. However, sometimes there was a case when a person had a problem either with his family, or some other problem, and in such a case many of them ended up in the hotel business where they were assured of room and board and a few dollars in their pocket. This fellow, Bill, was one of them.

When he came to the hotel, we showed him the swimming pool which needed reparirs and also the floor of the social hall. He immediately ordered bags of cement. We rented a cement mixer and many bags of sand. Other handymen scraped off the old cement from the walls and he filled up the cracks with cement. He cleaned out the broken floor of the pool and while looking around the grounds in the back of the hotel, he found a pile of old bed springs and other scrap metal. They were all brought to the pool, with which the floor was lined. Eventually, a lot of cement was poured on it. This operation saved a lot of cement and at the same time made the floor very strong which would last for years. After a good paint job, we had a practically new swimming pool.

As for the floor in the casino, the first thing that we did was to dig ditches to draw away the accumulated waters. When this was done, we brought lots of stones that we gathered around the property, placed them on the ground under the casino. When the place was pretty dry, we rented a hoist, a sort of a jack and little by little, we jacked up the building. We placed large stones under that section, set up a cement foundation, and the social hall floor was all straightened out. So, instead of spending thousands of dollars, both jobs were done with a few hundred dollar expense.

One day, many weeks before we were to open for the season, my brother Sidney approached me with a sour face, telling me that after many discussions with his wife, Ruthie and his in-laws, they decided that they did not want to continue in the hotel business. Their decision was based on many factors.

1. After a very hard five months work, instead of earning some money, they lost $175.00, which was their share of the entire loss of $350.00.
2. Not only did they lose $175.00 out of their pocket, but also the wages that he would probably have earned, which amounted to about $1,000.00
3. In the business, he was occupied night and day, whereas on the job, he had to work a certain amount of hours and then was free.
4. Who knew when the hotel business would start showing a profit, it could take years before he could make a living there, etc.

I could not help but agree with him and told him so. I advised him to really decide before we got more deeply involved in the business, with an additional investment of money. Well, here we were before a season, and we had no partner to help us continue our business. The nature of the business was such that we could not do it by ourselves. It was too much for us alone.

So we started to look around for a suitable partner. I had an uncle and aunt, he was my mother's brother. Their names were Herman and Helen Ligeti. (Here I will deviate a little and explain the Hungarian sounding name of Ligeti). His name was really Lebowitz, like the rest of the brothers. While he was a young fellow, he and his friend, a boy by the name of Adolph Lefkowitz, left their villages of Deregnyo and Wayan and went up to Budapest to look for careers. They found jobs in a haberdashery store. It was a period when many people who came from small towns into big cities, changed their names to a more Hungarian sounding one, so my uncle changed his name to Ligeti. I believe that there was a park in Budapest which was called Ligeti Park.) His friend, who later on married his sister named Helen, changed his name to Laszlo. I understand that at one time there was a famous Hungarian by the name of Laszlo. Later on, they decided to come to America. Their older sister Hannah who was already in America, was notified that two boys by the name of Ligeti and Laszlo arrived at Ellis Island and gave her name as the one to whom they were related and that she should come and take them out of Ellis Island. It took a while for her to find out who they were, one of them her own brother.

A similar situation happened with my brother Joseph. Before he came to this country, he took up residence in Israel. He could not take the heat and the malaria that was prevailing at that time. He married his wife, Manye there. One day I received a letter from Israel, and I noticed that the return address on the envelope was from a Mr. and Mrs. Hargany. I could not make out who had sent me the letter. I opened it and saw that it was from my brother Joseph. It was during the period when people in Israel changed their names to more Hebrew sounding names. His name being Gartenberg, which stands for a garden and a mountain, translated into Hebrew means *"gan"* and *"har."* Turning the words around the other way, he made up the name Hargani. In the letter he wrote me that they decided to come to this country and would I be so kind and send the papers which would enable them to come here. He asked me to make the papers in the

name of Hargani, which was the name that they were now registered under.

My uncle was in the wholesale butter and egg business, selling mostly to grocery stores. They lived in Far Rockaway. besides this business, my aunt Helen had a rooming house at the ocean, where she rented out apartment facilities to *koch aleyn* families. Once the apartments were rented for the summer, she did not have much to do with them. She once mentioned to me that she would not mind joining us in the hotel business for the summer months. As I was in business with my brother, I did not find it practical to take in a third partner. However, now that I remained alone in the business, I thought that perhaps it would be a good idea to get in touch with her. I did so and she agreed to it immediately. So instead of being known as formerly, Gartenberg and Schechter, and later as Gartenberg Brothers, it was now known as Gartenberg and Ligeti.

My uncle, Herman was in the city taking care of his business and my aunt came out to the hotel. Having some experience in running a rooming house, she took over the supervision of the rooms, and Mrs. Gartenberg supervised the running of the kitchen. Mr. Freilach was as before the waiter-headwaiter, salad man and the chief actor. Of course, we had hired a full staff of other help, so that the operation ran pretty smoothly during the whole summer.

There were slow periods and some very busy periods, especially during the weekends. We already became known as a place where young boys and girls came out to meet their future mates. We were therefore quite busy with checking in many boys and girls. For the three weekends after *Shabbos Nachmu,* we were flooded with requests for reservations for young people. We rented all the available rooms from the neighboring farms and rooming houses, but the requests just kept coming in.

The hotel had two floors. The front rooms had large porches, almost as large as the rooms themselves. The porches had a ceiling and a roof, and the walls were partially enclosed. I kept looking at those porches and it bothered me that so much space was being wasted for nothing. As a matter of fact, they could not even be used as regular porches, because there were no doors leading from the rooms to the outside. (I suppose they were built just to take the sun away from the inside of the rooms.)

A brilliant idea struck me. With the help of my master builder-carpenter, the handyman, Bill, we went to a lumberyard and found some old windows which we bought very reasonably. We also pur-

chased some old lumber that we used to fill in the open parts of the porches, and in a few days, we had an extra ten or twelve rooms. Bill built wooden steps that were placed from the inside and the outside of one of the windows of each room, in order for the guests to reach their rooms. Previously, each room accommodated only two or three guests, and now was accommodating six boys or girls. When I first suggested the idea, all thought that it would not be practical and laughed at me. When the porches turned into rooms, which made the occupation rate about 25% more than before, they did not laugh any longer. Of course, being that we rented the place "as is," without having the landlord buying anything additional, we had to buy some more blankets and pillows, but in the long run these expenses paid for themselves. We were also able to accommodate people whose reservations we had turned down before.

It also gave us a chance to write a skit, how six strange people check into a sort of a dormitory, which I produced and played on the stage and which brought laughter from the guests. By this time, I already became a regular writer of *Purim Shpiels,* or little playlets, which Mr. Freilach and I produced, and acted out a few nights a week, especially on Saturday nights. So much so, that not only did our own guests enjoy the entertainment that we presented, but neighboring guests from nearby rooming houses started to come to the social hall, which already presented a problem, as we did not have enough seats to accommodate all of them. After the shows they visited our tea room, took away the seats that we prepared for our own guests, who now had no place where to sit.

The season went by fairly well. When we figured up the expenses for the year, there was no actual profit left, but we spent a lot of money on improvements. Being that we had intentions of staying another summer, it really meant a profit, as we would not have to spend the money the following summer for the same things. Also, there were many blankets and pillows left for the following summer's use. All in all, we thought that it was a good summer. However, my partner, my aunt Helen who was used to making large profits on her rooming houses in Far Rockaway, was disappointed. She decided that she did not want to go into the business again the following year.

The truth is that I did not care too much, because she did not bring any worthwhile business. Her customers were not too religious. They wanted a more modern type of hotel. Kosher food, yes; but the religious environment was a little too much for them. Our strict observance of the Sabbath, with our blocking the gates on the Sabbath

and not allowing cars to come and go, was not to their liking. Also, not allowing use of the card rooms on the Sabbath was not acceptable to them. We closed the swimming pool and collected the oars from the boats so that they could not go rowing, so they had nothing to do on Friday evenings and all day Saturday. As a matter of fact, even religious or semi-religious people got bored not having some real activities on Friday nights and Saturdays.

I remember a particular incident. It was in the month of June, when there were not yet too many guests in the hotel. We had a handball court which was used all week long. I remember that on a Saturday afternoon, a few boys wanted to play handball. My good friend, Max Gross (he lives in Far Rockaway and is a member of the Agudath Israel), together with other boys, came over to me asking me whether it was permissible to play softball on a Saturday. I did not know what to answer them. One of our guests was Rabbi Ehrenfeld (the Matesdorfer rabbi, who had just come to this country from Europe at that time). I told them to ask the Matesdorfer rabbi, *Z"l.* When he asked them what handball meant, they told him, "We take a ball, which we had in mind to use on the Sabbath anyway. We throw it against the board and when it bounces back, we throw it back on the board with the palm of our hand." The rabbi hesitated for a while, and then said something like this, "Well, as you explained it to me, it is not strenuous work, and as you say, you had in mind to use the ball on the Sabbath, so that it is not *muktzoh* and as there is an *eyrev* around the whole hotel, and since you play with the ball while you are on a cement walk, I would say that perhaps it is permissible." And so reluctantly, he gave them permission to play handball. A little later, when he was walking near the handball court and saw that it was really not like a child's game, and that there was plenty of fast running and great effort involved in playing the game, he said, "Ah, I see that you misled me. If I would have known how much work there is involved in the game, I would have hesitated to give you permission to play the game."

My aunt Helen wanted us to figure up the value of the inventory left, and that I should give her a check for her share. I told her, "How do I know that when I come back next spring, that I will find all the merchandise? As a rule, thieves come during the winter, and clean out everything that they can find in those places which are not being watched. No businessman would go out and buy merchandise in the fall for next year's use, and leave it unguarded for next summer." She agreed that I was right. We decided that when I would come back in

the spring, and find that the merchandise was still there, that I would give her a check for $250.00, her share. Right after Passover of the next year, she started calling me, as to when I would send her the check. I went out to the hotel one Sunday, and the same night, as I had only stepped into the house, she called to find out if everything was still there. I did give a fast look into the room where we had stored the things for the winter, and it looked like everything was there, although I did not count nor examine the contents very closely. I sent her the check the following day.

For the next summer, we decided that we would operate the hotel by ourselves. The place was in good shape inside and out. Bill, my right hand man, came back again. He took care of the maintenance of the place. We hired a housekeeper who, with her own chambermaids, fixed up the rooms and kept them in good order, so that we felt that we would be able to manage without any partners. We already had a good mailing list of guests, many of them came back, making reservations during the winter and spring months, so that I did not go into New York too often to look for customers. They were calling us to make sure that we would accommodate them. During this time, Hitler already started to invade European countries. There was talk of a real war which might start any day. Prices on all kinds of merchandise started to climb. We had to raise our rates to $22.50 per week, and $4.50 per day for the weekends. Hitler did invade Poland by the end of the summer of that year. We made a little money that year, but I do not recall the amount.

That year, the Jewish holidays came out late. We had some reservations for the holiday, but not too many, and we were hesitating whether to remain open or not. During the years that we were separated from the Schechters, we met often and on friendly terms. He also had a handful of people for the *Rosh Hashanah* holiday. We decided, that there was no reason to have two places open for a small amount of people. We therefore agreed to stay together in one place for the last days of the summer. His place was better heated and equipped for colder weather. We therefore moved into his hotel.

I was the *baal tefiloh* for *shachris* and *musaf* and blew the *shofar*. It was only natural for my wife to join Mrs. Schechter in the kitchen to help out, and so the Gartenbergs and the Schechters were together again. Everybody was happy to hear the good news. It was like they say in Yiddish, *"De tate hut de mamen genumen,"* The father took the mother back again. Mazel-tov!!

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Now, that we were together again, we decided that we must at this time get a real classy and modern hotel with all the improvements. The Empire Hotel in Ferndale was available. Mr. and Mrs. Goldberg, who owned and operated the hotel for many years, and were getting on in years, decided to retire. We rented the hotel for one year with an option for four more years. The Empire Hotel was already considered to be a real classy hotel, with all the modern improvements of that period.

There were about twenty rooms with semi-private baths, something that the richer guest demanded. It had a real nice lobby and dining room, a modern social hall, a swimming pool and a lake, and also very nice grounds. This would be the most modern hotel in the mountains catering to the high class and very strictly kosher people of the country. It would surpass the Ehrenreich Hotel, as well as the Pine View Hotel

We took over the hotel for the Passover holiday. Up to now, neither the Schechters nor us were open for the Passover holiday. It is a very hard holiday to operate a hotel, especially a new hotel. We had to buy new sets of dishes, pots, pans, glassware, silverware, etc. The reservations came in fast. The close to one hundred rooms were reserved very rapidly. As there came in more requests, we had to look around for roms to rent. We took rooms as far as the outskirts of Liberty. We told the guests that it was a far distance to walk on *Yom Tov*, but they were so anxious to be with us that they agreed to take the rooms anyway.

It was a very cold winter. The first two floors of the main house and one of the outside houses called the winter house, were steam heated. The third floor of the main house and two other houses across the street, were not heated. Previously, the Goldbergs never used these houses for the Passover holidays, so there was no need to have them heated. At first, we thought that we would not open the third floor of the main house, and surely, not the two houses across the street, but as the reservations kept on pouring in, we decided to open them by putting in gas and electric heaters in the rooms. We told the people that we would do so, and they were satisifed.

We forgot to realize that besides the question of heat, there was also a problem of water. Except for the winter house, the water was disconnected for the winter months. In the winter house, being that the Goldbergs and the caretaker lived there, the water was on for the whole winter. When the plumbers were called in to open the water for the holidays, they said that the third floor of the main house would be alright, but that the two houses across the street, being that the water pipes leading into them were not buried under the ground, the water in the pipes might freeze before they would reach the buildings. They could not guarantee that the water system would work.

What should we do? Every room was already rented for the holiday. After many hours of deliberation, it was agreed that the houses would be heated as well as the public baths. We would have some pipes leading to the buildings and under the buildings opened up in a few places so that there would be a steady flow of water at all times, so as not to give it a chance to freeze. In this way, we would have no problems. With heavy hearts, we opened the water for the holiday. Let the water run at all times, even though it was water supplied by the village and charged by the gallon. We bought as many gas heaters as we were able to get. We placed electric heaters in the smaller rooms. We let them burn on a low heat so that the rooms would be kept warm even before the guests arrived.

A day before the holiday, a big snowstorm began which kept on going all day and the following day as well, which was *Erev Pesach.* It was the year 1940. In those days, the quickway to the mountains was not built yet. The main highway was the old Route 17, with the famous Wurtsboro Mountains. The guests who came up by car, already had trouble getting up the steep hill. The road was slippery. When they finally arrived in Ferndale, it was even much worse than on the steep mountain, down in the village of Ferndale. If they made that stretch of road, the real trouble began trying to get up on the treacherous steep hill leading to the hotel.

That hill always gave us trouble, even in good weather. Just to give you an example, when we had the Roxy Hotel three years before, which was in the same area, but a street before the Empire Hotel, we had an old car which was very hard on starting, especially in the early mornings. I thought of an idea. When I parked the car the night before, I left the car facing the front towards the road. If the car did not start immediately, I just released the brakes, and let her roll down the hill, with the clutch in the first position. Ninety-nine percent of the time, the car started. That was in the summer and with a clear road

going down. Now we are talking about coming up, with a deep snow and ice on the ground.

Practically every car stalled or slipped on the icy roads. The drivers had to walk up to the hotel in the cold weather on icy roads asking us to come and help them climb the hill, leaving their families on the road in the car. Most of the cars at that time did not have heaters yet. We tried our best to help them in the best way that we could. The end result was usually to call Newman's Garage on Route 17 to come with his tow truck and pull them up. After hours of driving, being half frozen, they were told that some of them would have to travel another mile to a house to which they were assigned. They surely did not like it, but of course, we were not to blame, as they were forewarned. Since they made their reservations late, we had to get them the nearest accommodations available. Those who were lucky to have a room on the premises, found that some of the rooms were located on the third floor of the main building, or in the buildings across the street.

There were also other problems awaiting them. Because they were half-frozen from the long ride from New York, the first thing that they did was to turn up the electric heaters to the highest degree. When they did that, the fuses burned out, and the rooms became very cold. Because of the severe cold weather the water pipes leading to the houses across the street began to freeze. Immediately the plumbers were called to use their fire torches to unfreeze the pipes. But in the meantime, there was no water in the rooms, and the toilets were clogged up. Until the fuses were replaced, the rooms were cold. We ran out of fuses. We had to go to Liberty to get a large supply of fuses, which burned out as soon as you put them in. It was a complete catastrophe. We immediately arranged with the electrician and the plumber to have a set of non-Jewish help with their trucks on the premises on a twenty-four hour shift. We and the Schechters were ashamed to face our guests.

Luckily the tragic situation did not interfere with the kitchen or the dining room. There was plenty of food available. We gave out plenty of wines of all sorts for the *Seder*. We went around to the tables serving *schlivovitz* and sweet drinks to everyone. After the *seder*, the people went to sleep, but every few minutes people came down to the lobby telling us that they were freezing. The electricians ran up and down to fix the stoves. In the morning most of the guests came down angry, but hot milk and coffee awaited them in the tea room. Slowly, the guests calmed down.

After the *musaf* services, when the *tal* was prayed, the snowing and the cold weather subsided. It became warmer. Our help cleaned up the walks from the heavy snow. The street cleaning department came with their plows and cleaned away the snow from the road and everything slowly came back to normal. Before things were restored to normal, we thought that our business was ruined, that no guest would ever come back to us. It was not so. By late afternoon, as the guests were sitting in the tea room partaking of the delicious Passover cakes and fruits, they all became merry, the place was filled with laughter and songs. People went for walks, met friends, made new friends. The second *Seder* was greatly enjoyed by everyone. The rest of the holiday passed very normally. We had arranged for high-class entertainment for every night in our large social hall, with plenty of heat. By the time they left after Passover, everyone thanked us for the nice holiday that we prepared for them. Many of the guests made arrangements to come back for the *Shevuouth* holiday.

For this holiday, we encountered different problems, something we did not expect at all. This holiday was a combination of Decoration Day and *Shevuouth.* Decoration Day usually comes out on a Monday, which was also *Erev Shevuouth.* When we rented the Empire Hotel from Mr. and Mrs. Goldberg for one year, the understanding was that they remain living on the premises for the next summer. They left themselves a room in the winter house. They were the operators of the bar. The liquor license remained in their name. Therefore, when the combination of the Decoration Day holiday and the *Shevuouth* holiday came around, it was a long weekend of almost a week. Some people were scheduled to arrive on Thursday night. The *Shevuouth* holiday ended on the next Wednesday night, so that some guests stayed on until the following Thursday morning after breakfast. As the lease was only for one year (with an option of four more years), the Goldbergs, not being sure that we would be able to fill up the hotel with an orthodox and Sabbath observing clientele, being that there were already other kosher hotels in existence, and while the Goldbergs did not notify their former guests that they were out of the business, they did not advise us to refuse to check their guests into the hotel. On the contrary, they wanted to hold onto as many of their former guests that called up for reservations (the income, of course, going to us).

This is what happened. A group of their guests made reservations to come out for that weekend. The guests who patronized our former hotels made reservations. We had an advertisement in the paper that

we have a new hotel, one which was modern, up-to-date, with all the facilities, for guests of all ages. In the ad we had the telephone number of the hotel in Ferndale and the telephone number of my New York address. People made reservations by calling the hotel, and also by calling me in Brooklyn where I was during the week. As I called into the hotel every night, inquiring how they were getting along with reservations, I gave them a list of the reservations that I had accepted in the city. Mr. Schechter advised me that I should slow down in accepting reservations. I should accept no more couples, only families who would occupy rooms by being three or four in a room. A day or so later, I was advised to accept no more reservations, to order more food to be sent to the hotel.

I did so, and reluctantly refused to accept more reservations, except for young fellows who were willing to sleep in a large dormitory which was the kitchen and dining room and located in the old winter house which the Goldbergs used when they were open for the Xmas and New Years holidays, when they operated during the winter, which had about ten rooms. It was my intention to put up many beds and cots in the kitchen and in the dining room. Soon, more boys called up for reservations than we were able to place. Also, girls must have heard that there were many single boys coming to the hotel and began calling up for reservations. I quickly made a switch. I told the girls that I would place them in a dormitory, which they accepted (knowing that there would be many boys there for the weekend). Now, what shall I do with the boys? I called Mr. Schechter and told him to have all the chairs taken out of the social hall, go out and rent as many used cots as he could get, and if he could not get enough used ones, to buy new ones, put them all in the social hall and on the stage, as that would be the boys' dormitory. Mr. Schechter did so. He always listened to my advice, no matter how crazy it sounded, and I in turn also listened to his suggestions, which many times were even more crazy than mine, but as a rule always worked out well. I accepted as many boys and girls as I thought that we could reasonably accommodate.

At that time, I got a call from a Mr. Ben Zion Silber of Bensonhurst telling me (not asking me) that he and his family of about eight people were coming out for the holidays. I told him that I was very sorry, but that we had no more rooms left, even the rooms within walking distance of the hotel were all filled with guests who would be coming out. He replied, "Yes, I heard about it. Therefore, I am not asking you whether you have accommodations available. I am just calling to tell you that my whole family is coming." I heard about the

Silber family before. My brother Sidney who previously worked at the Ehrenreich's Hotel in Ferndale, told me that the Silber family stayed there every year for the whole summer. When years before, I worked in Boro Park, I heard about a prominent man by the name of Mr. Ben Zion Silber, who was the president of the Yeshiva Toras Emes, which was at that time located on 12th Avenue near 40th Street. He and his children were in the wedding gown and ladies high class dress business. Their factory occupied a loft of a block long on Benson and 18th Avenues in Bensonhurst, with showrooms on Seventh Avenue in New York. They were very religious and charitable. Now he was calling me for three of my best rooms with private or joining baths. Every few hours I received a call from him. I told him that I had no rooms, and he repeatedly told me that he knew all about it, and that he was just calling me to hold three rooms for him.

Finally, I was unable to control myself, and I asked him, "Tell me Mr. Silber, I have been in business for four years now; how come in all those years I did not hear from you, and now all of a sudden, you decide that you must come to my hotel? Why don't you go back for this one holiday to the Ehrenreichs and for the summer you will come to us?" He answered me as follows, "I have been watching you for the last four years. Up to now you did not have a good enough hotel to suit me, but now that you are at the Empire Hotel, which is a higher class hotel, I decided to come and stay with you from now on. It is too late for me to make reservations in any other hotel, so I repeat, have rooms ready for me and my family, and we are coming out and will be there tomorrow." I was flattered by his remarks, but I did not know what to do. I explained the situation to Mr. Schechter but the two of us were stumped without a solution.

Early the next morning, I got up and walked around the premises. About two blocks from the main house, I noticed a long, flat structure with doors to enter and a few small windows. The building was empty. No signs of any furniture, no water, no toilets. Just a flat one story structure. I found Mr. Goldberg and asked him what this building was, and what was it used for? He smiled and said, "Ah, I see that your mind is working on something. Before I bought this place and built a hotel on it, this property was a farm. The farmer lived in the old winter house. He raised chickens. The structure that you are talking about was used as a chicken coop. I can go along with your idea of using the winter kitchen and the dining room as a place to sleep in. I will also go along with your idea of using the social hall and the stage as places to sleep. At least you have water and toilets there; but a

chicken coop without a sink and no toilets, how can you expect people to live there?" I explained to him that the people whom I expected to put there, had no reservations. I had no obligation to them at all. I would put in pails of water for them to wash themselves with, and as far as toilets were concerned, they would have to go to use them in the nearest buildings, like the winter house or the social hall. I would put in a few cots there and when they would arrive, and did not like it, they would not have to check in.

That is just what I did. I took out a few cots from the social hall, also a few chairs, a few old dressers and knocked a row of nails into the walls. I put in a few pails of water, put on fresh linen and pillows on the beds, covered the dressers with nice linen scarves and the place did not look too bad. I had the windows washed, also the floors were washed and cleaned, and the place was ready for the Silber family. Later, I was paged to the telephone. It was Mr. Silber telling me that he was at the Red Apple, and did I have something for them. I told him the truth, that I had fixed up an old chicken coop for them, without water or toilets. He asked me if the place had a roof over it. When I replied, "Yes," he said, "We will see you in a few hours." They drove up to the hotel and checked in. I took a bellhop to show them to their rooms. I did not want to go along. About half an hour later, the whole family came to the lobby and inquired where the tea room was. When they were shown the place, they sat down and had their refreshments. I did not hear from them during the entire weekend. Fortunately, on Monday after the Decoration Day holiday, some of Mr. Godlberg's guests checked out. I immediately transferred the Silber family to regular rooms.

Mr. and Mrs. Silber were regular guests with us every summer from then on. We became very friendly. We bought lots of dresses from them. They also supplied me with free cases of wedding gowns and other gowns that I sent to Israel to supply poor brides and their families. I went into the oil business with their oldest son, where we lost lots of money. His name is Sidney. After we lost the money, his remark was, "It is alright; I am a big boy, I can take it." We still have a small interest in some oil royalty business from which we receive a few dollars every once in a while.

As for the cots that I placed in the social hall, I made up tags with numbers on them, hung them on each bed (about twenty or so). When a boy checked in, the office gave him a number so that he should know which of the beds was his. On Saturday night, when the social hall was to be used for the show, we folded up the beds, took them out on the

lawn, and after the show when all the guests had left the social hall, our handymen put them back in the hall. The same thing held true for Sunday night. After the beds were put back on Sunday night, they remained there until after the holiday, as we did not use the hall any longer during *Shevuouth.* Mrs. Schechter, my wife, and Selma Schechter used sort of a room in the back of the large kitchen in the main house. Mr. Schechter, the Schechter boys and I slept in the social hall. Not having any cots left, we had our handymen make up a large platform from boards on which we put some old mattresses and on which we all slept. It was surely better than the time that we all slept in the barn of the Garden House, when I awoke feeling a cow licking my face. All in all, it was a very happy holiday.

Sammy Goldberg (may he rest in peace) came out for the holiday. As he was in the delicatessen business on Delancey Street in New York, I called him to ask him to bring along lots of smoked meat products, so that there would be no shortage of food. We took in an extra baker to bake enough white breads and cakes. We had plenty of wine and liquors to supply the guests with enough drinks. One of the guests was my good friend, Yosel Schechter (may he rest in peace) who led the crowd in singing and dancing. The young people had their own crowd for singing and dancing. The dining hall was crowded, so we put some extra tables in the lobby. The tea room was open day and night for tea and other refreshments. We served late breakfasts and snacks. We had good entertainment for Saturday night and Sunday night as well, with a midnite supper on Saturday night.

And so the name of Gartenberg & Schechter began to be known as an international resort place, patronized by thousands of people from all over the free world. We were especially popular among the young people who came from all over to meet each other. During the following years, many thousands of boys and girls met their future wives and husbands in our hotels. To this very day, I meet hundreds of people who tell me, "Do you know that we met in one of your hotels and were married?" Many add on, "You never gave us the 'Free Weekend' that every couple who meet in your hotel were supposed to get." I don't know where the rumor started that we were supposed to give free weekends to couples who met in our hotels. But my usual answer was, "And you never paid me the *'shadchunes gelt'* (the matchmaker fee) that you were to pay me for being responsible for getting you together," and we ended with pleasant laughter and good wishes for a good and happy future. I also receive a lot of remarks from young

people who tell me, "Do you know that my father and mother met at one of your hotels. Too bad that you are not in the hotel business now."

This was the year 1940. The Second World War was on. People made a lot of money. They went to hotels very often. Our price was raised to about $40.00 or more per week, to meet the great inflation and the high cost of labor and for food and supplies. Some hotels started to cut on the meals or the service. We felt that we should not do that. Instead, we raised our prices a few dollars per week, and kept on serving the same meals and giving the same good services. It was our feeling that when a person stays in a hotel, when he or she goes home, they do not recall what they paid, but will remember the good meals and services that they received, and would come back again and recommend others.

That was our policy at all times and it seemed that most people agreed with us. Only last night, I spoke to a Mrs. Kovalenko, who is staying with us here in the La Palapa Hotel in Acapulco, Mexico, where I am the cultural director and she told met that as a girl when she was a Miss Fink from Scranton, she remembers that she was a guest in our hotel during a *Bnos Agudath Yisroel* Convention and that she slept in the kitchen-dormitory of the winter house. Although it was during the Second World War when there were shortages in everything, we did not cut on our meals or services as other hotels did. So our popularity grew day by day.

However, our popularity also brought along many problems. For instance, the matter of visitors, or what is known in the hotel business as free-loaders — people who take advantage of making use of other people's property or facilities and not paying for it. Many people, especially young boys and girls, made a habit of checking into small hotels, or into rooming houses near our hotel and using the facilities of our hotel free of charge, which was wrong and at the same time, made it uncomfortable for the regular paying guests who were entitled to get everything that they were promised and which they paid for.

In those days, most of the small hotels and of course, the rooming houses, did not have swimming pools, sport facilities, and entertainment. These so-called free-loaders even those who as a rule were religious, and would not take anything that did not belong to them, used facilities to which they were not entitled to, even when doing so deprived the paying guests of use of those facilities. They would come

to our hotel, use the chairs on the porch or on the lawns, while our own guests had no chairs or couches on the porch, on the lawns and especially around the swimming pool, to sit on. On the nights when we had entertainment in the social hall, they would come early and occupy the best seats in the hall, while our own guests who paid a good price for their stay, and liked to take a walk after dinner or talk to the other guests, when they came down to the social hall, either had to take seats in the rear or finding no seats at all, were forced to stand during the entire show. When the show was finished, these uninvited guests rushed over to the tea room and again took away the seats at the tables, consumed our food, and many times made up packages to take home with them. It was getting to be a real problem without any solution. During the forty years that we were in the hotel business, we must have supplied thousands upon thousands of uninvited guests with facilities, tea room services and entertainment, free of charge. When our guests came to complain to us saying that they had no chair on which to sit in the social hall or in the tea room, and we went over to these uninvited guests and asked them to please leave their seats so that our paying guests could sit, some of them did get up, but most of them refused to do so, and what is more, they even insulted us, calling us unfriendly or roughnecks.

It is true that there were some nice people, whose names I can count on my fingers of one hand, like Rabbi and Mrs. Harry Bronstein who came to us at the beginning as regular guests but later on when it was not convenient for them to stay in a hotel for the entire summer, they took a bungalow near us and came to me and said, "Leo, because of health reasons, we cannot stay in the hotel for the whole summer, but as we want to be among our own kind of people, please tell us what you will charge us for a season pass, so that we can use some of the facilities and occasionally go in to your tea room." We agreed on a fair price, which they paid, and were always welcome at our hotel. But that was a case of one in a thousand. There were also times when we had no rooms in our hotel and some of our former guests, forced to check into other hotels, would call and ask if they could come to either visit friends who were guests, or asked permission to come to see our shows. In such cases, we would advise our guards at the entrance of the hotel to let them come in.

However, thousands of people just came, and by using all sorts of tricks, got into the hotel. They just stayed there and took advantage of everything that they could. We were always limited in our sport facilities, like the tennis courts or handball courts. These free loaders

would come early in the morning, get on the courts, and just play for hours on end. When our own guests wanted to get a chance to play a game, they were unable to do so, unless the outsiders became tired and took a rest for a while, or went to our tea room to partake in the late breakfast that we served between ten and eleven in the morning.

Our biggest problem was with the social hall. We did not mind that these people came to the shows during the weekdays when it was not too busy, but on Saturday nights, when as a rule, we were overcrowded with our own guests, they, knowing we had the best shows on those nights, came in droves. The Saturdays being long days, by the time it got dark, they were unable to go to any other amusement place, like movies. They had nothing else to do and nowheres to go where they could meet friends, or make new ones. They made it their business to sneak into the hotel one way or another to spend a free evening of entertainment.

I remember a particular incident (among hundreds of others). I mentioned before a Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Freundlich, who were my good customers in the insurance business. It was during the time that we operated the Empire Hotel in Ferndale. They rented a bungalow for the summer in Swan Lake, for their own use as well as for their children's. It was a short distance from Ferndale. Of course, I gave them permission to come to our shows on Saturday nights. It was a very busy weekend, perhaps the weekend of *Shabbos Nachmu.* As I was on my way to the social hall, he drove up to the front of the hall with his panel truck which had no windows. He used the truck to deliver butter and eggs to his customers. I stopped and said *A gutte voch* to him. He went to the rear of the truck, opened up the rear doors, and there started to emerge a whole group of people, maybe ten or more, practically all the occupants of the bungalow colony. They all marched right into the social hall to grab the best seats that were available before our regular guests arrived.

As he was about to enter the truck to drive it away to the parking lot, I went over to him and with a broad smile on my face, and with a pleasant tone, I told him, "My dear friend, it is true that I extended a season privilege to you and to your family. But here you are extending this privilege to your whole bungalow colony. We are overpacked. We do not have enough seats for our own guests. By you bringing a dozen or more people with you, twelve of our guests will have to stand up during the whole show. Don't you know the saying, *"Eyn ohrech machnis ohrech,"* one invited guest does not also invite another guest?" In a very serious tone, being very earnest, my friend, Mr. Freundlich

replied, "My dear friend, you will have to forgive me, but you are not a good businessman. Don't you realize that if you will accommodate outside people, they may like your shows and services, and perhaps next year they may check in as regular guests or recommend their friends to you?" Of course, I replied to that, "At present, I am not concerned about what your friends will do next year. I have to look out for the welfare of the guests who are here with me this year. They are paying good money for their stay and are entitled to get their money's worth." I did not even mention to him that most likely after the show, he and his friends would be first to go into the tea room and occupy two or three tables, thereby depriving the regular guests of the services that was due them. And that is exactly what happened. When the show was about to begin, our guests came into the social hall, and not finding any seats, stood in the back of the hall. I went over to Mr. Freundlich and asked him to come with me for a few minutes. He did so, and I proved to him that there were a group of our guests standing in the rear of the hall, while his twelve people were sitting comfortably in the front. I did not want to get into any further arguments, and we did not discuss the matter any further.

After Passover of the following year, I read an advertisement in the *Morning Journal,* that Mr. and Mrs. Freundlich opened a hotel which they would operate. It was in the neighborhood of South Fallsburg. During the summer, I met him in some market place where he was doing some shopping for his hotel. When I asked him how he was doing in the hotel business, he confessed to me that it was a very hard undertaking. He never thought that it was such a complicated and nerve-wracking business. It was not for his patience. Among other things, he also complained that the worst part of the business was supplying all kinds of facilities to the free-loaders. They were just driving him nuts. They were all over the place, in the tea room, in the social hall, in the swimming pool. They were depriving his own regular paid guests of the privileges that they were entitled to, and now he was being insulted by them if he dared to tell them anything.

In a very serious tone, I told him, "You will excuse me my friend, but you are not a businessman at all. Why don't you take it in consideration, that by being friendly and catering to these uninvited guests, you will eventually derive a great benefit. It is the best investment that you can make. These people will appreciate the free services that you give them. Next year, they will check into your hotel as paying guests, and will also recommend all their friends to you." An odd expression came to his face, and in a serious tone, he told me, "You

know what? These remarks that you just made, ring a bell in my mind. I am sure that I heard these words before. I cannot remember where." To which I replied, "Of course those words are familiar to you. It was you, yourself who told them to me about a year ago." He put his hands on my shoulders and remarked, "Forgive me my friend. You are so right. Now I can clearly understand what our Sages taught us: "*Al todin es chaveyrecho, ad shetagia limikomoh,*" Do not judge your comrade, until you arrive in his place (his circumstances). Now that I am in the same boat as you are, I can realize what you are going through." This incident occurred while we were operating the Empire Hotel in Ferndale. The problem became even more serious when we bought the Pioneer Country Club in Greenfield Park about which I will write when I will come to that part, a little later on.

As we had rented the Empire Hotel for five years, there was no reason for us to do any building or construction. We got along the best we could with the rooms that we had. We were more choosy in accepting guests. We only took such people whom we felt would appreciate our hotel, and who would come back time and again. For instance, on the first *Rosh Hashanah* that we were there, a group of people from the Maramorosh Society in New York contacted Mr. Schechter about coming out for the holiday. We recalled the incident with the group of dentists that were with us the first year in the Garden House. However, these people, while they were not strictly religious or Sabbath observing, they were European born, whom Mr. Schechter remembered from the old country. They would not purposely do anything to disturb the other guests. Besides, in this hotel, we had a house with ten rooms across the street from the main house. By moving them into that building, they would be all by themselves, and have no connection with the other guests, except to come to the dining room for their meals. As a rule, we were never too busy for the New Year holiday, so that we could give them a few tables in one section of the large dining room. We reluctantly agreed to take them in. We had no trouble with them. They kept to their rooms and played cards near their building. I do not remember whether they came into the synagogue or not. However, they checked out in the afternoon on the second day of *Rosh Hashanah* after the meal. They packed their cars and left from the other side of the street, but we did not like it. Although we, as a rule, were not crowded during the *Rosh Hashanah* holidays, and an income of a few hundred dollars came in handy at the end of the year, still when they called the following year, we did not take them. We never wanted that people should drive to or away from our hotel on a Sabbath or on a holiday.

10

Up to now I wrote about the hotel business in the Catskill Mountains. I will now put on paper about our enterprises in other sections of the country. I will start off with Miami Beach, Florida. We first visited Florida in the year of 1939. We heard a lot about Florida, about the warm weather, and the continuous sunshine. Being that our hotels in New York State were closed for the winter months, we decided to take a few weeks' vacation in Florida. We picked the end of December and the beginning of January as the ideal time. We felt that it would be more interesting to make the trip together with another suitable couple, who would help with the driving. It was Mr. and Mrs. Charles Klein. They were just married at about that time, and this would be sort of a honeymoon for them. So, we packed our bags, took along a frigidaire which was packed full of all kinds of food, meat and dairy, and surrounded it with dry ice.

On a Sunday morning, we left New York for Florida. In those days, there were no highways like we have at the present time, whereby one can make the whole trip with practically cutting out all cities and towns. Being a member of the American Automobile Association, better known as the A.A.A., I prepared myself with their trip-tick, showing us the way, step by step. The routes took us through dozens of towns, villages and cities. The speed limits were lower than they are today. Every village was patrolled by local police, who were anxious to present you with a speeding ticket. There was no New Jersey Turnpike. We had to cross every town on the road to Pennsville Ferry which took us across the Delaware River to the states of Delaware, Maryland, through Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

We spent a little time sightseeing in Washington, also we visited the Washington and Lincoln Monuments. By the time we left, the day was already gone. Crossing the Potomoc Bridge, we were in the state of Virginia. After two hours of driving, we reached Richmond, Virginia. Being that we were two drivers, we kept on driving late into the night. We stopped to sleep in Wilson, North Carolina. In those days there were no large hotels nor any motels. There were private houses

where the owners had a room or two to rent out for the night. They were known as tourist houses. The toilets were in the hallways which were used by the owners of the residence and the rest of the tourists who rented rooms for the night.

The next day, we drove all day and part of the night, until we came to the state of Florida. After a good night's sleep, we got up in the morning and visited the showplace known as Marine-land. It was a place where they have a tremendous water tank with all kinds of huge fish including sharks, also tame fish which put on a show. A sailor fed them with small fish which they practically ate out of his hands. After the show, we continued on Route No. 1 to Miami Beach.

We were anxious to stop at an orange grove. We saw signs advertising a particular orange grove named Pioneer Groves. We did not as yet have any connection with nor inkling of the Pioneer Country Club, but somehow the name struck us and we continued to that grove. We were very thrilled to cut oranges right from the trees and eat them. These days, people are so accustomed to go to Florida by airplane which brings them from New York to Miami in about two hours, that they miss the thrill of traveling through the countrysides and enjoying the sceneries, flowers, old trees, orange groves, and all kinds of tropical fruits. Neither do they see the houses of the poor people, white as well as colored, most of them isolated, away from cities or towns. They still have no electric lights. The toilets are outside in the back of the houses. They also don't see the cotton fields, and the natives who pick the cotton which look like flower buds. They place the buds into sacks, which they bring to a warehouse where they are cleaned and then pressed into huge square bails. We found the trip very interesting. They had a sign saying, "All the orange drinks that you can drink for 10¢," also signs reading, "Bags of 20 pounds of pecan nuts for $1.00." (Today the prices are much higher, but still much less than elsewhere since they grow there.)

What interested us the most were the signs which read, "All the watermelon that you can eat, free of charge." I could understand the 10¢ orange drinks since I saw hundreds of oranges on the ground under the trees which the wind had blown down, which I presume they used for squeezing. Also the same pertaining to pecan nuts, but free watermelon? When we arrived at the place on the road where they had the watermelons, I saw that they had long tables with trays full of sliced watermelons, knives and forks ready for use, with metal plates near every seat. There were signs that read, "Please put all the pits in these containers." I found that this is the place that sells melon

pits to farmers or individuals who plant them. The pits are packed in small bags. Instead of engaging workers to take out the pits, they ask the guests to do it. The pits are gathered, dried and sent out.

Along the way there were also small zoos where all kinds of animals were shown. The signs on the road read, "Buy your gas here and see the zoo for free." In many places they had various kinds of snakes. There were alligators that were laying in shallow waters basking in the sun. At certain times, they had alligator wrestling exhibits. A person (mostly an Indian) would wrestle an alligator until the alligator became tired and gave up the fight. At the end of the exhibition, you dropped a few coins into a container as his reward. These things cannot be seen if one makes a fast two-hour trip from New York to Miami.

In places, when we stopped for a red light, we were surrounded with youngsters who were distributing leaflets advertising hotels at very low rates. We did not have any reservations in any particular place. When we stopped at these low priced places, we did not, in most cases, go out of the car, as the places did not look inviting. We finally arrived at a place that looked pretty decent. It was on Collins Avenue, corner 7th Street. The place was the Whitelaw Hotel. We rented two rooms with kitchens, with frigidaires, etc. The nearest synagogue was on Washington Avenue and 4th Street. It was an orthodox place. The rabbi was Rabbi Mescheloff (he is now in Chicago).

We had a nice time in Miami Beach. I even went fishing with someone that I met there. It was from a fishing pier outside of the city of Miami Beach. This man supplied me with all the usual things that I needed for fishing. Except for a few times that I went fishing in some shallow waters on the outside of the village where I was born in Europe where we used straw baskets to catch small fish in the weeds, or when we broke the ice in the lake in the winter time and some small fish jumped out on the ice, where we caught them by hand, we never went real fishing. Therefore, imagine my beginner's luck, when I actually caught quite a big fish there. I did not know how to handle the fishing rod; it was my new found friend who helped me with bringing the large fish up to the pier. To my luck, it was a kosher fish. I brought the fish to the room, opened and cleaned it. We baked it in sections, as we did not have a large enough pan to bake it at one time. We had fish for a few days with enough left over to take back on our trip home.

When we were ready to make the trip back, the Klein couple decided that they wanted to remain in Florida for a while longer. We therefore made the trip by ourselves with me doing all the driving.

The trip to Miami, being that we took our time stopping for sightseeing, took us three days, even though we were two drivers. Going back, being that I would be driving alone, would surely take at least that much. I decided that instead of taking the roads according to the trip-tick whereby we used numbered routes, I would, on the way back, take only route no. 1, which goes from Key West, Florida to Boston, Massachusetts by way of New York.

We got up very early on a Tuesday morning, left while it was still dark (I stopped to pray on the way near the Pioneer Groves, where I loaded the car with oranges and grapefruits, enough to supply all our relatives and friends with the citrus fruits). I had in mind to stop for the night somewhere in Georgia. As I felt good, I kept on driving late into the night. When we were ready to stop, we discovered that we were alrady in Columbia, South Carolina. The next day at about 5:00 p.m., I was already outside of Washington, D. C. It was not quite dark yet, so we kept on going. As we came closer to New York I decided that I may as well drive all the way and so at about 11:00 p.m., we were home. The whole trip was made in two (long) days with only one night stopover.

In years to come, I made dozens of trips from New York to Miami. Most of the time, I made it in two and a half days, depending on the weather. As a rule, I found that on the way there, once I passed Washington, D.C., the weather was clear with good driving, except one time when I took along my mother-in-law (may she rest in peace) and Mr. Freilich. The weather was bad all the way to the state of North Carolina, and therefore took three and a half days. It was snowing most of the time. The roads were very icy and slippery. I spent a little time writing on the first trip, because it was our first trip and it made a great impression on me. The rest of the trips were uneventful, and I became accustomed to the traveling. As the years went by, the roads improved, the traveling became much easier. Today with the new roads, one practically cuts out all the large cities as well as the small towns, so much so that the traveling in itself is not too interesting anymore.

After we were settled in the Empire Hotel for the summer months, we began thinking of operating a hotel in Miami Beach for the winter months. Mr. and Mrs. Schechter spent the winter months in Miami Beach every winter even before we thought of opening a hotel there. The first hotel that we rented there was the London Arms Hotel on Collins Avenue between 7th and 8th Streets. In those days

most hotels were located between First and 15th Streets, therefore, this was considered a good location.

Before we decided to operate a hotel in Miami Beach, we began checking the availability of strictly kosher meats. We were told that the meats which were used came from the cities outside of New York, like Chicago, Denver and other places. The meats were sent by train and as a rule, they did not arrive there before three days after slaughter. Therefore, the train that brought in the meats, when they stopped in Jacksonville, had a *mashgiach* board the train and wash the large pieces of meat, so that they could be used according to Jewish law.

On one of his trips back to New York, Mr. Schechter stopped in Jacksonville and was present at the railroad station when the shipment destined for Miami arrived. He met the *mashgiach* who hd a pail of water with him and a small whisk broom. He went with him into the car where the large forequarters were hanging on hooks tightly packed next to each other (in order to save space). The *mashgiach* dipped the whiskbroom into the pail of water and with it sprinkled the outsides of the forequarters, veals, lambs, etc. As the train stopped there only for a limited time, the *mashgiach* did not have a chance to reach between the large pieces of meats and sprinkle water on them. He claimed that the back of the forequarters are only bones anyway. Of course, he was one hundred percent wrong. The back of the forequarters have plenty of meat all around. While it is true that they do have bones in that section, the bones also need washing because the bones are used to make soup. The fact is that there is no time for the *mashgiach* to do a good job of pouring water on the meats, because in order to do a job properly, each piece of meat would have to be taken out and water poured from all sides, which cannot be done in a car with hundreds of pieces of meat packed tightly together.

When Mr. Schechter came back to New York and described to me what he saw, we immediately decided that we would not use that kind of meat, although the difference in the price for a winter season would come to a savings of thousands of dollars. We tried to make contact with the slaughter houses in New York, but they did not care to do business with individual people or hotel keepers in a distant place like Miami Beach. So, we made arrangements with a butcher in Williamsburg by the name of Mr. Steiger. He bought the meats in his name on his credit. The meat was shipped in barrels to the Pennsylvania Railroad station and shipped by train to Miami. The meat which was slaughtered on a Monday was prepared and sent away on Monday

night, which reached Miami on Wednesday morning. Mr. Schechter and our butcher were standing at the railroad station, picked up the barrels and brought them to the hotel. The butcher took the meat apart, and koshered it, all before the full three deays expired.

In reality, it was not as easy as I have described it here. It required a lot of persuasion to have it done this way. Slaughter houses do not like to cut up meats on the same day that the cattle are killed. What they usually do, is take off the skin, place the whole skinned steer into a cooler to have the meat chilled, and the next day they cut it up. Otherwise, when they cut up the steer in order to separate the front part from the rear (the front being used for kosher and the rear for non-kosher) if the meat is still warm, the cut comes out zig-zag. Mr. Steiger had to be present while it was being cut while still warm. He had to pay an extra premium for that, give tips to the workers to do that. In the freight station in Miami, Mr. Schechter had to pay extra gratuities to the help in order to find our shipment and load our station wagon, so that we should not lose any precious time in order that all the koshering should be done before Thursday morning which was the end of the three days in which meat has to be koshered.

This arrangement worked alright for a while. However, when the Second World War broke out, the railroads were occupied with transporting soldiers and war materials, trains were delayed. Instead of the trains arriving in Miami during the early part of a Wednesday, they started coming at irregular times, like in the afternoon, or during the night. Mr. Schechter and the butcher spent all day Wednesday and many times all night waiting for the train to come in, grab the shipment and rush it to the hotel, work on the order the whole night of Wednesday in order to have it ready by early Thursday morning. At such times, we had to watch the labels on the meats to see whether they were marked *kodem chatzos,* that the animals were slaughtered before mid-day of Monday, or *achar chatzos,* after mid-day.

One day the shipment arrived during the day of Thursday and the labels were stamped with the initials showing that the animals were slaughtered before mid-day on Monday. By the time the meats were delivered to the hotel, it was already in the afternoon of Thursday. Although when Mr. Schechter asked a *sheiyleh,* what to do about it, he was told that *beshas hadchak,* in an emergency, it could be said that although the labels show that the animal was slaughtered before the afternoon, we can add on a few extra hours, because, we take the time from the removal of the skin of the animal, and the washing of the whole sides of the meat with water. He telephoned to New York

where I was, to ask my opinion, and we decided not to use the meat. He sold the whole shipment for non-kosher at a great reduction in price. We never depended on the very last shipment of meat. We always had a supply of provisions in our freezer, and by using more poultry, cold cuts, fish, etc., we managed to get by the following week.

Not being able to depend anymore on the railroads, we had to make different arrangements. I knew that there are refrigerated trucks going to Miami twice a week from New York, who pick up all kinds of perishable merchandise all around the city and bring it down to Miami. Therefore, I had the meats delivered to Mr. Steiger in Williamsburg who made the meats kosher, packed them in boxes, and I had the refrigerated trucks pick them up on Tuesdays and Fridays and have them delivered directly to our hotel in Miami Beach. That was also the time that I started to deal with the well-known Lamm's Meat Market, an association which lasted for about thirty-five years. This arrangement was much more costly than before, but we decided that when it came to *kashruth*, we never watched the costs. This was one of the reasons why we never made large profits in the hotel business. Later on this arrangement did not work too perfectly. These trucks picked up merchandise in the Greater New York area on Mondays and Fridays. The Monday pick up was alright. However, there were many Fridays that they were too busy and did not come to pick up the order until late Friday night. Since the winter days were short and the butchers were strictly Sabbath observers, it happened many times that when the trucks came for the pick-up, the stores were already closed. In such cases, we were again without meat for the following week.

We were already operating the Clarendon Hotel in Lakewood, New Jersey at this time. I found out that these trucks that picked up the provisions all around New York, were not the ones that delivered the merchandise directly to Florida. These trucks brought the sealed boxes to a small town in New Jersey, where the company had their warehouse. The merchandise was transferred into large refrigerated trailers and from there, it was taken to Florida. I then had the meats delivered from New York to my butcher in Lakewood. I loaded my station wagon and delivered the boxes on Thursday afternoon to the refrigerated warehouse about forty miles away, from where they were taken to Miami. Luckily, there was a very fine reliable *shochet* in Miami at that time who was the slaughterer of poultry, so that we were able to buy our poultry there, and our own butcher in the hotel made them kosher. Later on, that *shochet* passed away, and we did not

like the one who took his place, so we also began buying our poultry from New York, again at a much greater cost than before. The local butchers in Miami Beach did not like the idea that we did not buy our meat provisions from them. They thought that we did the buying in New York because we wanted to save money. We did our best to convince them that on the contrary, it cost us a whole lot more to get the merchandise shipped from New York our way, and that we would be very glad to do away with all that trouble and extra expense if we could be assured that we could get our meats from them on time.

One Thursday afternoon, I received a rush telephone call from one of the local butchers saying that he just received a shipment of meat from Chicago which was slaughtered on the previous Monday, and if I would come to him immediately, he would be able to put the meat into water to soak. I rushed down to the store. The label said that it was from a steer that was slaughtered on the previous Monday in the morning. Naturally, I did not take the meat. The butcher said that being that the meat was not watered before, he might as well do it now. Remembering how my former employer, Mr. David Klein, who since he was a short man, he hung the meat on a hook, stood up on a chair, and had prepared buckets of water to spill on the meat from the top down. I was anxious to see how this was to be done, being that the forequarter was laying on a butcher block. He put on a sort of flat tank with a pipe hanging down which had a thin sprayer (like we use to spray mosquitos) on his back, and he sprayed a thin spray like a mist on the top of the meat, and only on the side which was on the open top.

The butchers, not being able to do business with us, began to harass us. One day a man came to us telling us that he was the kosher inspector of the city, and that he wanted to see our bills and inspect the meats in the frigidaire. Immediately, I saw that he was trying to trap us with something. I produced and showed the bills from the butchers in New York. In the frigidaire, I showed him the boxes that were still not opened with the *plumbes* still on the boxes. Then he started to examine the pieces of raw meats hanging on the hooks. The large pieces had the *plumbes* on them, but the small pieces, like the sliced ready portions of flanken, naturally, did not have any *plumbes* on them. As a rule, they were not put on. He started asking us why there was not a *plumbe* on every slice of flanken. I explained that it just was not done that way, but the explanation did not help. He was ready to give me a summons for not having kosher signs on some of the meats. Here I became really angry and told him to take it easy.

I immediately ran to the telephone and called my friend, Rabbi Rockowsky, and asked him to come over immediately. He was very nice and rushed right over. He knew the inspector quite well, and even called him by his first name, since they had often worked together. Rabbi Rockowsky told him that he knew us personally for many years, from New York yet, and that we had a good reputation. He explained the reason why we got our meat directly from New York. At the end he told him not to be persuaded by people who wish to do us harm, and if he would issue us a summons, we would have to go to court and that he himself would appear for us and explain to the judge the whole matter. The inspector (who was Jewish) saw that he would not have a leg to stand on, stopped the proceedings right away. Of course, I also promised him that I would be in touch with my suppliers in New York and ask them to put on more *plumbes* on the meat. The inspectors never came back to us again.

I had a similar experience in reference to the wines that we used for *kiddush* and for the Seders on Passover. At that time, in Florida, they did not as yet sell the wines from the wineries that we bought our wines from. The wines that the stores sold were not the ones that we used, so we brought our wines from New York. When it came before Passover, I loaded my car with the kosher wines and brought them to our hotel in Miami Beach. On the first day of Passover, while I was in the synagogue, I was called out and told that an inspector was waiting for me outside. It turned out that he was from the Florida State Liquor Bureau. He told me that they heard that we did not buy our wines locally, that we brought them from New York, which was against the law, as all wines consumed in Forida must be bought there, and a State tax had to be paid on them. He therefore had orders to confiscate all our wines. Again, I had to explain that the reason was that we were strictly kosher and we used only a particular kind of wine. I also told him that we must have the wines for sacrimental purposes. He agreed that right after the holiday, I would come to the bureau and pay the required taxes. We agreed and he let me use the wines.

Problems of this sort came up all the time; we had to be ready for all kinds of emergencies. Another problem on which we had to make our own decision, was the question of serving meals to outsiders on Friday nights. It is a custom in Miami that on Friday nights, many people come to kosher hotels or even to kosher style hotels and restaurants for their Friday night meals. They like the Jewish *gefilte* fish, meat balls, and *tzimmes*. You can see even now, long lines of people who stand in front of restaurants waiting to be served a kosher or

kosher style Friday night meal. Some will drive miles to go to their favorite restaurant. When we opened our hotel on the first Friday night, a few people came in from the street, and asked to be served a meal. Naturally, our office was closed. The night man called me over to speak to the people. It was always our custom of *eyn bodkin bimzoynos,* you do not investigate when it comes to give out food. If a person comes in and wants a meal, you ask him no questions. First give him the food, and ask him the questions later. When I was told by the people that they wanted a meal, I took them over to the headwaiter and told him to serve them and I went back to my table, or to whatever I was doing. When the people finished their meal, and went back to the office to pay their bill, there was no one there to accept the money. Again, the night man called me over and I told them that we do not handle any money on the Sabbath. If they would come around during the week, we would give them their bill and they could pay at that time. The people thought that I was crazy, but there was nothing else for them to do. To this day, I do not know whether all of them came back to pay or not; we kept no record of them nor of their names or addresses.

As a matter of fact, this incident was the cause of some people to check in as guests at our hotel. A few weeks later, a couple came to the hotel to check in for a two weeks' stay. The man told me that the reason that he came to us was because he was very particular about the kosher laws. He and his wife would not eat in a restaurant or hotel unless they were one hundred percent sure of the *kashruth.* As he was in a store selling his merchandise and speaking to the storekeeper who had just returned from Miami Beach, he was told about a peculiar incident that happened to him while there. He came to our hotel and had a meal on a Friday night, and when he came to the desk to pay his bill, he was told by the proprietor that they do not handle money on the Sabbath, and they let him go away without paying the bill. They told him to come in during the week to straighten it out. They did not take his name or address. This salesman continued, saying that he and his wife were reluctant to come to Florida, not being sure that they would find a strictly kosher hotel. Hearing about our place and our practices, they decided to come to us and stay with us for a few weeks. That is what is called *matan sechoroh batzeydoh,* the reward of the good deed is attached to the side.

The outside guests told each other about the good meals that we served at our hotel, so that more and more people started to come for meals on Friday nights. Some paid in advance, while others paid or did

not pay, later on. We saw that the matter was getting out of hand. We decided that we would have to seriously think whether or not we should go on with the practice. We saw many drawbacks. Many people did not pay in advance, since they were not sure beforehand that they would come to our hotel for their meals. Whether they paid or not, we had to pay the waiter the tip, because even if the waiter was not religious, we forbade them to take any money from the guests on the Sabbath. Our dining room was not too large and by putting in extra tables, we made our regualr guests very uncomfortable. We did not find that there were any worthwhile profits in just serving meals. The profits were in the rental of the rooms. If the room is not occupied for even one night, we cannot make up the profit on the next night. The night which is gone without a guest using the room, cannot be made up anymore, whereas food which is not served, remains to be used the following day. People who came in for a meal on Friday night, already remained for the *Oneg Shabbat* where we served tea, cakes and all kinds of fruits. If they came for the Sabbath daytime meal, they already came for the services in *shul* and partook in our elaborate *kiddush* which was served before the main meal. Above all, we found out that most of the people lived far away from the hotel, all the way uptown, on Motel Row, which was outside of Miami Beach, and we did not want them to travel to us and from us on the Sabbath. If we did not serve the meals, and only one or two couples, in order to have kosher food, would check in as regular guests, it would bring us in more than all the extra meals brought in.

Mr. Schechter and I decided to discuss this matter with the other kosher hotels. Their answer was, "We will go along with you if all the other hotels will do the same." We visited all the kosher hotels and explained the whole situation to them. They all decided to follow us, until we came to one of the large hotel owners who said, "I happen to have a large dining room, and can accommodate plenty of more meals to guests. Why should I lose hundreds of dollars of income?" To my question as to what happens to the people who do not pay in advance, what did he do about the bills?, his answer was, "By me everyone pays before they leave; I have a *shikse* (a non-Jewish girl) who collects the money from them." To our question as to who collects the money later on from the *shikse*, we did not get a direct answer. And so it remained, all the other hotels served meals to all comers on Friday nights and Saturday, while we stuck to our decision. The only time that we made an exception was for people who, for some good reason, were not able to check into and stay in the hotel having all their meals

there for the entire week. They lived nearby, so that we were sure that they did not travel to or from the hotel on the Sabbath. Those we did accommodate, by serving them their Sabbath meals. It meant a loss of thousands of dollars income, but that was the way we felt. We were sure that we were doing the right thing, and our guests agreed with us.

We had accepted guests for the whole winter to include the Passover holiday. A few weeks before the holiday, Mrs. Gartenberg and Mrs. Schechter came over to Mr. Schechter and me telling us, "This is the first Passover that we will operate in Florida. In the Catskill mountains, where we opened the hotel for the holiday, we had several weeks after the Succoth holiday of the previous year and several weeks before the Passover holiday to kasher everything and prepare for the holiday. How can we do it here if we are obligated to serve the season guests until the last minute? We decided to close the dining room for the week in which the holiday comes out. We returned a cash payment to all the guests who were entitled to have their meals. For the money that they received, they were able to provide their own food. Still, that gave them only a few days to do all the work, which they did not want to undertake unless we would have an experienced Rabbi to watch everything and advise them what to do.

We went over to Rabbi Mescheloff who provided us with just such a person. He was a retired rabbi and had the time to supervise everything. We provided him with a guest room and we agreed that very early on Sunday morning, he should be at the hotel and take over the task of doing everything that had to do with kashruth. The Friday before, we prepared a crew of help to start the scraping and getting everything ready to kasher. We had a night crew who removed all the *Chometzdidge* dishes and utensils. Very early on Sunday morning, we were all ready to start working. We did not see any sign of the rabbi supervisor. We found out that he went to the synagogue as usual, came to the hotel at about nine o'clock, and asked to be served a good breakfast which one of the women made for him. In the meantime, the other one, being tired of waiting for the rabbi, with the whole crew sitting around, soon began to wash the shelves, scrape the pots and pans, as we always did, in order to save precious time. As the rabbi finally finished his breakfast, he came into the kitchen, looked around and saw how the work was being done. He remarked, "You are such fine *baal-bohstes,* you know exactly how everything is to be done. I will be sitting in the lobby and every once in a while, I will come in and look

around or you can come out and ask me any questions in connection with the *kashering.*" So saying, he walked out to the lobby, took out his favorite newspaper and began reading it.

Full of anger, the women came to see us, and said, "Come and see for yourselves what a *mashgiach* does. And if this is how *mashgichim* work, we are glad that we never engaged any." So, working around the clock, we *kashered* the hotel, as we did all the previous years. Every once in a while, the rabbi came into the kitchen, spent a few minutes, praised the women for their good work and walked out. He had a very nice paid vacation over the entire holiday, collected the agreed salary and left. Since then, we never took in a *mashgiach.* Our guests were very satisfied with what we did, and came to us for the reason that we did *not have a mashgiach* on our premises.

We were once approached by a kashruth organization who told us that they would like us to insert in our advertisements that we are under their supervision. They may or may not send in a man once in a while to see our operations. They did not want us to pay them anything for this service. All that they wanted is that we should use their name, so that they could recommend our hotels to the inquiring public. We were not interested in their proposition. Still, one afternoon, when I had a large group of guests listening to one of my lectures, I made a remark like this, "What would you ladies and gentlemen say if the firm of Gartenberg and Schechter would decide to go under a *hashgacha*?" The attending guests were shocked that I should bring up such a question at all. A few of them took the floor. One said, "I cannot see any reason for it at all. It will not improve your business at all." Another one said, "When you will do that, people will lose confidence in you." And yet a third one remarked, "When you will do that, I will be the first one to stop coming to your hotels and I will tell my family and friends to do the same." Still another one said, "I will do the same, because it would show that you are depending on others to take over your job. The minute that you and your wives will leave the purchasing and supervision of the kitchen to others, when that will happen, count me out." So, that was that. We never thought about it anymore.

When Mrs. Schechter *Z"l* passed away, before Passover, and we found that it would be too hard for Mrs. Gartenberg to take care of the kitchen by herself, we engaged a couple (husband and wife) to help her out and take the place of Mrs. Schechter. When Mrs. Gartenberg also passed away, I engaged a certain rabbi, Rabbi and Mrs. Fried (a well-

known *mashgiach* of the O.U.) and told him, "Rabbi and Mrs. Fried, I am engaging you not as *mashgichim*, but as my right hand." As a matter of fact, he also brought along his son-in-law, Rabbi Meshulem Goldwag, a graduate of the Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin, who did not move without a *Shulchan Oroch* in his pocket. I continued saying to him, "You have a free hand to do anything that you feel should be done in the field of kashruth and Shabes, etc." Rabbi Fried not only supervised the work, he did not mind taking a scraper, fire torch, or a scalding hot water pipe in his hand and show the workers how things are to be done. And that is how we are doing it to this very day.

Just to give you an idea what it means to watch a kosher operation work, I will try to explain it here. Mrs. Gartenberg and Mrs. Schechter did not leave the kitchen from early in the morning when they lit the gas ovens under the pots, until late at night when everything was packed away. It was on a Saturday morning in the Park Central Hotel in Miami Beach, Florida. Both women were sitting as usual in the kitchen, having their eyes open to whatever was going on. We had engaged a high class chef. He was not Jewish, but all his previous jobs were in kosher hotels. When we engaged him as a chef, he gave us references of several hotels, one in particular was a very well-known strictly kosher hotel. This particular Saturday, the women saw him come out of the frigidaire, carrying something under his apron. Both women were anxious to see what he had under the apron. As they approached him at the stove, they saw that he took out two chickens ready to throw into a pot. When he was asked by the shocked women, what he was doing, he nonchalantly said, "I have used more chicken for the meal last night and I think that I may be short a few portions for the Sabbath daytime meal. So I am now about to cook these two chickens." When asked how he could cook raw chickens on the Sabbath, he replied that he had been doing it in the former hotels all the time. His excuse was that the water in which he was about to throw them in had been on the stove since the night before, so it was permitted to do it. Just imagine, that if the women would not have been in the kitchen at that particular moment, the chickens would have been cooked on the Sabbath without anyone knowning about it. As a rule, many *mashgichim*, when it comes Saturday, are busy making *Mi Shebeyrachs* in the synagogue for their own benefit.

When we rented the London Arms Hotel, we did not have the monies to pay the rent in advance and other expenses that were involved. We took in a Mr. and Mrs. Charles of Brooklyn as a silent

partner for a one-third interest. I was connected with him in the insurance business. They advanced us the $5,000 that was needed When we finished the winter operation, we found that we made about $5,000 profit on the business. We gave them their share of the profits. We came to the conclusion that we would attract a much better class of people and do more business, if we would have a nicer place. For instance, when some of the Septimus brothers checked in at night, the lobby was lit up, everything looked pretty nice; but in the daytime, when they visited other hotels, they saw that the other places were much nicer. We started to talk to Mr. London, the landlord to fix up the place, put in more modern furniture in the lobby and some of the rooms, but he did not want to spend the additional money. I especially complained about a few of the rooms, but he did not want to go along. These rooms were blocked by the next building and had only semi-private showers, that he should enlarge them and also put in private baths. Mr. London, a true *Lutvack* and very shrewd, replied, "Mr. Gartenberg, these rooms that you are complaining about, are the ones that kept me in business all these years. I advertise in the papers and in the leaflets a very low rate, having in mind these rooms. Whenever, I put in a low rate I always say 'and up.' When the people who made the reservations and either paid in advance or sent in a deposit, do not like the rooms, they take better rooms and pay the difference. So you want me to do away with those rooms? It would be suicide for me to touch those rooms."

We definitely decided to look for a nicer place. We took the Park Central Hotel on Ocean Drive near Sixth Street. While the London Arms Hotel was on Collins Avenue, a block away from the ocean, the Park Central Hotel was right on the ocean and facing the park. It also had a very nice porch which the former hotel did not have. There was an upper and a lower lobby, a beautiful mezzanine, a very large dining room and kitchen. Mr. and Mrs. Charles again joined us as silent partners, but we were still short about $20,000 to make the deal. We contacted two business people in New York who gave us the money at a 25% annual interest rate. It was a very high rate, but we needed it, and it was for only a few months. We started doing very nicely, but at that time the war broke out in Pearl Harbor.

Thousands of soldiers were recruited, there was no place where to train the army men. The government decided to come to Miami Beach, take over the hotels there, place the soldiers in the hotels and asked the operators of the hotels to leave. Some of the hotels which were operated by the owners of the buildings, gave over their building

to the government. The goverment paid them their actual costs, like monies needed for mortgage and interest payments, insurance, etc. However, we were not the owners of the building and while the government was willing to pay the landlords their upkeep expenses, they did not want to pay us our costs. As a matter of fact, being that we had the lease for only three years, and as they did not know for how long they would need the building, they did not want to deal with us at all. They only wanted to deal with the owners of the buildings. We were at a loss not knowing what to do. In the meantime, the street in front of the hotel was closed to traffic. The soldiers were doing their training exercises on the street there. The training officers were standing on our porch and gave orders to the soldiers, depriving our guests of the use of the porch.

By that time, we already had paid back the $20,000 to the investors. There only remained the investment of Mr. and Mrs. Charles and the monies that we ourselves had put into the business. After a meeting with our partners, it was decided that we should give the hotel back to the landlord. We kept the hotel open until after Passover, at which time we closed up. Together with our partners, we took a big loss. As it turned out, we made a bad decision, because people did not stop coming to Miami Beach, even though the soldiers occupied most of the hotels and did their training excercises right on the street in front of the hotels. Those hotels who did not turn over the hotels to the government did a fabulous business. There was one hotel in particular, the White House, located on Ocean Drive and Fourth Street, that did not have a vacant room throughout the entire year. People were placed on a waiting list to get a room there. There were no ceilings on rates, the guests were glad to pay any amount that was asked of them. So, for a while, we were out of business in Miami Beach.

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We now concentrated all our efforts on the Empire Hotel in Ferndale, N.Y. where we had a five-year lease. The following summer, we were very busy there. Supplies and labor costs went up very high. It was very difficult to get merchandise or proper workers. We had to pay any amount that we were asked. We had to raise our rates accordingly. Our overhead jumped out of proportion. Unfortunately, many guests took advantage of the situation. When they checked out of the hotel, they took along anything that they could lay their hands on.

We lost thousands of napkins, pillow cases, bed sheets, and blankets. I remember a family who stayed with us the previous year. After several weeks' stay, upon checking out, they brought down their luggage to the lobby. One suitcase which was overstuffed burst open in front of everyone. Out fell all kinds of linens on the floor. Not only they, but the people in the lobby were terribly embarrassed. Everyone looked away, or walked out of the lobby. Their bill was already paid, so they did not have to stop at the desk. They just grabbed their private belongings and ran out as fast as could be. Of course, they never came back to us again.

When I decided to write about the hotel business, I determined that I would never mention any names of guests, only when it was for the purpose of giving them credit, but never to shame them or cause them embarrassment. So, I will never mentione anyone's name who may be insulted or ashamed because of my writings.

I remember a certain rabbinical family who stayed with us for a while, and then they decided to check into a nearby bungalow colony. When they left the hotel from one of the cottages that they had occupied, the maid went into their room to clean up and found that the beds were completely stripped of every piece of linen and blanket. She called the office, and I went to their room and I found the room bare of everything that was supposed to be there. They just pulled up their car in front of the cottage and packed in everything that there was in sight. Although, they continued coming to the hotel for services in

our *shul*, as well as for sports and entertainment and tea room (free of charge, of course) I never mentioned one word to them.

Many guests came to tell us that on check-out day, like on Sunday nights or Monday mornings, as guests checked out, they folded a lawn chair and put it into their cars. If it was called to their attention, their answer was, "It is alright, I paid a big enough bill for my stay. Gartenberg and Schechter will not become poor," or they disregarded the remark and laughed.

I remember an incident, when I came to the house to see a guest about some insurance, the father told his son, "You remember Mr. Gartenberg from the country," to which the child remarked, "Oh, yes, that is the hotel that we took our blankets from." You can imagine both of our embarrassments.

It is also true, that some people who left on a cold morning took along blankets to cover their children with, or some pillow cases to pack some of their belongings in, but once these things were home, they never bothered to return them. It is also true, that many times before Yom Kippur, we did receive by mail a package with some things that were taken from the hotel. Most of the time there was no return address or name on the package, but this did not happen too often.

Only recently, I received a letter from far away Israel, where a man wrote that years ago he was a waiter in one of my hotels, and while working there, he took out food from the dining room to feed some friends who were free loading in the hotel. He wanted to know how to go about making good the loss, as his conscience was bothering him. I wrote him back that it was a long time ago, and I did not know what figures to give him. I suggested that he take a generous sum of money which he thought would cover the cost of the theft and distribute it to charity. I don't know what he did, as I did not hear from him since, but I presume that being that he was so honest about it now, that he must have taken care of it properly. If all the waiters, guests, bungalow colony people, free loaders in general, would send in their legal debts to me, for all the things that they took, I would suddenly become a very rich man, or tens of thousands of dollars would be collected by charitable institutions all over the world. The Talmud says, "If one stole or took illegally something from another person, he/she is obligated to return it even to the other end of the world."

Here is an interesting unsigned letter that I received:

To Leo Gartenberg:

I am sending six dollars to cover the cost of the books. This is for my Teshuva (repentance) of two Jewish prayer books which my wife and I took.

Please forgive me. For my fear of Him (Lord) has worsened His ways. I am nothing but a worm, about to bite an apple. A sorry shaking trembling fear who shall share for a sin offering. I rather have love of the Lord now. Thank you.

Please accept my profound apologies and memories — and my embarrassment and gultiness. Never again. My promise Hashem. Please forgive my sending cash, a money order would reveal my name. Bless you.

[The mistakes are his, and as there is no address, no date, no signature, I believe that I am permitted to print the letter, although he asked not to publicize it. No one can have an inkling as to who it is. L.G.]

As the name of Gartenberg and Schechter became a sort of institution, we became known as a modern but strictly kosher and Sabbath observing hotel. We attracted guests who were looking for that type of hotel. As a matter of fact, during the early part of our operations, we used to print up signs reading, "No smoking on the Sabbath." Eventually, we took off these signs, as there was no need for them anymore. However, every once in a while, people who did not know that there was a change in management, drove up in their cars to the hotel to check in. If it happened on a weekday, there was no problem. When they saw the crowd in the hotel, that it was a religious crowd, they either drove away, or if they did not mind, checked in.

The problem did arise on Saturdays. I remember one particular Saturday afternoon during the month of June while we were at the Empire Hotel. I was sitting on the lawn teaching *Perek.* Mr. Schechter and his children and a few guests were there. The revered Matesdorfer rav, Rabbi Ehrenfeld, *Z"l,* honored us with his presence and also listened in and made comments of his own. We had no fence around the hotel, or a gate. A car drove up, stopped in front of the entrance to the hotel under the canopy. Mr. Schechter, in great haste, jumped up, ran to the car, and I suppose that he told them that we were the new operators, and that we did not accept any guests or discuss business on Saturdays. The car immediately left. Mr. Schechter returned and sat down again. He seemed to be under the impression that he did a good deed. The Matersdorfer rav, in a pleasant and quiet way, told him words something like this: "You seem satisfied with yourself, feeling that you did something of a *Kiddush HaShem* (sanctified the Holy Lord). I want you to know, that on the contrary, what you did was very wrong." Poor Mr. Schechter was at a loss, he

did not understand what the rabbi had in mind and said, "But it is Shabbos, what else could I have done?" Rabbi Ehrenfeld replied, something to this effect: "You should have told them, 'we are now a new management, we observe the Sabbath, we do not check in any guests on Saturday. Please leave the car where it is, come into the hotel. I will give you a room to rest in, serve you with refreshments, and at night, after the Sabbath, we will discuss business. If you will like it, you will remain; if not, you will be able to leave.' But since you sent them away, they are now riding on your account. It is alright to make a gate in front of a business so that people should not enter on a Saturday; but if there is no gate, and the people drive up to your property, you are not allowed to make them go away and make them continue to drive." From that time on, we blocked the entrance of the hotel with a chain or benches, so that no car could come in on a Saturday. Later on, when we bought the Pioneer Hotel, we spent $10,000 for a fence and a gate.

As we became more and more busy, I was always looking for ways of finding more rooms in which to accommodate guests. Many times we gave up our own rooms to accommodate them, since we had promised rooms to them. I always managed to see to it that the Schechters should have some kind of a room to stay in, being that they had their son Jerry who had some health problem and their daughter Sema (may she rest in peace) had a probem with a foot. We, the Gartenbergs, managed the best way that we could. When it was not busy, there was no problem at all. We used the best rooms available. It was during the height of the season that we moved around like gypsies.

On the top floor of the main building of the Pioneer Hotel, there were a row of rooms known in the business as garret rooms. On the same floor, I saw two doors that had no numbers on them. The doors were locked all the time. I asked the owner, Mr. Goldberg, what these doors were. He said that they opened into a vacant space under the roof where there was no possibility to make rooms because the roof there was very low. In that space were kept some boards that were left from the time when the building was built and were too small to be used for anything. Looking at the roof from the outside, I saw that in two places on the roof there were two peculiar looking windows, not the square windows that were in the rest of the rooms, but a sort of a half moon window. They seemed to be stationery, not the kind that could be opened. I thought to myself, If the windows were there, someone had to place them there. If so, the person had to have room to

move around in order to put the windows in.

I got a hold of Sammy Schechter. Sammy was always the all-around fixit man. (He is now the owner of the Caribbean Hotel in Miami Beach.) He found some keys and opened the doors. First we were met by a gust of hot air. After a while the hot air escaped and we were able to go into the room to open the windows, so that the hot air escaped and cool air came into the open space. After looking around, we saw that at the beginning the space was high enough to place some cots there, while further on, it became lower until the roof touched the walls of the building.

Sammy immediately said, "I am reserving one of these spaces for me and my friend, Joe Roe, to sleep. (Joe Roe, was short for Joseph Rosenberg. He was the captain of the waiters. He is now my neighbor in Boro Park. I live on 59th Street, while he lives on 58th Street. My house and his are back-to-back to each other. He is now connected with the office of Agudath Israel, and we see each other very often.) So Sammy reserved one empty space for himself and his friend, while we held on to the other one. Naturally, there were no facilities at all, not even a sink, but the public toilets were nearby. So for the rest of the time that we operated the Empire Hotel, that was our emergency room. Many times we took in some of our family, like my father-in-law and mother-in-law, whenever there was no other room for them. The space was large enough. All that we needed was some sort of a partition. The same thing happened in the so-called room that Sam Schechter had. If a boy or a man showed up on a Friday afternoon, and we had no room for them, if he was willing to move into Sammy's room, we put up a cot there for him. The policy of the hotel was always, not to send a guest away if the guest really wanted to stay with us for Shabbos.

As we had no hotel for the winter in Miami Beach, and we were already accustomed to having a hotel in the winter as well, we decided to look for a hotel in Lakewood, N.J. At that time, people were still going to Lakewood. We bought the Clarendon Hotel on Madison Avenue and Seventh Street. It was an old hotel but still in pretty fair condition. There were some rooms with semi-private baths, and also some rooms with private baths. We did pretty well there for a few years. Lakewood is not far from Brooklyn, New York, Newark, N.J., Philadelphia, Pa. Our name was quite well-known, so people came to stay at our hotel. The only competition that we had, was the New Brunswick Hotel, a few blocks away. The New Brunswick Hotel was

considered kosher, It had a *mashgiach* and while the hotel was nicer than ours, still many people preferred to come to us instead.

As a rule, the hotels in Lakewood were not large, some of them were as small as 20 rooms. The Clarendon was a medium sized hotel. It had about 65 rooms. Later on, we added on four more rooms for the exclusive use of the Gartenbergs and Schechters and their families. We made ourselves sort of a promise never to give up these rooms, no matter what. In reality, there was no problem about rooms in Lakewood, as we were located in a small city with plenty of rooms all around us that could be rented out for a night or more. There were hardly any grounds around the hotel, there were no sport facilities. Very little entertainment was offered, except some small show on Saturday night. Not too many young people came to Lakewood, except for certain weekends. The guests were middle aged or elderly and therefore did not require too much, just a comfortable room and good plain meals. The main recreation all day was a walk to the lake and back, a movie show a few times a week. The shopping was very easy. Whatever was not delivered, since it was only a few blocks to the shopping center, we were able to pick up. We had a full staff to do the work, so that the work was easy. We therefore let the Schechters rent a room for themselves in Miami Beach for the sake of their children's health. Sam Schechter stayed with us in Lakewood. Mr. Schechter spent some time in Florida and some time in Lakewood.

The *Agudas Harabonim of America* held their conventions with us a few times. Every once in a while, we had a *bar mitzvah* or a wedding at the hotel. As a matter of fact, the wedding of Rabbi Schneur Kotler, the *Rosh Hayeshivoh* of the Lakewood Yeshivah was held at our hotel. Many people from New York and other nearby cities used to come out for a Sunday dinner and spent several hours in Lakewood. Rabbi Pesach Levovitz was engaged as the local rabbi for the Fourth Street Synagogue, and we became quite friendly.

Our nearest neighbor on the next corner was Mr. Goldstein, who with his children operated a very small hotel. He and I were instrumental in building the small yeshiva in the city, which is now quite large, which accommodates the children of the town and the children of the couples who learn in the famous Lakewood Yeshivah which was organized by the Gaon Rabbi Aaron Kotler, *Z"l*, just at about that time. It started first in a small house and it has now become one of the great Yeshivas in America with branches in various other cities. As a matter of fact, the city of Lakewood which at one time was known

because of the hotels there, now that there are very few hotels left, is now famous for the *Beth Medrash Gevoha* known all over the world.

It was while we were in Lakewood, that we were the first ones to make ice cream for Passover. We were connected with a Jewish dairyman who was very reliable for *kashruth.* I was discussing with Rabbi Pesach Levovitz the possibility of using ice cream for Passsover which was not yet available at that time. Together we went to see the dairyman, who said that as far as he was concerned it could be done and that he would undertake to make it. The first thing that we did was to *kasher* the utensils and machinery that would be needed for this purpose. We sent two young men from the *yeshiva* to the dairy farm where they watched that the milking of the cows should be done in our kosher pots. When the milk was brought to the dairy in Lakewood, it was put away in a special place in the frigidaire. When the milk turned into cream, it was made into ice cream. The Passover sugar was used in the manufacturing. We needed something to give it a color. In those days there were no Passover colorings or flavorings. We decided to cook beets that we used to make the borscht. From the colored liquid of the beets, we mixed some of it into the ice cream, so that it had a pink color.

Came the Passover holidays, and we served the dairy ice cream as a dessert for one of the dairy meals. I was sitting in the lobby waiting for the guests to come out from the dining room to make some comments, or put questions to me, as to where I got the Passover ice cream which was never heard of before. Not one person came to inquire where I got the ice cream from. Here I could not control myself. I went over to my good friend, Abe Reiss (may he rest in peace) and asked him, "Abe, did you ever eat any ice cream on Passover?" To which he replied, "Neither did I ever eat cheese blintzes, or the delicious cheese cake that you served, so if I ate all the other things that you served during the holiday, I also ate the ice cream. I will tell you more, if you should serve something that looked like pork, I would also eat it. In my mother's house, we did not have even a dairy plate or spoon for Passover, but if Leo Gartenberg serves me and I eat all the other things, why not eat the ice cream as well." Of course, I was flattered by his remarks, but I did not think it was right. Here I was ready to give all the answers to the questions that I would be asked, and no one went to the trouble of asking me anything. After I made up ice cream that year, the following year, the Barton Chocolate Company came out with ice cream under the supervision of the Union of Orthodox Congregations.

Speaking about firsts, there were many, many firsts that we were involved in:

1. The Passover ice cream that I have just described.
2. The first ones to keep food warm on the Sabbath, like soups, meats, poultry, etc., according to the *halacha.*
3. Put up fences with gates at a cost of about $10,000.00 in order to keep cars out on the Sabbath.
4. First one of the large size hotels to serve glatt kosher meat exclusively.
5. First ones to bring fresh meats (not the so-called *gegosen*) to Florida.
6. The first hotel to build a kosher *mikvah* in our hotel. To take one of the best corner rooms and make a *mikvah* out of it.
7. To build a large synagogue to be used exclusively for a shul and nothing else, at a cost of about $100,000.00.
8. To sell the *aliyos* on Sabbaths and holidays, to make appeals and thereby raise over $4,000,000.00 (four million dollars) for charity.
9. To help build or repair *mikvahs* in every town or city that we operated hotels in.
10. The biggest first of all — to erect a Sabbath elevator in our hotel, at the advice and under the instructions of such great authorities as Rabbi Aaron Kotler, *Z"l,* Rabbi Eliezer Silver, *Z"l,* Rabbi Yosef Eliyahu Henkin, *Z"l,* at a cost of thousands of dollars.
11. To at one time be known as the largest stricly glatt kosher, *shomer shabbos* hotel in the world.
12. To have two swimming pools, filtered, and with separate life guards with certain hours for men and certain hours for women at the request and advice of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.

(In reality, it did not work out, as the guests did not really care for separate swimming at that time.) While on the other hand, we also, due to necessity, were the first ones to put up people in dormitories, in the social hall, on the stage, and even in former chicken coops. We were also the first ones to engage expensive entertainers, like Red Buttons, Jackie Mason, and not put their names in the papers or in the brochures, as that was my agreement with the *Agudas Harabonim.* Although they were against entertainment in hotels in general, at least they asked that we make no issue of it, so that should not be the reason that people came to our hotels. It was their claim that the

people should be drawn to our hotels for the *kashruth*, the observance of the Sabbath, the good food, etc. But as long as we were giving entertainment, at least not to advertise it publicly. We should not make that part of the business, as the main attraction. We kept up an extra swimming pool for several years at a cost of about $5,000 a year, although there were times when during a whole summer only two people used the pool. One was a boy who was the son of one of our tenants in our bungalow colony and the other one was my own daughter, Evelyn.

In the fourth year of our stay at the Empire Hotel, we came to the conclusion that the place was too small for us. We were toying with the idea of buying the hotel, but there were too many drawbacks. In order to remain there, we would have to do a lot of building and renovating. There were not enough rooms, the lobby, the dining room, and the kitchen would have to be enlarged should we decide to add additional rooms. The swimming pool was too old. In order to do what we had in mind, it would require an expenditure of more than it would cost to buy a larger and newer place. We let the word out to real estate agents who took us to see various places. They all seemed to think that we should buy a hotel on the main highway, near other hotels, where we would get the overflow from existing large hotels. We finally convinced them that we were not looking for the overflow from other hotels, since we already had our own following. Above all, we were not looking for a hotel on the main highway. On the contrary, we were interested in an exclusive section of the mountains.

After looking at a dozen or more hotels, an agent brought us to the Pioneer Country Club in the neighborhood of the town of Greenfield Park, N.Y., on a private road known as Greenfield-Mountaindale Road. We immediately liked the place. We took some of our guests who were staying at the Empire Hotel to see the place. They all loved it and urged us to buy it. There were about 100 rooms, over twenty of them with private or semi-private baths, a private golf course, a large social hall, about 50 acres of land around the hotel, all kinds of sport facilities, large lobbies and dining room and a big kitchen. Just about everything that we wanted in a hotel was there. It was two miles from Mountaindale and about three miles from Woodridge. Being that we still had a lease for one more year at the Empire Hotel, it was decided that for the following summer, we would operate both hotels.

We bought the Pioneer Hotel for $85,000.00. With the monies that we had accumulated and some private loans, we put down about

$40,000.00, with the rest to be paid out over the next couple of years. There were two partners, a Mr. Walterman and his sister-in-law, a Mrs. Cohen. Mrs. Cohen took back the balance as a mortgage.

The first thing that we looked for was a place to be used as a synagogue. There was a very large enclosed porch running along the whole main building. That space was designated to be used exclusively as a *shule.* It was large enough to take care of the guests that would occupy the hundred or so rooms. This was in the year, 1944.

The buildings consisted of a two story main building, a building next to it having a ground floor and one floor above it, known as the White Mansion. Next to the White Mansion were two cottages. One was known as the Lilac Cottage and the other, the Park Avenue Cottage. The main building and the White Mansion were heated. The two cottages were not. Behind the small buildings was a row of small cottages, which were used for the help, such as the cooks, bakers, head-waiter, steward, etc. A cottage on the right side was used as a caretaker house. The main house was situated on a small hill. Below it, was a beautiful social hall with quarters for the help in the basement. The sports facilities were better than those that we had at the Empire Hotel. There was a nine hole golf course on the premises. In general, it was a hotel which was comparable to most of the larger and better hotels in the Catskill Mountains of that period. Surely, it was far superior to the other kosher and Sabbath observing hotels who were catering to the Orthodox Jews at that time.

We opened the hotel for the Passover Holidays and we were sold out immediately. Every guest and the hundreds of visitors were greatly impressed. While it was not our intention to take away business from other kosher hotels, it was only natural that as a new hotel with better facilities, such as rooms with private baths, a beautiful social hall comparable to almost any of the better hotels, with more and better sport facilities, many hundreds of people who patronized the other kosher hotels, and even people who had been going to Grossinger's in Ferndale, left the hotels and started coming to the Pioneeer Country Club. The religious young people, in particular, started flocking to the hotel. We soon became known as the meeting place for boys and girls who were anxious to meet religious young people in order to eventually marry.

12

As I am writing about the year 1944, before I go into the future of the legendary Pioneer Country Club, what we did, and how we built it up to become known as the largest, strictly kosher, *shomer Shabos* hotel in the world, I will go back a few years, to our hotel operations in Miami Beach, Florida, to the year 1939 when we left the Park Central Hotel which the army took over.

After about two years, when the U.S. government had already built army barracks in various parts of the country, they began giving back the smaller hotels in Miami Beach to their former owners. They only held on to the larger hotels. Among the first hotels to be released was the George Washington Hotel, located on Washington Avenue, between 4th and 5th Streets. We rented that hotel. It was not a fancy place. It had about fifty rooms, all with private baths. Some rooms were on the ground floor which also had a lobby and a dining room. It was formerly owned and operated by a non-Jewish woman as a low-price non-kosher hotel. It had a beautiful garden. At the end of the garden was a very modern cottage which was formerly occupied by the owner of the hotel.

We received a call from a real estate agent that the place was available. Mr. Schechter and I took a train from New York and went down and rented the hotel. We took along our good friend, Mr. Louis Sturman of Liberty, N.Y., who was our lawyer for every hotel that we rented or bought during our hotel operations. As there were no other hotels available in Miami Beach at that time, we immediately put a deposit down on the place. Mr. Sturman checked on the necessary details of the hotel. Mr. and Mrs. Schechter were very busy in New York. With their children being in school there, and with Mr. Schechter still holding on to his job, it was decided that the Gartenbergs would go down to Miami with Mr. Sturman to close the deal. We finished the deal on a Thursday. In those days it was not yet popular to travel by airplane. Most people were traveling by train, a trip which took at least thirty-six hours from New York to Miami.

As it was not feasible to take a train on a Thursday afternoon and arrive in New York the following day, just before the Sabbath, it was

decided that we would take an airplane very early Friday morning which would bring us to New York in the early afternoon, with enough time to reach our homes before the Sabbath. The airplane was traveling slowly, making several stops on the way, so that when we were approaching Washington, I was in doubt as to whether we would arrive in New York on time to reach our home before the Sabbath. We stopped in Washington. We telephoned our good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Davidowitz in Baltimore to arrange a room for us in a hotel and to find us a kosher restaurant where to eat on Sabbath. Our friends, the Davidowitzes, actually became insulted that I should even suggest a thing like that, for us to stay in a hotel and eat in a restaurant, when they were only two people occupying a whole house. Being in the delicatessen manufacturing business, and food being no problem, they would not let us even consider eating in a restaurant on Shabes. (They were our steady guests for many years in all the hotels that we operated.) They insisted that we come directly to their home. We took a cab from the airport to the train station in Washington and then a cab from the train station in Baltimore to their house, with plenty of time before the Sabbath. We spent a wonderful Sabbath in their house. Practically everyone that we met in the synagogue knew us. After the Friday meal, there were visitors who came to see us until the late hours of the night. The same happened on the afternoon of the Sabbath and Saturday night as well. The next day, we returned to New York.

Right after Succoth, I prepared myself to go down to Miami, to take over the hotel the day the army would leave. We were notified that since the army was still occupying many of the hotels, many members of the families of the soldiers were coming to visit them, so, in order that these families not be overcharged or taken advantage of, everything had to be under government price control. I believe it was called the O.P.A. regulation or something like it. Talking the matter over with the Schechters, we agreed that when we would file our price list with the government office, we would ask permission to charge between fifty and sixty dollars per week, in order that we receive the approval of the government. We checked the rates that we had charged before. They were lower than these rates. We felt that the rates that we filed would be acceptable, and if not, we were ready to reduce them by a few dollars. I filled out the forms in the office of the O.P.A. and was told that I would hear from them in a few days. In the meantime, I engaged help to clean up the place. I spent a few weeks there by myself and did all I could. Ten days later, I received the license

of occupation, with their approval of the rates. As is usual, after I received the approval of the rates that I filed, I was sorry that I did not apply for a higher allowance, especially after I checked with similar hotels and found that they had filed higher rates and that it was approved. However, it was too late, and I was afraid to ask for a higher rate, just in case it would not be approved. After all, it was not a new hotel, and it was located all the way downtown. We felt that if we would have a reasonable rate, we would do the business.

As it turned out, being that the other hotels were still occupied by the army, there were very few hotels available to guests, and if we would charge only as little as $10.00 per person more per week, it would have meant thousands of dollars profit for us. I remember that when I came down from New York once, Mr. Schechter told me that a few families came and rented rooms for the whole season, and as was the custom in the hotel business, if people booked for a long stay, they received a discount of at least 10%. He therefore, checked in a few families for the low rate of $45.00 per week per person. Poor Mr. Schechter, he practically ate his heart out for aggravation, but it was too late. A deal is a deal.

Our hotel became very popular, guests came for short or long periods of time from all over the country as well as Canada. Soon, we were short in rooms, so we rented extra rooms all around us, wherever they were available, some even several blocks away. Our fame for good meals spread throughout the city. People came to only have their meals at our hotel. As the dining room was small, we set up extra tables in the small lobby. However, we held to our original decision not to serve the general public on Friday nights or during Saturday, only in very rare cases, such as when people wanted to check into the hotel, and there were no rooms available and they were forced to take rooms in private houses, or we knew them from before, or they lived within walking distance of the hotel and so did not have to travel on the Sabbath. In such cases, we made an exception and served them meals.

There arose the question of rooms for our own families. Being that the Schechters had their children with them (Jerry, who did not feel well; Selma, who had trouble with her foot; Blanche Schechter, whose husband Harold was in the army also moved in; and Sam). Blanche was the headwaitress. She did a very good job and people liked her a lot. We insisted that the Schechters occupy the private cottage in the garden. They did not want to take it, but did so reluctantly upon our insistence. As far as the Gartenbergs were concerned, we found a

storage room that was used to store the clean laundry, blankets, pillows, etc. It so happened that the room had a window to the garden. We squeezed a bed, a cot and a dresser into the room and we used that as our room when it was very busy. It was better than the garret in the Empire Hotel or the barn in the Garden House where a cow licked my face.

During that winter, my sister Florence was married to Arnold Solomon. We were in New York for the wedding which took place on a Sunday night. I took the young couple to Miami Beach for their honeymoon. We also took along a Mrs. Goldfinger, who came as a guest to the hotel. I will describe the following incident at length because it taught me a lesson, and I hope that it will also teach others how one must be very careful with every word that one utters.

We left New York early on a Monday morning. The next day, Tuesday evening, we were approaching Savannah, Georgia. As usual, we took along plenty of food to last for the whole trip. It was, of course, cold stuff, like hard boiled eggs, cheese, chicken, delicatessen, etc. Mrs. Goldfinger remarked that she would like something warm to eat, like hot soup to warm her up after sitting in the car for two days. She asked whether I knew a kosher restaurant in Savannah. I recalled that a Mr. Hamm once told me that he spent a lot of time in Savannah buying furs for his business, as he was a furrier by trade. He advised me that he ate in a kosher restaurant which was located on the main street of Savannah, and that if on one of my trips to Florida I wanted to have a kosher meal, I could stop and eat in that restaurant. As a rule, I seldom eat in any restaurant, especially meat meals. Now that Mrs. Goldfinger had asked about a kosher restaurant, I told her what Mr. Hamm had said. She also knew Mr. Hamm well, as he also lived in Williamsburg, near where she lived. She asked me to find the restaurant so she could have a hot soup. I found the place. It was located on the first floor above a food store that sold smoked meats. There was the usual sign stating, Kosher and non-Kosher foods are served here. Even the kosher delicatessen was not the kind that we would normally eat. I just happened to notice the sign as I parked the car in front of the store.

We went upstairs. Mrs. Goldfinger and my sister and brother-in-law ordered hot vegetable soup. We just ordered a hot coffee or milk. While sitting there, I mentioned to the proprietor that a Mr. Hamm recommended the place to me. He asked who I was, and I told him my name and that I was in the hotel business. When the owner saw five people come into the restaurant, he probably felt that he would do

good business, so that when they had finished the soup, he came around with a menu on which there was a list of main dishes, like steaks, chops, etc. He thought that a party of five would surely order enough to add up to a nice sum. When he showed the menu and offered to broil the steaks or chops, one of the women, my sister or Mrs. Goldfinger, told him, "No, thanks. We just wanted some hot soup, and as for the meat, we will eat it downstairs," meaning, of course, that we would eat the meats that we had in the car which was parked outside on the street. Since I was drinking milk, my table was further away, to the rear, and I do not remember which of them said it, and the exact words used. We left the place and continued on our journey.

A few weeks later I was back in Brooklyn. I went to see my butcher, Mr. Steiger, on Lee Avenue in Williamsburg. I gave him a *sholom aleichem.* He gave me his hand touching only the tips of my fingers and answered me the usual, *aleichem sholom* under his nose. I continued talking to him, but when he answered me he did not look me straight in the face. I saw that there was something wrong going on, but as to my question why I was getting the cold shoulder, I did not get a direct reply. After I insisted that he should come right out and tell me what was bothering him, he finally told me that Mr. Hamm had just come back from Savannah, and that the properietor of the kosher restaurant told him that the well-known hotel operator, Mr. Leo Gartenberg, came in with a party of four people, and that they ordered soup, and when he offered to make them a meat meal, he was told that they would eat the meat downstairs, which was a place that was selling *treyfa* meats, and that we bought the meat from that place.

Only then did the whole incident come back to me and I explained to him what really happened. He was not yet fully convinced of the story, so I told him, "Mrs. Goldfinger lives right here in Williamsburg. She is a customer of yours; why don't you ask her as to what took place in Savannah?" I also called Mrs. Goldfinger to tell her what trouble she created for me all on account of the hot soup that she craved. She was also very much embarrassed about the incident and she explained to Mr. Steiger and to Mr. Hamm as to what really took place that afternoon in Savannah. It took months to convince everyone the real truth of the story.

A similar incident happened to me some years before. It was during the time that we were in the Empire Hotel. We were open late in the year in order to hold the convention of the Agudath Israel, which was held during the Thanksgiving Day weekend, at the end of

November, in order to have a three day convention. (Thanksiving Day is always on a Thursday.) Since we already kept the hotel open late, the Young Israel Council asked us to stay open for the Xmas and New Years Holidays for their winter convention. We decided to remain open for the balance of the year. I was in New York for the week, and the Schechters were already in Florida. I was getting ready to leave by car for the Empire Hotel. A heavy snow fell the night before. The roads were covered with snow and were very slippery. I did not want to take a chance and travel by car, and therefore decided to take the Short Line bus. As usual, the bus stopped on the way at a restaurant. The passengers went out of the bus to use the bathrooms and also to buy something to eat. I also went into the restaurant and took out an American cheese sandwich on toast, which my mother-in-law had prepared for me. I went to the counter, bought a small paper countainer of milk with a straw, sat down to a table, ate the sandwich and sipped the milk. As we returned to the bus, a man came over and sat down next to me and said to me, "Mr. Gartenberg, I know who you are. I watched you take out a sandwich from your pocket and buy a container of milk. Not everyone in the restaurant saw you take out the sandwich from your pocket. All they saw was that you were sitting in a *treyfa* restaurant eating an American cheese sandwich. Not knowing that it was your own sandwich, they may think that you bought a *treyfa* sandwich and ate it. A person like you, who is known to thousands of people and is in the kosher business, must watch his reputation and not give people a chance to talk about him. Please forgive me for calling this matter to your attention, but I only mean it for your own good." I realized that the man was right and that what he said was for my own benefit. I thanked him for bringing the matter to my attention. From then on, I made it my business to never step into a non-kosher restaurant. One never knows who is watching and what they may say. Having in mind the well-known phrase of *Vihiyisem Nekiyim M'Ashem V'Ohdom,* and you shall be clean in the eyes of G-d and in the eyes of mankind.

The winter season in the George Washington Hotel went by pretty smoothly. It was the best hotel operation that we ever had. For the Passover holiday, we were overbooked. Every room of the hotel was occupied. We rented additional rooms in hotels around us. The lobby was used as a dining room during the entire Passover holiday. We rented the hotel again for the next winter. However, by this time, the government had released more hotels, among them the larger

ones such as the Tides, the Victor Hotel and a few more. They were located further uptown, while we were considered downtown. Also, we were two blocks away from the ocean, while they were located right on the beach. It was competition between us and the larger and more modern hotels. We still did some business, but not anything like the business of the previous year. At the end of the first year we made a profit of $40,000 a fortune of money in those days, when a dollar was still a dollar. It was at that time that we decided that we would have to move further uptown, but there were no decent hotels available.

Mr. and Mrs. Willie Ehrenreich (formerly of the Ferndale Hotel in Ferndale, N.Y.) and Mr. and Mrs. Louis Sturman (our lawyer) rented a hotel on 15th Street near Michigan Avenue, the Helena Hotel. It was an older hotel, but it was a square block long with a large garden. It was several blocks away from the ocean. In order to go to the ocean, we provided our guests with a car to take them and to bring them back. We were taken in as partners by them. The rent was reasonable and we figured that the Ehrenreichs who were in the hotel business in the Catskill Mountains for many years (although they had been out of business for a few years, they were still remembered by many people) would be an asset to the business. The Gartenberg and Schechters were already well-known by thousands of people. We therefore figured that together we would make a go of it. However, the place was not modern enough in comparison to the other kosher hotels, and above all, too far from the ocean. We therefore did not make out too well. We just about came out even or perhaps even lost a small amount of money. We therefore decided that with a good name you must also have the right merchandise. The first initial of the word *mazel* is a Mem, which stands for the word *mohkom,* meaning a place. You must have a nice place to do business. We all agreed that from then on, we must only look for a nice, modern place, in order to keep our trade and make a profit. We already had on our mailing list, people who were religious, modern and well-to-do financially.

At that time, the Tides Hotel which was located on the ocean on the corner of 12th Street, was the place which suited us in all respects. It was known as the "Skyscraper" hotel of that period. It was owned by three partners who had started out together, while they were also operating a hotel in Atlantic City, N.J. Recently the partners had not gotten along too well. Better said, two of the partners did not get along with the third one. They decided that they would either split, pay each other out, or sell the hotel. We knew each one of them quite well. We went to see them about buying the hotel. The purchase price

was $330,000.00. We put down a deposit of $30,000, with a balance of about $40,000.00 to be paid at the time of closing. The rest was to remain as a mortgage. After we put down the $30,000.00, we had no more moeny left. There was the problem of raising the $40,000.00 within a short period of time.

The one who wanted to get out of the business completely, said that we should take back one of the two remaining partners as a third partner, which would of course, cut down the balance of $40,000, to only two thirds. He would go through with the sale only if we took back the one that he recommended. However, each of the remaining partners insisted that we should take him in, and not the other one. The third one who was not favored by the first main partner, who seemed to be the one that controlled the deal, insisted that if we did not take him in, he would not sign the papers for the sale. The lawyer advised us that being that the hotel was operated by the former partners as a corporation, and as we had the approval of the majority of the stockholders, we could buy the place. However, the third person could, if he wanted to, start a case against all of us as minority stockholders. However, he had a very slight chance of winning the case.

So there we were. We had a receipt for the deposit and an agreement of the terms which were very favorable. Being that one of the partners remained, we had the good chance of retaining the former business. We also had our own trade, who were looking to us to run a better hotel, which would make the Tides the ideal place. We needed the sum of $70,000 immediately, an amount which was hard to get and of course, there was the problem of what to do about the third partner threatening to start a lawsuit against us. The lawyer and I felt that if we would offer him a few extra thousand dollars, he would sign the papers. As a matter of fact, he hinted to us in our talks with him that that could be a possibility. As far as the raising of the $70,000 was concerned, I felt that if we really went out and saw our many friends, we would be able to raise the money, as we did when we took over the Park Central Hotel. I was always the conservative one in the partnership, and Mr. Schechter was the one who had a lot of *bitochon* and was willing to take chances. However, this time he seemed to take over my role, and was not ready to enter into the deal. After several weeks of discussions, he decided against the deal. Very reluctantly, I had to give in to him and we gave up a deal which I felt was the biggest mistake that we ever made in our lives.

This incident took place around Passover time. The demand for

hotels was very great. The government still held on to some of the hotels where they housed the soldiers. There were not hotels available to buy or to rent. As the Tides Hotel was not sold, the three partners remained there for the time being. Now comes the sad part of the story. During the later part of the summer, the hotel was eventually sold. Now hold on to your seat, because it is an unbelievable fact that the Tides Hotel was sold for the grand sum of $830,000, a cool half a million dollars more than we had negotiated to buy it for. Just imagine, the two of us could have retired with a half a million dollars, at quite a young age. But that is life. It just was not *bashert* for us to make an easy fortune.

While we were back in New York, we received word from our lawyer, Mr. Louis Sturman, that the Alden Hotel located on 32nd Street and Indian Creek Drive (a block away from the ocean, with the Indian Creek in front of the hotel), was for sale. From the rear of the hotel we could see the ocean and in front, the Indian River. The hotel had about seventy rooms. The army was still occupying the hotel, but it was scheduled to be released in a few months. The purchase price was to be about $230,000.00. As a rule, when the army gave back a hotel to the owners, they paid a certain sum of money to repair the damages made to the hotel while the place was occupied by the soldiers. In this case, it was estimated that they would probably have to pay back about $30,000.00 for repairs.

I went down to Miami Beach myself, looked at the place, but only from the outside and the ground floor which consisted of a small lobby, a side room suitable for a tea room, a medium sized dining room and a small kitchen. I called Mr. Schechter in New York and told him that I did not see the rooms since the army was still there, but that they appeared to be suitable. I explained to him that the public places were small, and that the kitchen was not large enough to permit us to install a dairy and meat department. The best that we could do there, was to serve only meat meals from the kitchen; as for breakfast, we could serve a *parve* meal from the kitchen, using *parve* milk and *parve* fats. Mr. Schechter, feeling guilty about the loss of the Tides, urged me to give a deposit on the place. A little later, as we were ready for the closing, we went down together to Miami. We examined the kitchen again. Mr. Schechter, being the eternal architect, drew up a rough plan of the space. According to the plan on the paper, he was sure that we could install two stoves, two dishwashers, and other things needed to run a meat and dairy kitchen.

For the next few winters, we concentrated on running the Clarendon Hotel in Lakewood, N.J. where we made out pretty well financially. It was not a very strenuous operation. During the whole week it was slow. Most of the business was done during the weekends and the holidays. Mr. and Mrs. Schechter went down to Miami Beach to operate the Alden Hotel. Mr. Schechter worked very hard and received a payment of $35,000.00 from the U.S. government, which he immediately spent to repair the hotel and install dairy and meat kitchens. It worked well for the first few weeks that we were there, while there were not too many guests. But when it became busy, it was immediately proven that it was not possible to run a dairy and meat kitchen in a small space like that. At every meal, we had to place extra help to watch the waiters not to mix the dishes. The chefs and the salad departments had to be guarded constantly, so that poor Mrs. Schechter could not take her eyes off the various stations in the kitchen for even one minute. The guests were very happy with the place and the good service and the fact that we were in the uptown neighborhood. Mrs. Schechter worked very hard. When time came for discussing the operation of the hotel for Passover, she actually put her foot down insisting that she would not undertake to run it. Right after Purim, we closed the place for good. We were operating the Clarendon Hotel for Passover. The Alden Hotel was leased out for a term of five years. It brought in enough income to cover all expenses and left a few thousand dollars over.

A story is told about the wealthy Mr. Anchel Rothschild. He accumulated a very large amount of a certain metal pipes which he could not get rid of for years. He offered his merchandise to various governments including the Russian government, but no one was interested in buying it. One day, the Russian government happened to need this particular type of pipe. They sent him a telegram before Yom Kippur advising him that they were in need of that particular pipe. They offered him a handsome price for it. The telegram arrived on Yom Kippur. Being that he was a religious person, his office was closed for the day. Naturally, he did not reply. A few hours later they sent him another cable doubling the price. Rothschild still did not answer since it was still Yom Kippur. They sent him a third cable tripling the price, as they were under the impression that he did not answer since he was not satisfied with the price. After the holiday, when he read all the cables, he replied that he accepted the price offered to him in the third cable. Because of the fact that he was an

observant Jew, he made a large fortune on his merchandise. The truth was that if he would have read the first cable, he would have been glad to accept the first offer. That is what happened to us also.

Mr. and Mrs. Schechter spent the winter in Miami Beach. Sam Schechter stayed with us in the Clarendon Hotel in Lakewood, N.J. On a Friday evening, as we were about to start the evening services in our synagogue, my bellhop, Jimmy, came into the synagogue and called me into the office. He told me that I had a long distance telephone call from a Mr. Sturman, who wanted to talk to me urgently. Jimmy told me that he had already told Mr. Sturman that I do not talk on the telephone on the Sabbath, but Mr. Sturman told him that it was not Shabbos yet, and it was very important that I talk with him, as he had already spoken to Mr. Schechter, but Mr. Schechter told him that this matter must be taken up with me. For a moment I thought that there was something wrong with Mr. Schechter or someone in his family, so I told Jimmy to ask Mr. Sturman what was really going on. I was getting worried and was anxious to know what happened. After a few minutes of listening to Mr. Sturman, Jimmy told me that Mr. Sturman told him to relate to me that there were two people there, who wanted to buy the Alden Hotel at a very good price but that they must have an answer immediately as they were also looking at another hotel. They were leaving Miami Beach the next day, and they had to make a decision immediately as to which place they would buy. At the same time, he told me that the price that the buyers were offering was a real good price. I was glad to hear that everything was alright with the Schechters, but as far as the sale of the hotel, I told Jimmy to tell Mr. Sturman that I was very sorry, but I could not talk to him at that time since it was already Shabbos. On Saturday night, my friend Mr. Sturman, called me again apologizing that he forgot that there is an hour difference between New York nd Miami (the Sabbath starts an hour later there), otherwise he would never have called me on the Sabbath. At the same time he advised me that the buyers bought the other place.

It did not bother me in the least, as at that time in my life, I was already convinced that *Kol mah deovid Rachmonoh letav ohvid,* Everything that G-d does, He does for the good. I am also a great believer in what the Talmud tells us, A person does not hit his little finger, unless it was so decreed on the Rosh Hashanah (the first day of the year). The final result was that Mr. Sturman himself, in partnership with the Ehrenreich family, bought the hotel from us later on, paying us about $50,000.00 more than the original offer made to us. They held on to

the place for a few years, and then sold it making a good profit on the deal. They bought a few more hotels which they eventually sold at good profits.

Mr. Sturman moved away from Liberty, N.Y. He now lives in Memphis, Tenn. He, with a group of other people now operate five or six Holiday Inns. We have an open invitation to spend as much time as we want in any of his hotels, as his guests. Unfortunately, we cannot take advantage of his generous offer, since the hotels are in the South, and we do not travel to that part of the country. We have spent several nights in one of his hotels in Kingston, N.Y. about 100 miles from New York and about 50 miles from the former Pioneer Country Club. We have been to this Holiday Inn several times. I understand that he and his group have an option to buy the Grossinger Hotel in Ferndale, N.Y. Good luck to you, Mr. and Mrs. Sturman. We are still close friends to this very day. He was our friend and our sole lawyer in all the hotels that we bought and sold in our career as hotel operators, starting with the first rooming house that Mr. Schechter and I rented in the Catskill Mountains. As a matter of fact, we were partners with him in one of the hotels. Later on, when I went into the oil drilling business, Louis Sturman joined me. We lost some money together. To this day, I have a 5% interest with him in a small oil well in Louisiana, which brings me in a few dollars a month. I send him the Jewish Press every week, where he reads my weekly article. He has bought every one of my twelve books. Be well, Louis and Dora Sturman. may the L-rd bless you with many, many more good and healthy years together. May you continue to support the Pioneer Milk Fund, as you have been doing since the year 1958.

It seems that we did not have too much luck in Miami Beach. We made money in one hotel, and then lost it in another. We were offered a deal on the Edward Hotel, formerly operated by the Evans family of Loch Sheldrake, N.Y. It was located on 10th Street and Collins Avenue, one block from the Ocean. Mr. Louis Sturman, Mr. Schechter, and I went down to see the place. Mr. Sturman and I did not become too excited about it for several reasons.

1. It was an old place.
2. It was located in the downtown section of Miami Beach.
3. It was a block away from the ocean.
4. The lobby was located a floor above street level.
5. There was a bar, or sort of a night club on the ground floor of the building.
6. Many of the rooms were on the ground floor under the porch.

There were also many other drawbacks. However, Mr. Schechter felt that we would make a fortune of money there. The rent was very low for the amount of rooms that they had. He claimed that not all of our guests were happy to pay the high prices that the other kosher hotels were charging. If there would be a real kosher hotel charging lower prices, it would attract many more guests who would be able to stay for longer periods of time, enjoying the warm climate of Miami Beach in the winter. It was my feeling that we would be better off with a smaller hotel, which was more modern and located further uptown. Agents took us to many other hotels on the beach, which Mr. Sturman and I thought were more suitable for us. However, Mr. Schechter made up his mind that it had to be only this hotel. We called our wives in New York. I gave the whole picture to Mrs. Schechter. She seemed to agree with me, but as long as Mr. Schechter had made up his mind on this place, she reluctantly agreed with her husband. After many days of pro and con, it came to a point where Mr. Schechter said that if I did not want to go into the deal, he would take the place himself and operate it with his children.

After so many years of being in business together, I could not see having a hotel up north together and have one partner run a separate hotel in the south by himself. I felt that the two operations would interfere with each other. I saw many disadvantages in this kind of arrangement. Reluctantly, against my better judgment, I decided to go into the deal. We had to sign a five year lease, with a payment of the full amount of the rental for the fifth year, as security. The rental was to be $40,000.00 a year. We rented the hotel.

The repairs and additions which were promised to be ready at a specified time, were not ready. We opened the place later than we thought, thereby losing many reservations from a large convention of War Veterans. As our regular guests checked in, they did not like the set up. It was too much in the downtown section of the beach. The rooms on the ground floor were damp and dark. We had to rent them to the workers of the other hotels, like busboys, waiters, and chambermaids. The music in the bar blasted away day and night. All in all, it was not a hotel suitable for the "Gartenberg and Schechter" families. After one winter, Mr. Schechter agreed that the hotel was not right for us. We spent a lot of money preparing the place as a kosher hotel, as was befitting for our name and prestige. We began talking to the landlord about him taking back the hotel. As he had a payment of one fifth rent in his pocket, he was not interested in paying back any of the money to us. The result was that we lost the security that we had

given him and so left the place with a loss of about $40,000.00. So that was the end of our operations in Miami Beach, Florida.

We were among the pioneers of kosher hotels in Miami Beach. We brought in *kashruth.* We helped build the Yeshiva. We were instrumental in building a modern *mikvah,* etc. Later on, when things became much easier, we were not there to reap the benefits. But thank G-d, we made thousands of guests happy. We made some profit during our stay there. We helped build up Miami Beach to what it is now. We gathered hundreds of thousands of dollars in charities for practically every yeshivah and worthwhile institution. So again, thanks to G-d for everything that we had the opportunity to do and did.

It is true that when Sam Schechter started business in Miami Beach, he asked me to join him there, but I did not care to do so for many personal reasons. I was glad to let him have our full mailing list of all the Gartenberg and Schechter guests. In the first year of his operations, the guests were positive that it was a Gartenberg and Schechter hotel. Even now, some guests tell me, "I just came back from your hotel in Miami Beach." I don't mind it a bit. I always liked Sam Schechter. While his mother and his father were down in Miami Beach with some of their children, for their health, Sam was with us in the hotels up north. He helped us run the Clarendon Hotel in the winter months and the Empire and Bradley Beach Hotels in the summer. I will be writing about them in the next chapters.

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The year 1946 was an eventful year which made lots of changes in our personal lives and in the lives of thousands of others. We were not blessed by the good L-rd to have children of our own. At the beginning, while we were still young, it did not bother us. However, as the years went by without any children, we became concerned. After ten years of married life and no sign of children, we became worried. Naturally, we visited many doctors. As a matter of fact, my former wife went through several operations, one in particular, called the Rubin Test. It did not seem to help. It was at this time that we decided to adopt one or two children, especially a male child.

First we looked for a so-called "Kosher Jewish child." There were none available. We were advised to be in touch with a child adoption agency. Unfortunately the one in New York was operated by the Reform movement. People told us that it was no use inquiring from them since there was a shortage of adoptable children. They would definitely not give a child to an orthodox couple. Still, we made an application to them. The first questions that we were asked were, where we lived, how many rooms we lived in, the source of our income, etc. We lived in Williamsburgh on Lee Avenue, which was not a rich neighborhood. We told them that we were living there only temporarily and that we were willing to move to any neighborhood that they would suggest. In the meantime, we moved from Lee Avenue, which was a three story building above a hardware store, to Rodney Street. There we had a nice apartment in an apartment building. We also took an extra bedroom, which could be furnished as a children's room.

When finally the lady inspector came to visit our apartment, she looked around. Naturally, I wore a skull cap. The first ridiculous question that she asked was, "Why was not the extra bedroom already furnished for a child with a crib, children's toys, and so on." When I inquired as to when a child could be expected, her reply was that she did not have the slightest idea. We asked whether the child would be a boy or a girl, but she just shrugged her shoulders. We tried to explain

to her that not knowing the sex of the child, we could not furnish it, to which she smiled. She objected to the fact that we were in the hotel business. From her behavior, she gave us the impression that the least that she expected, was that we live on an estate on Long Island. When she left, she told us not to call them, they would call us. Of course, they never did.

At about that time the Lubavitcher rabbi came out with a statement telling people who were anxious to adopt a child to adopt a non-Jewish one. His reason was that when the child would be circumsized, it would be considered a Jewish child without any connections, which according to him would eliminate many problems at the present as well as those that may arise in the future. We started looking for a non-Jewish child. An agency, somewheres on the West Coast, was recommended to us. We contacted them. They told us that a representative would visit us shortly. In the meantime, they asked that we send them several hundred dollars to cover the cost of the trip and expenses. We immediately did so. We sent them the money as well as directions how to reach us in Ferndale where we were operating the Empire Hotel. Knowing that they too would not approve of us living in a resort hotel, we decided that should we be successful in adopting a child, we would build a private house for ourselves on the grounds of the hotel. We made arrangements with a neighbor of ours who lived in a modern private house not far from the hotel to let us use their home when the representative from the adoption agency would come to interview us. When we were notified of her imminent arrival, the neighbor moved out and we moved in. I met the lady in New York City and brought her out to the very beautiful modern furnished house. We treated her royally. She seemed very impressed with the surroundings. The house had a small shallow lake in front with a few colored ducks. A child's room was already fixed up. She left us with the impression that everything was fine. I took her back to New York in my car, and she promised that we would hear from her just as soon as the first available child would come to them. Of course, we never heard from them either.

This being the year 1946 when the Jewish refugees and their families began leaving their former countries on their way to Israel, United States and other countries, Rabbi Eliezer Silver of sainted memory, from Cincinnati, was sent by the *Vaad Hatzalah* to see what could be done to help those unfortunate people reach their destinations. The rumors where that besides families, there were thousands of small children who were given away by their parents before they

were deported to the gas chambers. They were handed over to Christian neighbors who, for monies and gifts, undertook to take these children into their homes as their own, and would return them to the parents upon their return. Since most of the parents did not return, these neighbors were selling these children to the representatives from the European countries, the United States and Israel. It was a true fact that many thousands of small children were saved in these non-Jewish homes. They were brought to Czechoslovakia and France. The rumors were that these children could be picked up from the streets. These rumors were false as will be seen later.

Rabbi Silver left for Europe in the early part of the summer. I was very close to him since the days that he was our guest while attending the conventions of the Agudath Israel held in our hotel. Before he left New York, I went to see him and he assured me that I had nothing to worry about. He would personally bring me two children on his return. I had no doubt that if Rabbi Silver made a promise, he would do his utmost to keep it. Weeks passed. Not ony did I not hear from him, but the *Vaad Hatzalah* also did not know of his whereabouts. I called my friend, Itche Meyer Ferstenberg, in New York, who was the one who originally advised me not to depend on the agencies in the United States to bring children here from Europe, but that I should go there myself. It was he who suggested that I speak to Rabbi Silver about the matter. On his advice, I came down to New York and upon his insistence tried to find out the whereabouts of Rabbi Silver. We called various places in Europe, with no results. We were told that he had procured the uniform of an American high ranking officer and was flying all over Europe doing rescue work. They also said that he took a two seater open airplane in which he flew to Israel to arrange some secret illegal immigration or weapons' deal.

Seeing that the matter was too complicated, Itche Meyer and I agreed that I, myself should fly to Europe to "pick up" so to say, two children and bring them back with me. We figured that the whole operation would take two to three weeks. In this way, we would be assured of having "good kosher" children and having the great *mitzvah* of saving two children and bringing them up as good Jews. Several days later, I remember that it was *Erev Tisha B'Av*, I went to New York to get my passport and visas in order to be able to leave shortly and to be back in time for the Labor Day weekend, as well as the New Year Holidays since I was the official cantor in the Pioneer Country Club. My very dear friend, Louis J. Septimus (who was, and still is my accountant) also decided to go to Europe as a representative of the

Vaad Hatzalah. He left New York a few days before me. His first stop was to be London, England, since there were already refugees there who needed assistance. Before he left, I asked him to try to find me children there, which he faithfully promised to do. I recall that he took along a suitcase of nylon stockings, since it was claimed that with a pair of nylon stockings one could perform wonders. I also took along a supply of nylon stockings.

When I was ready to leave for Europe, I too decided to make London my first stop. While it was true that my main purpose was to look for children, at the same time, I felt that if I would be able to help with some rescue work, I would only be too happy to do so. I was never in London before. Upon arriving there, I expected to find a nice large airport similar to the one in Idlewild in New York. Imagine my surprise when I stepped down from the plane and found no buildings in sight. The place was like a desert, with tents that were being used as offices, reception halls, etc. It was only then, that it dawned on me that we were after a world war, and that the London airport had been completely destroyed by the Nazis.

Louis J. Septimus made his headquarters with a family by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Rosenblatt, the in-laws of Mr. and Mrs. Schreiber who are in the diamond business in New York. I took a taxi and went to the same address where he was. When I asked Louis whether he saw or heard of any orphaned children, his answer was that there were no children in London. There were many refugees in England who needed help to establish themselves again and he was trying to assist in whatever way he could. We went to see Mr. Harry Goodman, *Z"l,* the Agudath Israel leader in England and we discussed many angles in which we could help. The next morning we sat around the breakfast table discussing the economic situation in London. Mrs. Rosenblatt was telling us how hard it was to get food and that for weeks she was unable to get eggs. While she was telling us about the scarcity of eggs, we were eating scrambled eggs. I told her, "But I see that you managed to buy some eggs," to which she replied, "What you are eating is not real eggs, it is egg powder." I am a former Yeshivah bocher, and I can eat most anything, but as I looked at Louis, I noticed that his face was becoming darker as if he was about to choke. When our hostess turned her back, he grabbed the paper napkin and spit the so-called scrambled eggs from his mouth into the napkin, which he then quickly put into his pocket. After we left the house he threw it into a garbage can.

After London, Louis and I left for Paris, France. This was the place where the refugees made their stop and from where they left to their destinations. Most of them were going to the United Sates. However, practically none of them had any passports or visas which were to take them out of France to go to other countries. Most of them did not have affidavits either. Affidavits were necessary to show that someone in the United States was sponsoring them, guaranteeing that they would not be a burden to the United States. I remember some years back, in the office of Louis J. Septimus, I was given a pack of affidavits a few inches thick, each one in triplicate, which I signed in blank and which were later filled out with an individual's or families' names. I was supposed to be a relative of each. These affidavits were sent to Europe to be given to the so-called relatives. These affidavits were used to save people and their families from being sent to the concentration camps. I remember signing so many papers, that I had an attack of "writer's cramp." Many times, years later, when I was introduced to someone he burst out with happiness saying, "I remember the name Gartenberg. It was your affidavit that saved me and/or my family from being deported." Now it was a different story. Affidavits were needed to actually prove to the American ambassador that the people who came to get an American visa, actually had someone sponsoring their stay in America.

Upon our arrival in Paris, after checking into a hotel, we made the office of the *Vaad Hatzalah* our first stop. This was really the office of the Agudath Israel. The manager of the office was a rabbi, Captain Manheim. The next in charge was a Mr. Ernest Itzkowitz. I became very friendly with Mr. Itzkowitz. From his name and the first words he uttered, I immediately knew that he was a Hungarian. Eventually, I sent affidavits for him, his wife and their five children, and with these papers he was able to come to the United States. He is now in the printing business and resides in Boro Park. As soon as we were seated, we were told of the tremendous problems, which were as follows:

1. Every Tuesday and Friday, a trainload of refugees arrived from Prague. Their original homes were in Poland, Russia, Hungary, Roumania, Czechoslovakia, etc. The greatest problem was that these refugees arriving in Paris, were under the impression that once they arrived in a free country such as France, it would be a question of only a few days, and the representatives from America and Israel would put them on aircrafts or boats and send them on their way to whichever country they would choose. It was far from the truth

2. If some of them had passports or affidavits or money for transportation, the *Vaad Hatzalah,* the Agudath Israel, the Joint or Hias, were able to be of help to them. Most of these unfortunate people had no papers, no visas, and no money.
3. Upon their arrival in Paris, the religious ones were taken by truck to the Agudah office. The workers in the office were at a loss as what to do with them. Most people came without money, without food, and with very little clothing. If they had some money, they registered in the low priced hotels in the city. Those who had no money, found some lodging and food by good-hearted people of the Jewish community.
4. Others who were not particular about *kashruth,* found their way to the Joint, who maintained a kitchen in which they served whatever food was available, kosher or not kosher.
5. Another probem was, that the police allowed these refugees to stay in Paris for only two weeks. After the end of two weeks, the helping organzations took away from them the identification papers that they had (mostly a one page paper that was give to them by the Red Cross). The police put a rubber stamp on the paper prolonging their stay for another two weeks. After the second two weeks, the police were reluctant or refused to prolong their stay any longer.

I know of one organization which upon the refusal of the police to place the rubber stamp on the paper, just swiped the rubber stamp and brought it back to their office and stamped the papers there, or, they made a copy of the rubber stamp for their use.

At this time, an organziation in America was holding its annual convention. Relatives of refugees went to the organization and procured a letter form them stating that the refugee in Europe was invited to attend the convention as an official delegate. That helped some to receive a visa to enter the United States. After the convention, it was decided that due to the inability of all European delegates to attend the first convention, a second convention would be held to enable the rest of the delegates to attend. This too helped a small number of refugees to enter the United States.

Things were so bad, that we were told that two religious young fellows who had arrived in Paris, seeing what was going on, having no place where to go from there, having no place where to stay, or enough food to eat, being picked up by the police and told to keep moving, in desperation, threw themselves into the river that flows through Paris.

An emergency meeting was called at the home of the Agudah attorney, Dr. Matthew Mueler. It was attended by the representatives of all countries and a committee of local people at which time it was decided that we must go out the next day and rent, or buy old castles or other large houses outside of the city in which we would lodge the displaced refugees. This was the situation that faced us upon our arrival in Paris. Louis J. Septimus and I attended that meeting. We gave them our contributions towards renting some places. This relieved the situation a little. We took those refugees who did not have a chance to leave Paris in the near future, and placed them there. We called and cabled America, and some money arrived to pay towards the upkeep of the houses. Food was very hard to get as most foods were rationed. Ration cards had to be obtained in order to buy food. These refugees, not being residents of the country, were not entitled to ration cards. The houses were out in the country, near farms and some food was bought from the farmers at very high prices without ration cards. Other food was bought in Paris through various methods. New funds were constantly needed, either to rent houses or buy food. I kept on writing checks and advising my wife to make deposits into my account.

One day while sitting in the office of the Agudah, we received an urgent telephone call from the leader of a group of Beth Jacob girls who had arrived in Paris and were on their way to being smuggled on an illegal *aliyah* to Israel. They were now in the dormitory and dining room of the Joint who was feeding all the other refugees who were on their way to Israel. However, after checking the facilities, they discovered that the food was not kosher, and as they were already traveling on the train for three days, were very hungry. The other travelers not only ate all the food that the Joint gave them, but they teased these religious girls by telling them if they would not be so fanatically religious, they could join them in the banquet. We promised that we would do the best that we could. We all remembered that months before, we were called to the office of the Agudah in New York, where we made up packages of food containing matzos, hard cheese and various canned goods, which were shipped in large crates to various cities throughout Europe to distribute to the poor people who were in need of food. The office here told us where those crates of food were stored. Louis and I grabbed a taxi, went to the warehouse, broke open the crates, packed them into the taxi and rushed them to where the girls were. They ate their fill and had enough to take along with them when they would continue their journey to the Holy Land. Problems

of this sort came up every day. We did our best to try and solve them.

A few days later, while at the office, who should show up, none other than our lost friend, Rabbi Eliezer Silver. He was back from one of his mysterious trips. He was practically starved, not having the opportunity or the time to buy kosher food. He did not eat the usual canned tuna fish or salmon, not being sure that they were packed in kosher oil. The minute he saw me, he exclaimed, "Now that Gartenberg is here, I will have what to eat." I immediately ran to my hotel which was just a short distance away, brought back a couple of cans of tuna and salmon that I had brought with me from New York, and made him a meal. He apologized to me for not fulfilling the promise he made me to get two children for me. First, there were no children around, and besides he just did not have the time to make a thorough search for them.

While talking with Rabbi Silver, I noticed that he was holding a small suitcase in his hands without ever putting it down. As to my inquiry as to why he was holding on to it, he told me that it contained a large sum of American dollars which were entrusted to him to distribute to poor people. When I asked him where he got the money, he explained that there were people who were in possession of American dollars before they were deported. They buried the money in the ground for safe keeping, hoping to return later on to use this money. They entrusted the secret hiding place to some of their friends. Those who were fortunate to return, dug up the money, but those who did not, their friends dug up the money and in memory of the departed ones, entrusted Rabbi Silver to distribute the money to the most needy refugees. He had already distributed some of the money, but he still had a lot of it left. We looked at the money and saw that it looked like money which had been buried for years. Some of the bills were very old because they were longer in size than the money which was in circulation at that time.

We told Rabbi Silver of the many problems that we were confronted with. We arranged for a meeting with the committee for the following day. When we told him about the Beth Jacob girls who were deprived of a meal because they refused to eat non-kosher, Rabbi Silver became enraged. We immediately went to the Joint. Rabbi Silver banged his fists on the table, exclaiming, "I am immediately calling my friend, Shenator Taft (being Litvish, he talked with an sh) in Cleveland, telling him to stop sending funds to France unless you promise me that you will supply all the people who are particular about *kashruth*, with kosher food." He then opened the suitcase that he

was carrying, threw a few hundred dollars on the table, saying, "Here is some money on account, to make up the difference between the price of kosher and non-kosher food." He promised that he would see to it that more money would be forthcoming from America for this purpose. From then on, there was always kosher food available at the Joint dining room. The bag of money was left in the office of the Agudah. Each time when the people from the various homes came to the city to buy food, they were given some of this money. We also used the nylon stockings that Louis and I brought along with us from America. (Not having any ration cards, we were forced to pay higher prices for food. In many cases, a pair of nylons helped to strike a better deal.)

A young refugee boy was suffering with his lungs and was very run-down. The doctor advised that the only way that his life could be saved would be to take him high up in the mountains where the air was very strong. He was to be fed with lots of dairy food and above all, he had to follow a diet which would contain pork fat. A place was found for him in the mountains at the home of a non-Jewish farmer where he had been for several weeks prior, and his condition improved considerably. It was decided that another man and I should go to visit him to:

1. Take some clothing for him.
2. Pay the farmer for his stay.
3. See that the boy remained there for another few weeks.

The way to get there was via auto-bus. Early one morning, a young fellow and I took the bus. The boy took his bicycle along with him and placed it on top of the bus. After we spent some time there and cheered the boy up a bit, we walked back to the bus which would take us back to Paris. The bus did not show up on time. It was getting late in the afternoon and I had an important meeting with a refugee committee at which Rabbi Silver would also be present. Very serious problems were to be decided on, and here I had no transportation to get back. I eyed the bicycle that was standing next to us. I had not ridden a bicycle for about twenty years, since the time when I was working in the meat market in Boro Park. The roads were rough and since we were on top of a high mountain, the road was very steep downhill. The boy with me said that if I wanted to take the chance, he would let me use the bike, hoping that I would not break it and my back as well. I wanted to attend that meeting desperately. I took the bike and after a few light falls, I finally got my bearings and was flying down the hill for miles. As I was approaching the city, I said to myself,

"You fool, how did you undertake to ride a bike in such a large city without even knowing directions?"

I remembered the name of the street where Dr. Mueler lived, at whose home the meeting was to take place, but I did not have the faintest idea how to get there. I did not even know a word of French to make inquiries. After an hour of blundering, and doing the best that I could of asking directions, I finally arrived at the meeting, tired and knocked out, but I made it, and helped with the problems facing us. I got so involved with the rescue work, that I did not accomplish anything about finding children.

Someone told me that I would have better luck in Prague, which was the first place that the refugees and the children were coming to on their way to France. Anyway, Prague was on our schedule to visit, to see what was being done there. Arriving in Prague, we checked into a hotel where the representatives of the various rescue organizations were staying. As soon as news got around that two members of the *Vaad Hatzalah* from America were there, we were besieged with hundreds of refugees, all of them with the same problem: how to get out of there and get to America. Of course, the first step was to get to France. In order to get to France, they had to get a permit from the French ambassador. A permit was not issued unless they could prove that they would not remain there for more than two weeks, and then leave the country for another. Therefore, a visa had to be produced from the ambassador of that other country giving them permission to enter that country. A small amount of visas were legitimately given by the ambassadors of some small countries, giving the people permission to travel there. With such a visa, they were given a permit to enter France. However, after a short while, the ambassadors of these small countries refused to issue any more visas. So what was to be done now? A certain organization began to make up false visas for the refugees. In the toilet of a certain house, a place was set up to produce these false documents. Suddenly, I began to suffer from stomach cramps which required me to visit the toilet and I spent a lot of time there. I don't even remember whether there was a toilet seat in the room, but when I did come out from the room, my hands were somehow smeared with ink from the rubber stamps which were used to stamp the documents, and from the pens that were used to sign the names of the ambassadors of the various countries.

I was reminded of this incident by Rabbi Abraham Rubin of Los Angeles, California, who was one of the refugees whom I helped by

getting him transportation, which was very hard to obtain at that time. Like many others, he went through all the hardships of the concentration camps. His problem was, that although he had his papers as a delegate to the Agudah convention, he was unable to get transportation to New York. Through a friend of mine who was a representative of the Agudah in Israel, and who had a close friend who was an officer of a steamship office in Paris, I was lucky to get about fifteen tickets on a passenger boat which had been outfitted as an Army transport boat carrying as many as 20,000 soldiers, instead of the usual few thousand regular passengers. Before the boat was taken to the dry docks to refurnish her again as a passenger boat, she made one last trip to New York carrying passengers. It was on this boat that I got a ticket for Rabbi Rubin. Recently, we met in Acapulco, Mexico, where he reminded me about the favor that I had done for him. He told me that when I was in Prague, people said, "There came an angel from America by the name of Leo Gartenberg, who is doing favors for everyone who turns to him."

In Prague the refugees were kept in a former army camp called Diablice. Rabbi Victor Vorhand, the chief rabbi of Prague, was very influential there. We went to see the camp. It was a horrible sight to behold, even for me, who was used to seeing poverty. The people were crowded into wooden shacks, sleeping on cots with straw mattresses. There was no furniture in the so-called rooms. For food, they lined up in front of a public kitchen with tin plates and cups in their hands. They were handed a piece of black bread and something that looked like coffee and some lukewarm soup. I was mostly interested in seeing the children. My heart broke when I saw them. Their bodies were covered with boils; their bellies were swollen from, I suppose, lack of food; they had no clothing on their swollen bodies; some wore some kind of footwear, while most had no shoes at all. They all stood barefoot in the line. With tears in my eyes, I just had to turn away. I did not see how I could even consider taking any of these children home with me.

Eventually, these children were "deloused," the boils on their bodies were cleaned up. I looked for the leaders of the camp who explained that the camp was the first place to where the refugees were taken after they were brought from the different places in Europe. They were smuggled into Prague by various means, usually by crossing a fast running river that runs between Poland and Czechoslovakia. After they were cleaned up and put into shape, they were sent further to other countries. The children were taken over by *madrichim*

(counselors) who were sent there from Israel (usually from non-religious *kibutzim*) who eventually smuggled them into Israel. Once in a while, some *madrichim* from Poalei Agudath Israel, or Hapoel Hamizrachi came, who also took some of the children under their wings for the same purpose. These religious *madrichim* had to be very careful with the children, because after they were cleaned up, the *madrichim* from such organizations as the Hashomer Hatzair would come (they were far from religious) and sometimes stole the children away.

Most of the children were girls. There were very few boys among them. When I inquired as to why this was so, I was told that the girls were hidden by non-Jewish families who kept them as their own, with the hope that the parents would return and they would give the girls back to them. However, boys were not taken by these non-Jewish families, since they were afraid that when the Nazis or Polish anti-semites would come to their house and examine the children, they would soon discover that being the boys were circumcised, they must be Jewish children. Not only would they be taken away, but the guardians would be punished for saving Jewish children. What I saw there, were male children about ten years old who had saved themselves by hiding out in the woods with the Jewish partisans. These kids were kept in bunks under the control of *madrichim.*

We left the camp very dejected. A day or so later, I persuaded Louis Septimus to go there again. It was towards the end of the summer, there was an abundance of plums in the marketplace. These plums were brought in by farmers who sold them without ration cards. We hired a taxi and filled up the vacant seats and the trunk with crates of plums. Arriving at the camp, we stopped in front of the bunks where the boys were lodged. We called them out to the taxi and began distributing the plums. For a while, all was in order, but when some of the kids returned with the plums to the bunks and the other children saw them, they came running to grab the fruit from us. Soon we were besieged by hundreds of children, all grabbing the plums from the crates. They crept into the taxi and climbed on the roof. Some kids screamed, "Don't give those kids any, they are Mizrachists." Others yelled, "Don't give the others any, they are Agudinicks," while I screamed at all of them, "Shame on all of you. What difference does it make to me. All of you are the same, Mizrachi, Agudah, Zionist. You are hungry, anxious to get the fresh fruit while they last. You will all get your share. When the boxes are empty, we will go back to the market and bring more." When the fruit was all gone, the mob left. We looked around. Our clothes were torn; the taxi was all

scratched up; the fenders were bent. The taxi man hollered about the damage to his car. We had to pay for the damage to the taxi and the torn and spotted interior.

It was a fact that Rabbi Vorhand did heroic work to save and help the thousands of refugees who passed through the camp with everything that he could. He later told me that at one time there were as many as 7,000 souls, men, women and children, who occupied the place. The first thing that he did was to arrange a kosher kitchen, but there was just not enough food to supply so many of them plentifully. Fresh fruits were a delicacy, therefore, it was no wonder that these starved children were fighting over the plums. I made several more trips to the camp, always bringing more fruits, but with the assistance of the counselors, we kept order with the children so that the above described scene would not re-occur.

Here I want to mention a few names of emissaries who came to Europe to help with the rescue operation of the refugees: Rabbi Dr. Yitzhchok Levine of New York, the unfortgettable Mr. Moshe Enright of Elizabeth, N.J., *Z"l*, the Honorable Mr. Herbert Tenzer of New York, Mr. Stephen Klein of the Barton Candy Company, Mr. Mayer Schenkolevsky of Brooklyn, N.Y. who represented the Chief Rabbi Dr. Schoenfeld of England, a Rabbi Pfeffer, Mr. and Mrs. Sternbuch of Switzerland, and many others. The people who were there, who did all the *mesiras nefesh* work were: Dr. Jacob Griffel (about whom I will write at length later on), Rabbi Shimon Zucker, *Z"l*, who passed away recently in New York, Mr. Zalmen Bruner, and of course, Rabbi Leibel Zamisch. He is now a *mashgiach* in a hotel in Tel Aviv. On one of my trips to Israel, I met him there. These gentlemen actually went into Poland and other countries where the children had been hidden by non-Jewish families. They bought, or stole these children out of these countries.

I met a woman and her three daughters (they were related to Rabbi Shabse Frankel of Brooklyn, new living in Jerusalem) who related their hair-raising experiences to me. While they were being deported to the gas chambers, a non-Jewish woman saved them by taking them away from the line of Jewish people who were being led to the concentration camps. She took them to her house. However, since she was afraid to keep them in the house because the local nazis might find them, she did the following: In the back of the house, she had a bale of straw, as farmers usually do. It is used to placed on the floors of the stables where the livestock stay. During the dark of night, she

pulled out enough straw to make an opening for the four of them to creep in, where they spent their days and nights. The opening was covered with straw, so that no one suspected that human beings were hidden there. During the night, she pushed in some food for them. Also, during the night, the four of them came out for some fresh air, and to relieve their body needs. They lost all track of time. Some cats also spent their time with them. Every time the mother cat gave birth to a new litter of kittens, they had an idea of the time passed. When they came out at night, they came out separately, so that they never really saw each other. When finally the American army came and freed all the refugees, they came out. By the light of the day, they, who although they were huddled together, had to renew their presence to each other and find out who was who. I met the four of them in a restaurant where they told me of their experiences. The color of their faces was yellow. As a matter of fact, they were all sick and one of them died shortly after. I never heard from them again, so I do not know of their whereabouts, and what happened to them. This was just one of thousands of similar cases of the years of the second World War.

On Friday, we found out that the Klausenburger Rabbi is getting together a group of people to go out to the small city known as Buhley to spend the Sabbath with refugee families who were being held there. It was one of the places that was acquired by the Vaad Hatzalah and other organizations where refugees were hidden from the eyes of the police in Paris. It was said to be a palace, the former residence of King Louis the fourteenth. A bus was rented for the purpose to take out those interested to leave. Louis J. Septimus and I decided that we would go along.

The place consisted of a very old building surrounded by a moat (water all around the property, with a suspended bridge over it). The families had their own rooms, while single boys and girls lived in dormitories. Louis and I, being that we were Americans, were assigned to a small room in the garrett which was located on the fourth floor. The floors were tiled, but the tiles were loose, not cemented down. We had to be careful not to fall as we walked on them. The building was surrounded by a large garden which was very neglected. Very large rats were walking around just like ordinary cats. Louis was very much disappointed with everything. If there would be time and a taxi available, we would have returned to Paris imme-

diately. There was not time to go back or a taxi available. It was very hot. We wanted to wash around a little. The only water available was from a tank of water that was hanging on the wall of the lobby, to which there was attached a narrow pipe with a faucet, in front of which there was a line of people getting a cupful of water to wash their faces and the upper parts of their bodies. When they saw the two of us approaching, I heard one of them telling the other in Hungarian, "They are Americans. Let them go first to use the water and if there will be none left for us, we will go across the street and bathe Lekovod Shabbos in the stagnant rain water which has accumulated in the marshes." We washed ourselves around, the best way we could. Then we prepared for the Sabbath. Soon, we came down to the room which was used as the synagogue. The rabbi himself was the cantor for the Kabulath Shabbos. He prayed very slowly with great concentration and a lot of crying. He did not remain in one place, but was walking around back and forth, crying. He had lost his wife and children in the concentration camps. He had enough reason to cry. He was performing heroic work with the "sheyris Hapleytoh."

There is a law in the Talmud which says that during the Shemonoh Esrah (the 18 benedictions) a person must stand very still, and not move from the spot even if a snake is curling around his feet. The rabbi however, kept on walking back and forth in great excitement even during this part of the services. I have heard before that Chasidic rabbis do so while they pray. However, Louis, being an American born, and not used to Chasidic rabbis, just could not get over it. I had to hold him, so that he would not protest loudly. We took along some food, so that after the services, we had our own private meal.

Rabbis as a rule, have their Sabbath meals late. We attended the so-called "tish" at which all the people in the place gathered to hear the rabbi say words of Torah and listen to the Zemiros. We ate morsels of food that the rabbi distributed with his hand from the plate that he was eating from. Those chasisim who were not close to the rabbi to be reached by the rabbi, actually jumped over each other to grab a piece of food or fruit, as is the custom. The problem began when someone brought forth a few large bottles of soda. There were no glasses on the table. One of the chasidim took out from his pocket a silver cup (which he had saved all the time that he wandered in the concentration camps). He gave it to the rabbi, who took a few drops for himself to drink, and then proceeded to give a bit of soda to everyone present at the table. All accepted the glass of soda, wished the rabbi Lechayim and returned the empty glass. I was sitting in front of Louis. When I

was offered the glass, of course, I accepted, wished the rabbi Lechayim and drank the contents and returned the empty glass. As the glass was about to be handed to Louis he said, "Like the dickens will I drink from the same glass as they all drank." I told him, "Don't you dare insult the rabbi and the rest of these people by refusing the glass." Reluctantly, he took the glass, wished the rabbi and the rest of the people Lechayim, and put the glass to his lips. I am not sure whether he took a sip or not, and then he returned the glass. Of course, I did not blame him for his feelings. He is American born, not a chusid. He never saw these things and found it hard to accept. The next day, the services were about the same as Friday night. The day seemed like a year. Towards evening, we did not wait for the rabbi and his chasidim to finish Maariv. We made a minyan, called a taxi and returned to Paris.

I am very proud of my friendship with the famous Louis J. Septimus. Not only was he, and later also his brother Abraham Septimus, my accountants in the hotel business where they went out of their way to look out for our interest, but were also responsible in raising a large sum of money for the American Friends of Children Day Nurseries and Children's Town in Jerusalem. Louis made a wonderful contact with a certain Mr. Schwarts of the Paragon Oil Company by which he was influential in receiving from him millions of dollars for various Yeshivos and institutions in this country as well as in Israel. Through my insistence and continuous reminders to influence this Mr. Schwartz to also set aside a certain amount for the Children Homes in Israel, we eventually received a sum of about $700,000. As a matter of fact, the first building in Children's Town in Jerusalem is in the name of Mr. Schwartz (under the name of Brookdale Home). Thanks a lot Louis. G-d bless you with many healthy years. You should only continue to do good deeds all your life.

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It was before the New Year holiday. Louis J. Septimus decided to go back to the United States. It was with great difficulty that he, using his influence in America, was able to get transportation on an aircraft to go back. One day, as he was getting ready to leave, he brought a young boy of about thirteen years of age accompanied by his mother, a woman of about forty years, to my hotel room. He told me the following story.

"This lady is a distant relation of my brother, Sol. She is a widow. Her husband was lost in the war. She is now alone without any definite income. She and her son support themselves by her doing housework, like cleaning rooms, washing floors, etc. in houses where she can find work. She manages to get along somehow, but she is very worried about her child. She would like to give him a good religious education. She has no idea how to go about it nor has she the means to do it with. She would therefore want me to take him along to America. I cannot do it now, as I am about to leave in a few days. While it is true that the immigration quota for France is not as a rule used up, and that there would be no difficulty to arrange an affidavit and a visa for him, still it would take several weeks to have all the details arranged. I already signed an 'affidavid of support' for him." Louis Septimus also got an affidavit from the Yeshiva Torah Vodaath for him as a student. A visa which would permit the boy entrance to the United States would be forthcoming shortly. He would leave money to take care of all the expenses.

What he wanted from me was that I should do all that I was able to expedite his receiving the formalities necessary for this departure. I should procure the airline ticket (which at that time looked impossible) and what is more, take the boy along with me when I would be leaving for the United States. He made me give him and the mother my hand and word of honor that I would do so. As I did not accomplish anything so far about finding any children, and I knew that it would take me many weeks to do so, I gave them my hand and my word, that I would take care of the matter.

As of that day, I took the boy under my wings. He spent most of his days and nights with me in my room. I took him along with me to Fublaines (the children's home where I spent the coming holidays) about which I will write at length in future chapters. Eventually, when I left France several weeks later, the boy was one of my legal passengers. The American consul in Paris wanted to make sure that the boy, would not at a later date, apply for special privilege to have her come to the United States under a special visa. Therefore, we had to give an affidavit that we would not ask for this privilege. Eventually we arranged with the Beth Jacob schools, who were in need of a teacher who spoke some foreign language, and being that she spoke Polish and French besides Yiddish, we did get her out within a year, as a teacher.

The boy Edmond, who had practically no religious education, did attend the classes in the Yeshiva Torah Vodaath. Later on he went to other schools where he took his English education, so much so, that today he is a professor in a college. I believe it is the University of Long Island. What would have happened to him and his mother if we would not have been there at that time, I do not know.

On the day when the boy arrived with me in New York, Louis Septimus took him to Macy's Department Store to fit him out with new clothing. It was closing time. The sales people were just about to leave. Louis went over to the manager and told him that the boy just came off the boat. He had no clothing to wear except the ones that he had on, which were pretty shabby. The manager assigned one of the saleswoman to take them through the store and buy anyting that they wanted, which they did. The bill came to more than the cash that Louis had on him. The manager said that he should take everything and come in the following day to pay the balance. When they left the store and were standing across the street waiting for a taxi, they happened to stand in front of a store (like Bartons) that had a beautiful display of all kinds of chocolates and candies. Edmond never saw anything like it before in his life. He asked Louis what it was. Louis advised him in Yiddish that they were "tzukerkes" candies. Edmond asked whether they can be bought. When he was told that they could be bought, he told Louis, "With so much candies, one can buy off the whole city of Paris." He was right, because we had that experience with a satchel full of nylon stockings that Louis and I brought with us to Europe. All doors were opened real wide for us when we offered someone a pair of nylon stockings.

A story is told about the holy tzadik, the Rabbi Reb Zishe, who with his brother, Reb Meylech of Lezinsk (about whom they made a song of "When the Rabbi Reb Elimelech is gevoren zehr freylich — When the Rabbi Elimelech became very happy." Before they were discovered, the two of them went around "uprechten gohlus," which means to go around and suffer the life of exile. Whichever village they visited, they slept in the poor house with the rest of the wandering poor people. One morning, as Rabbi Zishe was coming from the *mikvoh* and was about to enter the poor house, he overheard one poor man tell another, "Do you know, Yankel, the wanderer came to the poor house last night?" Rabbi Zishe who was occupied with his body and soul to the service of G-d every minute of the day, and never paid any attention to what was going on around him, was astonished as to why he overheard this remark. What did it have to do with him. It bothered him all day until the next morning when he came again from the *mikvoh* and was about to enter the poor house, he heard a piercing voice of a woman screaming, "Did anyone see my Yankel?" It was then that he thought of the remark that he overheard the day before. He called the woman over and asked what she was hollering about? She explained to him, that she was looking for her husband Yankel who left her an "Agunah" (a woman whose husband left her without giving her a divorce, which means that she cannot get married). She was now trying to find him so that they would either live together or make him divorce her. The rabbi told her, "If he is not here now, it means that he must be in the next town. Go there immediately. You will catch up with him." With his being at the right place at the right time, he helped the woman find her runaway husband.

This little story, with "Elef Alfey Havdohles" — thousands upon thousands of separations, between the great holy man and myself, brings me to the following incident. One day, we left Prague where we were doing our rescue work and came back to Paris where there was a convention of the "Sheyris Hapleytoh," the remainder of the people who were saved from the Holocaust. I was sitting in the lobby of the hotel on one of those chairs with a tall back. In the back of me, there was a similar chair in which was sitting a lady who was talking to someone. She told her that she was Rebbetzin Soloweitchik from Spring Valley, N.Y. She just flew in from the United States. The reason for her coming was as follows: She had a sister who was killed in the war by the hands of the Nazis, but she knows that there was a little boy, who miraculously remained alive. She understood that this child was saved and was now someplace in the camps of displaced

persons somewhere in Europe. She decided that she would sacrifice two years of her life to come to Europe to search for him. She left her husband, her children, the Beth Jacob school which she organized and operates, to come here to look for her nephew.

Before we left Prague, I heard that a certain Rabbi Zamisch is very active in rescuing children and that he just came from Poland with a transport of children who are now under his care in that camp outside Prague (which I wrote about before.) She continued saying that if she could only find that Rabbi Zamisch, he would help her locate the child. However, she did not know where he was, whether he was still in Europe, was the child with him or were he and the child already taken to one of the kibbutzim in Israel. (It is interesting to note, that children were smuggled to Israel by either religious organizations, like the Agudath Israel, Poalei Agudah, Mizrachi or Hapoel Hamizrachi, but unfortunately, there were also representatives of non-religious groups who were after the children. The above religious groups sacrificed their lives by bringing the children from Poland. The non-religous groups used emissaries to steal away the children who were already "deloused" and put back into good health. The non-religious emissaries took them to their kibbutzim and we all know what happened to those children. We saved their bodies, but they stole their souls.)

When I heard the name of "ZAMISCH" I jumped up from my chair, went over to the lady, introduced myself and told her that I had heard his name mentioned in Prague only a few hours ago. I gave her the name of the hotel in Prague where he could be located. We immediately called the hotel and got in touch with him. When Rebbetzin Soloveichik mentioned the name of the child, he replied, "Of course, I know the child. He is under my control." The next morning she flew to Prague and picked up the child. Rebbetzin Soloveitchik has another version of the incident. She says that she knew that I was in Europe and the work that I was doing. She therefore came to the convention to look for me. I was at a meeting in one of the halls. She sent someone in to call me out. When she told me the reason for her being there and I mentioned the name of "Zamisch," I told her about his whereabouts. It really makes no difference how it happened. (I stick to my version.) She found the child, spent a few months there with him and brought the child back with her to America. (The "child" is now a mature, married man with several children. He is one of the "Chasidic" types.) I met him only recently at a wedding, where he was

together with Rebbbitzen Soloveitchik. Again, I am very happy that I was available at the right place at the right time, thereby saving Rebbitzen Soloveitchik months of searching for the child all over Europe and Israel. I also saved her a lot of time and expense. In those days, *Ohlom Haboh* (the good deeds that one does for which he is rewarded in the world to come) was laying on the ground. All one had to do is bend down and pick it up. It really is only a figure of speech. It was not so easy, but I am very happy what I was able to do to help others.

While I was in Prague, the camp Diablica was always on my mind and gave me no rest. The next Friday afternoon, I left my hotel with all its comforts and without taking Louis Septimus along with me, I went to spend the Sabbath with the refugees in the camp. I felt that being Louis was an American born, he would not be able to tolerate these things. I knew that they had a place where the services were held and where they studied. I figured that if there would be no place for me to sleep, I would spend the night on a bench. Of course, during the services, I was immediately recognized as an American.

Several men whose families had their own bunks, invited me to share their Friday night meal and their bunk. I went along with a man who was an old time Agudah member from Latvia. I took along enough food with me so that I did not have to deprive them of their meager meal which they took from the public kitchen. The family consisted of the father, mother and several children. During the course of the evening, they related their experiences of the last few years. They asked me how we were getting along in America. After listening to their sad stories, I was really embarrassed to tell them how well off we were, how we had too much of the good things even with the few restrictions that we encountered. The parents believed me immediately, but not the children. They told me that they knew differently. In the schools that they attended in Russia recently, they were told that there was a great shortage of food, clothing, and other necessities of life in America. They saw with their own eyes, films that they were shown, of long lines of people waiting to get food and other items, even though they had the money to pay for it. They also knew that there was great unemployment and that the average person did not have a job. Those that were employed did not earn enough to support themselves. I told them that they were right. There were long lines of people waiting, but not for food, but to enter a ball-game or a theatre, or a department store to buy bargains that were advertised in

the newspapers. They were not fully convinced that I was in earnest and telling the truth. I met many people like that during my stay.

The next morning, I was invited by two men who were either brothers, or brothers-in-law. Both of them, together with their wives and children, occupied the same bunk. I learned that they were Lubavitcher Chasidim. When we were about to make *Kiddush,* they brought a bottle of whiskey which they said they had saved for a very long time, to be used only for a special occasion. What could be a better occasion than to have the privilege of being visited by an American, especially someone from Brooklyn, the residence of their holy Lubavitcher Rebbe. They carefuly poured a little whiskey into three small glasses, made *Kiddush,* drank the whiskey in one gulp and wished me *Lechayim.* I did likewise, but I almost choked and could not catch my breath for a few seconds. How was I to know that it was a vodka with the strength of zex un neintziger (almost 200 proof) — my head was turning around in circles. There came to my mind the humorous interpretation of the sentence that we say in our prayers on the Sabbath morning in the chapter of *Ov Harachamim,* which reads thus *"Yudin Bagoyim, Mohley Gevihyos, Muchatz Rosh, Al Eretz Raboh."* The regular meaning is, He shall judge nations. The places are full of dead bodies; He shall unite rulers over a wide land. *"Minachal Baderech Yishte, Al Keyn Yohrim Rosh."* Of the brook shall he drink in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head. The humorous interpretation is as follows: *"Yudin Bagoyim,"* as long as the Jews are among the other nations (in exile). *"Mohley Gevihyos,"* as soon as he drinks a cupful of an alcoholic drink. *"Mochatz Rosh,"* his head is ready to split. However, *"Al Eretz Raboh,"* when the Redeemer will bring them to the great land, *"Minchal Baderech Yishte,"* he will drink alcoholic liquid, as one drinks from a brook on the road. *"Al Keyn Yohrim Rosh,"* still he will be able to lift his head high.

As a main dish they served two or three small herrings. Everyone took a small bite. I had a few cans of preserved meat with me, and opened one for myself and offered it to them as well. I assured them that it was glatt kosher, but they refused to eat it. Then I suggested that I give the children some of the meats. They also refused to eat it. They apologized by saying, "We come from Russia. We were under the communistic rule for about forty years. Not having any kosher meats, we have not eaten meat in all that time. Our children do not even know what meat is." One of the women added, "If we did not eat meat until now, we will refrain from eating it until G-d will help us to have the merit to . . ." Here I expected her to say, "until we will arrive

in our holy Land of Israel," but instead, she ended her sentence by saying, "see the holy face of ur rabbi, the Lubavitcher in Brooklyn, N.Y." What could I say to that? That is what is called *Emunas Tzadikim,* the trust in the righteous. Their hope and aim in life was to come to Brooklyn and see their holy Lubavitcher rabbi. I never saw them again. I left the camp that night and went back to Prague to the hotel. I hope that they reached their goal and that they are somewhere in Brooklyn, N.Y. near the present Lubavitcher rabbi. They surely deserve that reward, waiting for their dream to come true for all those years.

I did not believe the remarks that some people made, "that children can be picked up on the street," but I did believe that there would be children available in various Children Homes. However, it did not turn out that way. The ones that I saw in the camps in Paris and Prague, looked bad. Most of them were sick, their bodies covered with boils. Once the Madrichim took them out from there, nursed them back to health and cleaned up their bodies, they held on to them with the idea of bringing them to Israel. I was becoming discouraged.

On a Saturday night, while attending the *Slichos* services in a synagogue in Paris together with my friend, Louis Septimus, I met Dr. Isaac Lewin, a good friend of mine, who was wearing a uniform. He was a representative of the Chief Rabbi of England. I told him my problem. He immediately answered me, "Do not worry. Tomorrow I am joining a committee of members of the Agudah and Mizrachi organizations. We are visiting a Children's Home in Fublaines. You and Mr. Louis Septimus can come along with us and if you find any children who will suit you, you can have them."

The next day we were on our way there. The camp was one of a few maintained by the "Vadad Hatzalah" together with an organization called "Rescue Children" from the United States, headed by my good friend, Rabbi Z. Novick. Arriving there, we met about 120 children. Most of them were older boys and girls. We were introduced to a Dr. and Mrs. Josipovitz and their daughter Handushka, who were the managers of the place. After speaking to them only a few words, I immediately realized that they were from Hungary. I said to myself, "My battle is fifty percent won." They were from the same section of Europe as I was. They went trough the usual concentration camps and were now very anxious to go to America. I immediately promised them that I would take them out (which I eventually did).

When I spoke to them about finding small children, Mrs. Josipo-

vitz told me that there were very few small children, especially boys, but that there are now two little girls about three years old and no matter what will happen, these two girls will not be given away to any organization to remain in France or to be taken any other place, even if she would have to steal them out. She and her family will take them along with them to America if and when they leave the camp. They took us to a room where we met the two little girls. One was known as Evunya, meaning Eva, and the other one for some reason we did not know, was known as Pezshinka.

We immediately fell in love with Chave (Eva). It was decided that no one but I would get this child. The other one was later taken by a family from either Cleveland or Chicago. Louis Septimus was about to leave for the United States on the following day. Early in the morning, he bought a beautiful blue dress with criss-cross lines for his daughter. We left the dress as his gift for Chave. I insisted that I pay him back for the dress. His reply was, "Leo, there is no way that you can pay for this dress. It was decreed in Heaven that I should see this dress in a window to take it and give it as a gift to Chave." He just grabbed away the pleasure from me.

Louis and I were very close to each other for many years and still are to this very day. We are doing many good deeds together. Among the boys, the youngest one was Jackie. He was nine years old at the time. We took a liking to each other and eventually I also took him and did not look any further for any boys. It was a year later that Mrs. Gartenberg (may she rest in peace) made a trip to France and brought the two children along with her to America. It was really hard since the children in this camp were taken out from Czechoslovakia with the permission of the French government with the understanding that they would all remain there and become French citizens. So, with the members of a French committee wanting to hold on to all the children on one side, and the Madrichim (the leaders from Israel) holding on to all the children in order to take them to Israel, there did not seem a possibility to take any child out from there to bring to this country. Louis Septimus was advised of this fact. Before he left for America, he assured me that he would do all he could to see that the children would be given to me.

About ten days later, while I was in the synagogue again, the leader of the committee of the group who brought the children with the permission of the French government came over to me and told me, "Mr. Gartenberg, I did not know that your power is so great in

America." He continued by telling me that they received about a dozen telegrams from America, all of them stating that they should immediately release the two children into my hands, and if not, all funds from America would be immediately cut off. (It was the work of my friend, Louis J. Septimus, who arranged all this.) "In that case," the man told me, "we have no choice but to abide by their wishes. You have our permission to take the children." The man who spoke to me was an attorney. I gave him the task of arranging everything that was needed to have them leave the country to come to America.

"I Attend a Bris" . . .

A reprint from the "Jewish Press"

Recently I was present at a Bris to which I was invited by my friend, Rev Jacob Itzkovits, in the Beth Hamedrash of the Yeshivah Rabbi Chaim Berlin.

During the Bris I must admit that my thoughts were not fully concentrated on the prayers that I was saying with the Minyan there. My mind was thousands of miles away in the front of the office of the Agudath Israel in Paris, France, twenty-nine years ago. I spent thirteen weeks in England, Czechoslavakia and France, together with my good friend, Louis J. Septimus, where we were busy with "Hatzalah," rescue work for the benefit of the Sheyris Hapleytoh, the small remainder of those brothers and sisters whose lives were saved from the Nazi murderers. The details of our work, and the horrible experiences that we lived through, the unbelievable stories that we heard, will be given in more detail in my forthcoming book titled: "The Story of my Life."

For now, let me just describe a scene that took place on a side street in Paris on Erev Rosh Hashonoh in the year 1946. I was deeply involved in aiding a Children's Home which was organized by the Vaad Hatzalah and located in a village named Fublaines. The home which had about 120 children was supervised by a Dr. and Mrs. Josipovitz and their daughter Handa, themselves refugees from near Munkacs, a city in former Hungary. Later on, I brought them to this country. Dr. and Mrs. Josipovitz are now retired and live in Los Angeles, California. Their daughter Handa is married and also lives in Los Angeles.

Among the children living in the Children's Home were five who were of Bar Mitzvah age. Dr. Josipovitz and I made seven. A boy who was a distant relation of Louis J. Septimus and who lived with his

widowed mother in Paris, and was with me at the time, helped make eight males. We were therefore short two males for a Minyan, for religious services in the Children's Home.

The secretary of the Agudah office, a Mr. Ernest Itzkowitz, also a refugee, whom I later also brought to this country together with his wife and five children assured me that he would supply me with two refugee boys who would go with me to the Home. I telephoned the Home that we would be there with the *Sefer Torah* and the shofar that I was bringing with me from the synagogue of Rabbi Munk.

Dr. Josipovitz told me that all the children were very excited about the great event, since most of them had never participated in religious services, and of course never heard a shofar blown. He also told me that he had engaged a driver and a horse and wagon who would wait for us at the train station to bring us to the Home.

The train left at one o'clock in the afternoon, and at twelve noon I was at the Agudah office with my young friend ready to pick up the two guests who would accompany us to Fublaines. The hour of twelve passed and our two guests did not show up as agreed upon. After some quick inquiries Mr. Itzkowitz found out that the two boys who were supposed to come with me decided at the last minute to go to another place for the holiday.

We tried to get two other people to go with us, but to no avail. Everyone had already made other arrangements, so we were left without a Minyan. We sat there in the office and thought of the disappointment this would be to the 120 children in the Home who were suddenly deprived of their anticipated spiritual joy.

Suddenly, Mr. Itzkowitz clapped his forehead and exclaimed: "Don't worry Mr. Gartenberg. I have the solution to the problem. I was notified yesterday that a train is coming into Paris this afternoon on which there are a group of refugees coming from Hungary, Poland, etc. by way of Prague, Czechoslovakia. They consist of about thirty people, men, women and some children. I am positive that in that group you will find at least two men who will be suitable to make up a Minyan. I have arranged for a truck to pick them up at the train station, and bring them here. They will be here about three in the afternoon."

His words were music to my ears, and we stood around waiting for the truck to come. A few minutes before three, an open truck arrived in which were sitting a group of people. Before the truck made a complete stop I approached and in Yiddish announced: "My friends: I need two men to come with me to a Children's Home outside of the

city to make up a Minyan. There will be provided a bed to sleep in and enough food for the stay over the holiday. Who of you will volunteer to accompany me?" In one voice, they all cried out that they wanted to come with me. I had to explain to them that there was only a limited amount of beds and food available, and while I would have loved to take all of them with me, I had to reluctantly refuse their offer and choose only two of them. After listening to their qualifications, I chose two young men.

As I was getting ready to leave for Fublaines, a young fellow approached me. He appeared about seventeen years of age, but I later found out that he was twenty-one years old. Undernourished and shabbily dressed, he looked small, like a teen-age boy. He spoke to me in Yiddish and said: "I am a religious boy. Before the War I attended Yeshivos and I can 'daven for the Omid' (act as cantor) and I can also blow the Shofar. Won't you please take me along with you?" My heart was full of pity for this young child, and figuring that one extra mouth would not be too much of a burden to feed, I took him along with me. And that is how it was. He davened the Shachris, and I performed the Musaf services. Together with our guests and the children of the home we spent a pleasant holiday in the Children's Home. The three guests remained with us through the Succoth holiday.

The young fellow whom I picked up practically on the street in Paris is now Reverend Yaakov Itzkowitz. He tells everyone that if not for me, who, with G-d's help was in the right place at the right time that afternoon of Erev Rosh Hashonoh in 1946 he would not be here now. These events raced through my mind that morning while I was praying in the Yeshivah Chaim Berlin where I was invited by my friend Reverend Yaakov Itzkowitz who is the grandfather of the boy who was circumcised that morning in the Beth Hamedrash of the Yeshivah. That was the reason I was unable to concentrate on my prayers as I should have.

"The Missing Lulav"

A reprint from the Jewish Press

Fublaines, France, 1946. I was spending the holidays, from Rosh Hashanah until after Simchas Torah in a children's home that was organized by the *Va'ad Hatzala* of the U.S.A. It was right after World War II, and orphaned children had been gathered at this home, from all the war-torn countries. There were about one hundred boys and girls, all very young. Between the adult director and the few older children, we just managed to make up a *minyan,* and with the Torah and *shofar* that I brought from Paris, we held services at the home. This was a tremendous thrill for the children, because no more than a handful had ever witnessed a religious service before.

I must confess that I never cried as much in my life as I did during those days when I lived with those orphaned, broken, starved creatures — children as much starved for love and affection as they were for food. Though foodstuffs were scarce we spent a joyful holiday, and what we lacked in material goods, we made up in singing, dancing and story telling.

The major excitement in the childrens' life at that time was my promise to return for the Succoth holiday to build them a succah and to bring back an *esrog* and *lulav.* At the time, I could only describe those things to them because the poor souls had neer seen them before. After Yom Kippur we began thinking of building a *succah.* I quickly learned that I had made quite a promise. *Build a succah! Yes!* But from what? In America, we call the lumber yard, go downtown and purchase fruit and vegetables for decorations. But not here. However, I had made a promise which I meant to keep.

Without tools, we went to nearby woods and gathered branches. From the fields we got brush, and with everyone helping a *succah* of a sort was erected. When I think of the *noy succah,* the trimmings on the walls and the roof, I cannot help but smile because of the ridiculous request I made. I had said to the wife of the manager of the home (they are now retired and live in Los Angeles), "Mrs. Josipowitz, if you will be good enough to give me a dozen eggs, I will blow out their contents, and from the shells, birds will appear, and they will hang in the *succah.*"

I can never forget her look of astonishment at my request. "Did I hear you correctly? Did you say a dozen eggs? Do you realize that I haven't seen an egg for a long time? I doubt whether the children here

even know what an egg looks like, and you want a dozen eggs?"

I recalled that she had served us scrambled eggs on previous occasions, and asked her about it. "Oh that," was her answer, "that was made of egg powder that we get from America."

I apologized to Mrs. Josipowitz for my foolish request, but *nisim veniflaos,* miracles and wonders took place. A few hours later she came to me and in her trembling hands she held two fresh chicken eggs. "Here, Mr. Gartenberg," she said, "these are the only eggs I was able to get. I'm sorry I couldn't get a dozen." I kissed her hands out of sheer joy.

Later I learned that Mrs. Josipowitz, who was a religious woman, knew what it meant to have a beautiful *succah* and so she visited every house in the village. In one of them she found a man who had some chickens. From this home she was able to obtain two eggs.

I took these precious articles and with the point of a knife (with dozens of eyes watching me) I punctured the eggs, blew out the contents and with a sigh of relief made a few more holes in the egg shells for the head, wings, and a tail of the bird. The flimsy shells were placed on the table. From the dough supplied to me by the wonderful Mrs. Josipowitz I made heads for the birds. Two black seeds made the eyes. Now I needed some colored paper to make wings and tails for the birds. Obtaining colored papers was again a major difficulty. Searching through the entire building we discovered some *matzos* that were packed in boxes covered with wax paper (sent to children's homes by religious organizations in America). We unwrapped a few boxes and from the colored wrappings I folded wings and tails and with the greatest care, so that the thin eggshells should not crack, I stuck the paper into the punctured holes. The two birds wre now ready. Accompanied by the excited children, we hung them in the *succah* which was now complete.

This simple *succah* in Fublaines, France, was the most beautiful thing the children had ever seen. Even today, whenever I see a *succah,* I feel like saying, "If you did not see Leo Gartenberg's *succah* in France in 1946, you *ain't seen nothing yet!*" This *succah,* inscribed vividly on my mind, helps me understand clearly that well known old song called, "The Succahleh." It went like this:

Fun Shtengelach Gemeyne.
Berytelech gantz kleyne
Hab ich zich eyn sukele gemacht.
Badekt dem dach
Mit ah bisinke sechach
Zitz ich dorten sukes banacht.

Dos ershte gericht
Mit ah blases gezicht
Bringt mir mayn tochterel arayn
Sie shtelt es awek
In zugt mir mit shrek
Tatenyu: The suke falt bald ayn.

Za nit keyn nahr
Hab nit keyn tzar
Far deym sukeleh zohl dir nit thien bang
Es iz shon guhr
Balt tzwey toyzent yuhr
Dos sukele es stehyt sohn gantz lang.

For those who may not understand Yiddish, I will translate in free style and with no attempt at rhyme:

A man sings
From small pieces of wood,
Boards that are very weak,
I erected for myself
a small succah.
I covered its roof with some weeds
And I sat in it on the night of Succoth.

My young daughter
brought in
the first course
with a very pale face.
She put the food down
and announced with fear:
"Daddy dear, the succah is falling."

"Do not be a little fool.
Have no worry about the little succah.
It has been here almost two thousand years now.
This small succah has remained standing a long time.

We finished erecting the *succah* in Fublaines. A day before Succoth I returned to Paris to attend to some personal business, and above all, to bring the promised *esrog* and *lulav* to the children. In Paris I spoke to Rabbi Munk who assured me that he had set aside a set for the children's home. It was to be picked up by one of the employees of the home who was doing errands in Paris.

When I returned to Fublaines late in the afternoon, *erev* Succoth, I was given a box and a long package wrapped in paper. I opened the box and examined the *esrog* in the presence of all the children, who were

seeing this object for the first time. I found the *esrog* in excellent condition. Next I unwrapped the long package to take out the expected *lulav*. Imagine my chagrin when I discovered there was no *lulav* in the package, only the *hadassim* and the *aravos*. When I explained to the children that one of the important items was missing and that without it we could not observe the *mitzvah* of *benching esrog*, they were disappointed. Some began to cry, as children do when their expectations have been shattered. What could I do? Here it was only an hour or so before the holiday. Paris was hours away and there was no train until the next morning. I telephoned Rabbi Munk in Paris, who confirmed the fact that the *lulav* was in his home. I too felt like crying. I blamed myself for the sorry state of affairs. Why had I not checked all this myself!

Eventually it was decided to send a non-Jew on the early morning train to Paris to pick up the *lulav*. And that is what we did. The next morning a man from the village took the Paris train, picked up the precious *lulav*, and returned to Fublaines toward the evening of the first day of Succoth. We unpacked the wrappings and after the older people had made the blessing over *esrog* and *lulav*, all the children gathered, and with trembling hands picked up the *esrog* and *lulav* and performed the *mitzvah*. Some knew how to read the blessing from the *siddur*. The younger ones repeated it word for word after an adult. the happy smiles on their faces was ample reward for all the anxiety I had suffered during the past twenty-four hours. The joy we experienced during the holiday, the singing and dancing, is something I will never forget, and will cherish all the years of my life.

Later we brought some of these children and the directors of the home to America. Others went to Israel. The building was turned over to a group that taught Algerian children and became a yeshivah called Ohr Torah. When Mrs. Gartenberg, my daughter, Chavele, and I were in France a few years ago, we revisited the place. The yeshivah is on our list of charities and we make appeals for it at our hotel regularly.

After Succoth as I was getting ready to return to America, the young fellow approached me and asked me for help, as things were very bad in France at the time. The refugees were allowed to stay in Paris only for two weeks after which they had to leave, as they were supplied only with a transit visa. The representatives of the Left wing non-religious Kibbutzim in Israel were actually stealing children away

from the religious organizations and taking them to their kibbutzim in Israel. As usual, the religious organizations were short of funds to transport all the religious refugees to Israel so the non-religious groups were having a field day. I arranged for this young fellow to remain in the Children's Home for a while and teach the children our religion and how to read and write Hebrew. I promised him that I would do my best to bring him to America as soon as I would be able.

And that is what happened. With the help of my good friend Mr. Louis J. Septimus, we arranged a Student visa for him. A year later, a day before Rosh Hashonoh he arrived in this country. I met him and took him to my hotel, and again he davened Shachris in front of the altar during the holiday. After Succoth he went to the Yeshivah where he studied for several years, and as I did not have a regular home in New York, he lived with my brother and sister-in-law, Joseph and Ethel Fuchs, for several years. We found him a job, and later on we married him off, and acted as his parents all through this period. When his first boy was born, I was the godafather. Now the boy attends a Yeshivah. I was present at the wedding of his daughter last summer. She married a young man by the name of Drillman, who now learns in the Kolel of the Yeshivah Rabbi Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn, N.Y.

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During the Second War, when there were shortages in food, the government encouraged the American people to plant "Victory Gardens" to raise their own vegetables, poultry, etc., in order to alleviate the shortages. At that time we were in the Empire Hotel in Ferndale, N.Y. We had plenty of land to plant things. We all became very patriotic, especially Mrs. Schechter and I, who originally came from farm countries in Europe and had what is called a green thumb. We dug our vacant lands and planted various vegetables. We were very proud when we harvested our own vegetables, even though the time and money that we spent on the garden made the vegetables more costly than those that we bought in the market. We bought a cow, which our handyman undertook to feed and milk, with the same results. What we decided to do in another undertaking turned out to be very costly and heartbreaking. We decided to raise some chickens.

In early spring, we bought a few hundred little chicks and tried to raise them. We were not aware how delicate these little chicks are. Most of all, they had to be kept in a warm place until they became strong. Not being equipped for this kind of business, we kept them in one of the stables. Every morning, we went to feed them and found a few dozen dead chicks, which we had to remove and bury. It was a very sad procedure. I remembered this incident when my friend, the present Reb Itzkowitz related to me the following story while spending a few weeks with him in Fublaines Children's Home in France. While I do not want to go into the history of the holocaust, I am very close to the person in the following story. I will therefore write about it.

Just as in the case of the little chicks, every morning, the Jewish inmates went into the barracks and dragged out the dead corpses of the people who had died during the night. They were placed in open wagons and pushed to a dugout pit, thrown in, and the pit was covered with earth. One morning as a wagon full of corpses were taken to the

pit, there started a very strong rainstorm. One person who was on top of the rest of the bodies in the wagon, just as they reached the pit, the cold rainwater revived him. He opened his eyes just as the wagon was to be unloaded with the bodies to be thrown into the trench. Realizing what was happening, with the last ounce of his strength, he jumped off the wagon and fell to the ground. That is how he saved his life. As I said before, I personally know the man. He is now a very rich man, very charitable, gives of his wealth to all charitable organizations. He has given tens of thousands of dollars to the Children Homes that I am connected with. Truly as is written, *"Teshuas Ashem keheref Ayin."* If it is ordered, the "Help of G-d comes as fast as a blink of the eye."

The Torah tells us (Exodus 2:11), "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went to his brethren and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian man hitting a Hebrew man." He went out one day, and another day to see how badly the Jews were treated. The question can be asked, Moses was safe. He lived in the King's palace surrounded with the greatest luxuries available in those days. Why did he leave the palace even for a few hours a day to visit the so-called slums where his brothers lived and slaved? The answer is, Moses was a man with a conscience. He knew that his brothers were enslaved. It was no secret. Everyone was aware of the facts, so he left the palace every day to see if he could be of any help to his brothers.

That is also what happened in this country during the holocaust and the second World War. While it is true that many of us enjoyed the greatest of luxuries that money could buy, earning the greatest salaries and making the most profits, there were many people who did their best to save and help their poorer brethren on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. I remember one time, when I received a phone call from Mr. Stephen Klein, *Z"l,* telling me that for about $250, a person in Europe could be saved from deportation by paying in that sum to someone in Europe. I was operating the Clarendon Hotel in Lakewood, N.J. at that time. He wanted me to make an appeal to the guests of the hotel to raise as much money as we could for this purpose. He personally volunteered to come to the hotel to make the appeal, which he did. I also called the other hotels in town to invite their guests to come to my hotel for a *Melave Demalkeh* and entertainment, or I arranged appeals at their hotels. The appeal was made in my hotel and a large sum of money came in, which was immediately rushed to the other side of the ocean. Hundreds of Jews were actually taken off the

trucks or the trains that took them to the concentration camps. The only trouble was that not enough was done, as the saying goes, "Too little and too late." Much more should have been done; many more would have been saved.

After my return from Europe, I was a sick man. I was unable to sleep nights. I had terrible nightmares, always dreaming about what I went through during the last three months. Outstanding in my mind were the scenes about the poor children with their swollen bellies, barefoot, standing in the cold weather, with a tin cup in their hands waiting for a handout of a little lukewarm soup and a small piece of black bread. I developed a bad case of ulcers. For a few months, I was put on a diet of baby food, jello, sweet cream, etc. I lost a lot of weight. Only after a few months, was I able to eat more solid food, like well-cooked rice in milk. I had to take some food every hour or so as my ulcers bothered me. I was told by the doctor that I had open wounds in my stomach, and had to fill the "scratches" very often to ease the pain. When I left my house, I took along a bottle of cooked rice and milk; I would stop the car and eat a few spoons of rice.

My very good friend, Rabbi William (Bill) Novack (he now lives in Chicago) was the head of the "Children's Rescue Homes in Europe." He was about to leave for a trip there to help save as many children as possible. Before he left, he was honored with a cocktail party in one of the hotels in New York. An appeal was made to raise funds for him to take along to save and maintain the children in the various homes. I was invited to be the guest speaker. They served various kinds of drinks, hot frankfurters, cold cuts, etc. I could not touch any of the food as I was sick to my stomach. I do not remember what I said at the time, but when I was asked what the children were mostly in need of, I replied, "They are in need of everything." At the end of my speech, I made the following remark, "It is now bedtime in Fublaine, France, where we have a children's home for about 200 children. At this time Dr. Josipovitz is sitting at the door of the dining room, and as the children are going to the dormitory rooms to sleep, each child is handed a hard piece of newspaper 5 x 5 inches for them to use to wipe themselves when they leave the toilet. This will give you a little idea of what we need there. We cannot afford to even buy regular toilet paper for them to use, never mind any other things that children need, like food or clothing." I am sure that everyone present raised the sum that he or she had in mind to give before I spoke to them.

One day as I was sitting in my dining room in the Clarendon Hotel in Lakewood, N.J., a busboy came out of the kitchen carrying a plate of about three or four pancakes. He put a pat of butter between each cake, then he poured on a generous amount of pancake syrup on top of them. With his fork, he cut through them, took out a portion of the cakes, ate it, then pushed it away and took the plate and put it in his "busbox" ready to throw into the garbage. I was unable to control myself. I walked over to the boy and in an angry voice told him, "Do you realize that while you are throwing away a plate full of food, thousands of men, women and children in the camps in Europe are suffering hunger? If you were not sure that you would be able to finish the whole plate, why did you not take one cake at a time and not waste all of them?" He apologized saying that he did not realize what he was doing, and that it would not happen again. All my life, especially since that time, I cannot stand to see food being wasted.

When my friend, Reb Abraham Jacob Ickovitz became aware that I am writing, "The Story of My Life," He asked me to let him include an article written by him, which both of us were anxious to have. He sent me an article which would take up about ten pages or more. It is very interesting, but I am sorry that I had to cut it down considerably, for the following reasons:

1. It was much too much flattering to me.
2. I just could not have so many pages added, as the book is already much longer than I originally intended it to be. (Sorry, Rev Ickovitz)

At a hair cutting on Lag BaOmer

My Feelings of the Happenings in the Years of the Second World War and the Years Following

My expressions of thanks and gratitude for the favors that were accorded to me by an angel in the form of a human being, Rabbi Leo Gartenberg and his wife Gitel and in-laws, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Fuchs. Looking back at the happenings in our generation, it can be seen that everything that happened was by "Hashguche Prohtis," by individual supervision. Every movement was with a purpose and the will of G-d.

Take the episode in which I had the fortune to meet up with Rabbi Gartenberg on the day before Rosh Hashanah in the year 1946. What happened was that right after the end of the Second World War, when the small groups of people came back to their former places of residence, it was immediately seen that there is no hope for them to remain in Europe which was soaked with Jewish blood. Especially after the pogrom in Kieltz where a wild group of anti-semites befell the survivors of the holocust. It was seen that there was no place left there for Jews.

It was therefore agreed that we were again obliged to take the wandering stick and move on. Together with others, I also began my journey towards Prague, the capitol of Czechoslovakia. I was one of the few that had the opportunity to make the trip from Prague to Paris, a few days before the New Year of 1946. We arrived in Paris by mid-day. I was alone without a relative or acquaintance of any kind. The question uppermost in my mind was, "Where do I go from here?" There was an address that every religious person had in his hand, and that was the Agudath Israel. I do not know if the world is already aware of the wonderful work that they did by organizing conventions at various stages and sending affidavits to the survivors of the war which helped them receive visas to allow them to wander out of the "Depth of Tears," (Europe) whereby they were able to enter this country legally. I must say that I am shocked that even today, thirty-five years later, I see that some elements who had been accorded such hearty and wonderful care by the Agudath Israel, laymen, roshei Yeshivos, and Chasidic rabbis stand far away from the movement. Some of them are even antagonistic towards them. My G-d; where is the "Hakoras Tovoh" recognition of the favors shown to them?

A group of us finally arrived in the front of the office of the Agudath Israel. We were standing in an open freight truck, broken up from the long journey, tired and hungry. It was already three in the afternoon. And here out of heaven there

appears before us a gentleman, normal and elegantly dressed, and says in a good Jewish, "I am here with a taxi; I want to take along with me a few people to a Children's Home in order to arrange a minyan (quorum) for a group of grown-up children, where we will have food, prayers, and the blowing of the Shofar (Ram's horn). Of course, all the passengers of the truck wanted to go along. However, this could not be accomplished, as we were explained that:

1. There was not room enough in the taxi.
2. It seemed that there was not enough food and accommodations for all of us at the home.

Three people were finally chosen. I was not among them, but as I was most anxious to spend the holiday in an atmosphere of a holiday spirit, and as I saw that there were so many others lined up in front of the office of the Agudah, I raised my hand and said, "Dear Sir, I believe that you should consider me also to be one of the group. I am an accomplished Baal Tefiloh (cantor) and a good Baal Tekeyah (blower of the Shofar), a reader of the Torah, etc. My words made a good impression on Rabbi Gartenberg who said, "I really do not need an extra person, but you being a young, small fellow, how much can you eat?" (I looked younger than my actual age.) And so we left for Fublaines. Interesting to note, that on the way, the car had a flat tire, being in a hurry, this man who took us with him, laid down on the floor, and helped the driver fix the flat. It looked very peculiar to me that here, a refined American should also be ready to help out with such common work.

Arriving in the orphan home, we met beautiful "Shlomilech, Moshelech, Surelach, and Chanelach" surrounding and hugging and kissing Rabbi Gartenberg. We met Dr. and Mrs. Josipowitz and their daugheter Chane (Handushka) who took care of the children, as though they were her own. The place was spotlessly clean. The home was under the sponsorship of the Agudath Israel and the Vaad Hatzalah. I spent an exceptionally wonderful holiday there among the trees and green plantations. There was sort of a swimming pool to immerse ourselves before the prayers in the morning, although it was already pretty cold. But how can one pray on Rosh Hashonoh without first going to a mikvoh? Rabbi Gartenberg was the Baal musaf and I was the Baal Shachris and Baal Tokeyah.

This holiday reminded me of the Rosh Hashonoh of 1944. In that year I came to Auschwitz and from there into the barrack of Buna. We were placed in two large tents. In each one there were about 2000 people. There are still some people who remember

hearing me recite before the altar the Kol Nidrei prayers on Yom Kippur. Although I was a young boy, but as I spent most of my young years among wise men, and thank G-d possessed a head with a good memory, I therefore remembered most of the prayers by heart. That was the reason why I was chosen to be the cantor in tent No. 2. I even repeated for them a sermon that I had heard from the former Szigeter rabbi. It recalled the story of the shofar that was smuggled into the barracks in spite of the electrical charged fence, and the murderous watchmen of the watchtowers, being hungry and dressed in striped uniforms. It brought back memories of the only pair of Tefilin (phylacteries) that was in the barracks and many Jews after a hard day's work, oppressed and insulted and broken up, lined up in barrack No. 14 to put on the Tefilin for a minute and say a blessing. It reminded me of the time when two prisoners made an attempt to run away, and the inmates from all the barracks of about twelve thousand people were forced to stay for a very long time in extremely cold weather, practically barefoot, to watch them being hung. Staying among the others, I was curious to hear what people talk to each other in such a fearful, terrible moment. I listened and heard one asking the other, "Do you believe that the soup that we will be served today will be a bit heavier?"

It reminded me of the twelve year old boy from Bialostock who was hung because he could not bear his hunger and was caught going into the kitchen to steal a piece of bread. It brought back memories of the 15th of January 1945 when we were evacuated from our former barracks and brought to another one, marching for three days in a bitter frost and snow, practically naked and barefoot. It reminded me of the time when we arrived in Buchenwald. I was suffering from thirst and I was ready to drink the water from a cesspool, but a comrade held me back warning me that this may cost me my life. There came to mind the time when we were evacuated from Buchenwald traveling in open freight cars. We passed a village in Czechoslovakia where the natives watching us from their windows wanted to throw pieces of bread to us, but the S.S. watchmen threatened them with their machine guns if they would do so. Or of the time that we were riding in open railroad freight cars and were ready to pass out for lack of water. Luckily, it started to snow heavily. We gathered together a handful of snow with which we quenched our thirst a little bit.

I was thinking back of the time when we were laying in a freight railroad wagon, about thirty of us. The space was so tight that we had to lay only on our sides because laying on the back or

on the bellies took up more space. My hands were placed very close to my body. There was no flesh on my hands, only skin and bone. To this day, my left hand has the skin rubbed off next to the tattooed No. A.6898.

It reminded me of the time when an Ukranian S.S. watchman heard us arguing about being pressed together very tightly. The train was still on an open field. He told us, "You are tight and have no place? Here, I will help you." He pulled off a few prisoners and shot them dead, saying, "Now you will have more place." One time, as we were laying on our sides, and we could not bear the throbbing on our sides, it was arranged that when we will want to change positions, to have all of us turn to the other side. However, we were unable to do it as a few of the men were dead and could not turn. With great hardship the two people on each side of the dead ones managed somehow to turn them around also.

It reminded me of the time when they brought me before that tyrant, Dr. Mengele. We were asked by the tyrant, "What is your profession?" Some of us replied, "We are teachers, or students." He pointed to them, telling them to go to the left side, remarking, "Light work." While I and a few others, when asked what our professions are, replied, "Locksmiths," we were told to go to the right side. Those who were sent to the left side were never seen or heard from again. Now, as I was laying on the grass or on my cot, hundreds of similar scenes ran through my mind. I saw hundreds of friends, great rabbis and students who were burned or killed by various indescribable methods.

And here comes a Jew all the way from America, the modern prophet Jeremiah, who goes over the graves and destructions of our present times and you feel that you are in touch with a person who possesses a high great soul, whose heart bleeds along with us, as though he was together with us all through these terrible times, and is willing and ready to do everything to lighten our pains, and above all, with a feeling of believing and trusting. He tries to inject us with "BOHSOR VERUACH;" flesh and spirit. He brings along from America a pack of blank affidavits which is a guarantee that the immigrant will not fall as a burden on the government and is willing to fill out the blanks with names of anyone who turns to him. This proves to us that we are not lost and forgotten. He helps us to forget the past and tries to prepare us for the future. Reminding me of the prayer that King David wrote in Psalms."SAMCHEYNOH KIMOS INIHSOHNI," Lord of the Universe. Make us happy again, in the proportion of the agonies that we suffered.

Now, to bring to a happy conclusion of the jump from the freight truck on that fateful day before the New Year of 1946 in front of the Agudah office in Paris into the waiting taxi which took us to the village of Fublaines. Just a year later, when I arrived in this country, Rabbi Gartenberg picked me up in New York, and on the very day of Erev Rosh Hashonoh, brought me to the La Reine Hotel in Bradley Beach, N.J. that he was operating. Here again he officiated as the Baal Musaf and I was again the Baal Shachris and the Baal Tokeyah. It was arranged by having Rabbi Gartenberg send me a visa as a student in the Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, with the intervention of the great Agudah leader, Mr. Michael Tress, and the help of Mr. Louis J. Septimus. Rabbi Gartenberg told me at that time, "You came here as a future student of the Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, so go and sit down and learn there."

After the holidays, I went to the Yeshiva to learn, which I did gladly. Mrs. Gartenberg arranged for me to stay with her sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Fuchs. I was in a "chavrusah" (study group) with her son Rabbi Aryeh Shlomoh Fuchs, *Z"l.* I also studied from time to time with her son, Rabbi Elimelech Fuchs. They treated me as though I was their own son. As long as I will live, I will never forget the great kindness and good deeds of the Gartenberg and Fuchs families, who took care of me and helped me find a job and eventually married me off.

At the moment when this article is written, I am a father of two daughters and a son and eight grandchildren. May the Lord help me to see Naches from these two great families, and Naches from my own family until the true redemption, Amen.

Avrohom Jacob Ickovitz

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As Jackie and Chave had to be supplied with many legal papers in order for them to come into this country as legal immigrants and adopted children, I had to leave them in Fublaines, France, until a lawyer whom I engaged to work on their papers, took care of everything. It was decided that as soon as everything would be arranged, one of us would go back there to bring them over here. It took quite some time to have everything completed. So, in 1947, after the Succoth holiday, Mrs. Gartenberg left for France and brought them here. We added a few rooms to the Clarendon Hotel in Lakewood, N.J. for the use of the Schechter family and for us.

The children arrived at Kennedy Airport on a Thursday night. Our good friend, Rabbi Novick and I, met them there. There were a few newspaper reporters there who took pictures and wrote articles about the event. This was the first arrival of "Refugee Children" to this country, so it was of interest. We spent the first Shabes in Williamsburgh, Brooklyn, N.Y. Mrs. Gartenberg took Chave to stores in the neighborhood and bought clothing for her. I took Jackie to Delancey Street in Manhattan and fitted him out with a line of clothing. It was the "talk of the town." After the weekend, we took them to Lakewood, N.J. where we enrolled them in the local Yeshiva, which Mr. Betzalel Goldstein, the owner of a hotel across from the Clarendon and I, helped to organize. Jackie did not have too much of a problem in the school, as he knew the Yiddish language. However, Chave did not know one word of Yiddish and surely not one word of English. She spoke only Polish, but she managed.

A week or so later, we decided to make some kind of a party in their honor, so we arranged a Melave Demalke on Saturday night. We telephoned all our relatives and sent out invitations to many of our friends to come to the affair. The hotel was already open for business. Therefore, with all the guests in the hotel and the invited guests, we had a large attendance. The Revered Rabbi Aaron Kotler, *Z"l*, already had the famous Beth Medrash Gevoha in operation. He was one of the guests present. He made a very interesting Kabolas Pohnim in the

honor of the children. Rabbi Pesach Levovitz, the local rabbi, was appointed as the Master of Ceremonies. I can remember him saying, "I already spoke at all kinds of affairs, like a Bris, a Pidyon Haben, a Bar Mitzvoh or a wedding, but this is the first time that I was called upon to talk at an affair like this. I called my father, Rabbi Reuven Levovitz, who told me what to say.

After the winter of 1947-48, we went back to the Pioneer Country Club for the summer. The children attended the public school in Ellenville, N.Y. The school did not provide any transportation from the hotel which was located on a private road. I took them to Route 52 every morning where the school bus picked them up and brought them back in the afternoon. I instructed both of them in their Hebrew studies. When we sold the Clarendon Hotel in Lakewood, N.J. and spent our winters in Miami Beach, Florida either as operators of a hotel there or we rented an apartment, the children atended the Yeshiva in Miami Beach. When we brought Jackie here, he was about ten years old. Soon he was to become Bar Mitzvoh. We made the Bar Mitzvoh for him in New York City by the Tannenbaum brothers who operated a catering hall on Houston Street in New York. It was a large affair attended by over four hundred guests, relatives, and friends. I made myself a few enemies, as we could not invite more people, since the hall could not accommodate them. After his Bar Mitzvah, Jackie decided that he wanted to attend the Yeshiva In Cleveland, Ohio. I took him there. Later he changed to the Yeshiva in Baltimore, Md., and after that he attended the Yeshiva Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan in New York.

As Chave grew older, we had a little problem with her schooling. From Labor Day on, as the school season opened, she attended the public school in Ellenville, N.Y. until after the Succoth holiday. After Succoth, until the time that we were ready to leave for Miami Beach, we sent her down to Brooklyn, N.Y. where she attended a Beth Jacob school. While there, she stayed with our brother and sister-in-law, Joe and Ethel Fuchs. Both of them were wonderful to her and treated her like their own child, for which we were very thankful. When we were ready to leave for Miami Beach, we took her along with us, where she attended the Hebrew Academy there. As we came back before Passover to prepare the Pioneer Country Club for the Passover holiday, we again left her with our in-laws to attend the Beth Jacob school until Passover. We took her out from there for the holiday and after the holiday, it was again, either the public school in Ellenville, N.Y. or the

Beth Jacob school. It meant that she attended three different schools each year. It was not an ideal situation, but it was the best that we could do at the time. But with the private instructions that I gave her, she managed alright.

Soon after the Second World War broke out, I had no chance to go to Europe to visit the grave of my father *(Keyver Ohvos)*. Years after the war, when they started to allow visitors to travel to Russia, I started to plan a trip there to visit my father's grave. It was not an easy task. We had to get a special visa, explaining to the Russian ambassador the reason for going there. We were advised by people not to say that we have relatives there. (We did have a cousin in Munkacs, who wrote to me a few times.) Finally after months of waiting, we received a visa to visit there. Some people told me, that according to law, if one failed to visit the grave of a parent for seven consecutive years, one is not allowed to go there anymore. I felt that surely, it could not apply to me as I did not have the opportunity to go there. However, to make sure, I asked the advice of Hurav Hagaon Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, who told me that I should absolutely go there the first chance that I had, as I was permitted to go to the grave. As a matter of fact, he told me that as the situation was, that I was still taking chances going there.

When we were about to pick up the visas, we were given full instructions by the Russian authorities in this country, exactly when to go, how to go, what length of time we were permitted to stay there. We had to pay for everything in dollars here. We had to pay for our hotel room, telling us in which hotel to stay. The cost was about $50 per day which included room and board. (Of course, we did not eat any food there.) The cost included a car to take us from the airport in Moscow and a guide for a little sightseeing. Until this day, I still don't understand why we were forced to go to Moscow at all, by the way of Warsaw, actually a round circle.

We came to Moscow airport late on a Thursday afternoon in October 1963. We were paged and taken to a counter for a thorough search of our baggage, cleaned out our pockets, putting all the contents on the counter. Our bags were searched very slowly and thoroughly. I had with me a few thousand dollars which was counted and written up in our passport. Besides the cash, I also had about $10,000 worth of State of Israel Bonds, which I bought at a price of about $79.00 per hundred. They could not understand what they were. They asked whether I would want them to supply me with an interpreter, and if so in what language? After recommending several foreign

language interpreters, I chose one who spoke German. (I figured that after all what is the German language? It is a broken Jewish.)

A woman of about 45 years of age was brought over to us. In my broken German, I explained to her that in America, we save our money that we earn working or from business for which we buy Israeli bonds, to use when we go to Israel. She could not understand what I meant by the words, "saving money," saying, "You mean after you collect your meager wages you still have money to save?" She also said that she never saw any large money certificates like that. Finally she said, "Is it like American Express checks?" In desperation, in order to make an end of it, I replied, "Yes, it is something like that and the reason why they are larger than American Express checks, is because every country has different looking checks." Finally it was settled and recorded.

We took the aircraft to Russia in Belgium. We had all our bags with us. I had intentions to leave at least one large bag to be shipped separately as freight and pick it up when we would arrive in a free country. We were late arriving at the airport. There was no time to do it. I decided that I would do so in Moscow. I asked my German interpreter whether I could do it there. Her reply was that it could be done, but we would have to take it to the freight department. She volunteered to take us there. It was quite a distance away. A porter pushed all our bags onto a wagon.

On our walk, under a slight snow drizzle, she told me, "Look here. From your talking I see that you are Jewish, so let us talk plain 'mame loshen,'" which she did. She was still puzzled how I could have so many thousands of dollars when she knew that everyone in America was poor. People did not earn enough to cover their food bills, so how can it be that I saved up so much money. (Of course, I did not tell them that it was not my own money, that it was mostly charity money that I was taking to distribute in Israel.) "But you see that I have it, and how do you know that people are so poor in America?" I asked her. She answered that they are shown movies of people staying in line waiting to get some food. I told her that the lines that she saw were for the purpose of going into a theatre or a ball game. Surely not for the purpose of picking up food.

As women would do, she was looking at the dress and fur coat that my late wife was wearing. She asked me, "Tell me, how much does a dress like this one cost in America?" My wife replied that she paid $75.00 for the dress. The woman asked, "How many weeks does one have to work in America to earn that much money?" The answer

was that it does not take weeks. An average person in America earns $75 for working only a few days. She did not want to believe it until my wife told her, "You see these suitcases? I have a dozen or more of these dresses packed in them." She also wanted to know the price of my coat and suit and how many weeks I had to work in order to be able to buy them. When I told her that it does not take even a week to earn that kind of money, she replied that it was not like that at all there. It takes them months to save up for a dress or a suit.

She then asked me where we were going from here. I told her that we were on our way to Israel. She said that perhaps the things that we told her about America may have some truth to it, but as far as Israel is concerned, she knew for sure that people were actually starving there. She has seen pictures from Israel and also receives mail from there. People are actually writing back that they are very sorry that they left the country and went to settle in Israel. We told her that we had already been there several times, and saw no one starving. Everyone is making a nice living.

By this time, we had already arrived at the freight department. The result was that we did not send the bag by freight. They wanted us to put wires on the bag and the rate was ridiculously high. So, we turned back. On the way back, she told me that she has an old father who lives on a small pension that he receives from the government. As far as she was concerned, she had no choice but to remain there and make the best of it.

As we returned, a car with an interpreter and driver took us to the designated hotel, which was the Ukraine Hotel. We were assigned to a room on the fifth or sixth floor. When I asked to be given a room on a lower floor, since I did not use the elevator on the Sabbath, and I would not like to have to walk that many floors, the answer was, "no one uses the steps. Everyone has to use the elevator." The whole day of Saturday, we did not go down in the elevator and we stayed in the room the whole day. We found out later that the reason that we were put in a room on the higher floors was that next to the hotel there was a smaller building, six floors high on which there were soldiers stationed who observed all the occupied rooms.

On Friday, a car came which took us for a sight-seeing tour. There was a driver and an English-speaking guide. We were taken on a visit to two subway stations which were very nice, even nicer than our stations here.

I asked to be taken to the Moscow Great Synagogue, which they did. There were a few older people there who asked us what we

brought along from America. I presume that they had in mind things like taleisim or tefilin, which we did not have. I did have a small Pioneer *bencherel* from which we say grace after the meals and some other prayers, which I gave them. Another person came to join the group that I was talking to. He wanted to know what they asked for, what I gave them, etc. They told him that I gave them nothing and all that they wanted to find out was about the Lubavicher rabbi in Brooklyn. Later, we visited a supermarket, where there were long lines at every counter trying to buy something.

The system there works as follows: First one stays at a long line in front of the cashier who asks what you want to buy. When the items are mentioned, the cashier figures out what the total comes to. You pay for them, for which she gives you a receipt. Then you go to the long line at every counter, which has the required items. It takes hours to finish an ordinary shopping. We thought that we may buy a piece of black bread, but as we saw that the time that we would have to spend would be at least two hours, we gave up the idea. We had enough food of our own. We did get a herring in the restaurant for which we gave them a coupon which covered a whole meal. The herring was served on a golden plated plate.

On Sunday, we ordered the car to take us to the airport, as per pre-arrangement on our visa. We were taken there. We were put into one of their own airplanes. It was much different from the one we came in from Belgium. It was smaller, had wooden seats, no food, etc. We were taken to Lvov. There we were taken to a train station which took us to the Russian side of Chop. It took us all night to get there. When we arrived there, we took a train to Ungvar or what is now known as Uzhorod. There was no one waiting for us there. We took a taxi to the Korona Hotel where we were given a room. When I was in Ungvar in the yeshiva, it was a beautiful hotel.

We arrived early in the morning and immediately asked them to take us to the cemetery. Before doing so, I wanted to cash some dollars. For this purpose, the car took us to their government bank. On the way, we passed the former large synagogue, about one of the nicest ones in all of Europe. It was now used as a conservatory of music. We passed the large *klaus*, a chasidic like synagogue where I used to pray and study It had now become a factory.

As we entered the bank, I saw long lines of people in front of the cashiers. I was puzzled. People did not earn enough monies to have a surplus, what were they now putting into their accounts? I asked our guide and she explained to me that these are the people who work in

the stores which are government owned and now they are bringing their receipt books and the monies that they collected the previous day. I cashed $100 for which I was given 90 rubel. I understand, that should anyone dare to cash dollars on the black market, they get a few hundred rubel for $100.

Before going to the bank, I also took a chance to tell one of the interpreters in the office that I just remembered that I had a cousin in Munkacs and was anxious to know if we could visit her. The answer was a definite NO. It was not marked on our passport that we could go anywhere out of Ungvar. Munkacs was one of the cities that no tourist was permitted to go to. They suggested that we ask her to come and see us. Very few people have telephones. She suggested that we send her a telegram. From the bank, she took us to a telegram office from where we sent her a telegram.

In 1946, before we left for Russia, my brother Mayer (may he rest in peace) whom I also brought to America after the war in 1948, had visited me. He lost his wife and children in the crematories. He came here a broken up person. He married a very fine woman by the name of Frieda with whom all of us are very friendly. When I was in Europe, he came to see me. He told me that our father is buried in Radvanke and did not have a tombstone. I gave him a sum of money for which he erected a beautiful large black marble stone. When he visited with me he described to me where the grave was, remarking that I could not miss it anyway, because it was the only large new stone there.

Now, that we were taken to the cemetery, I thought that I would walk over to the grave immediately. Imagine my surprise, when there was no sign of a tombstone. After such a tiresome and long trip, not to find what I came for was a great disappointment to me. All that was left there, were a few old stones that were crumbling up when they were touched. The driver, the guide, and my wife and I walked the length and breadth of the place without any results. I made a *"Keyl Mohle Rachmim"* on a spot which I thought may be the grave. Broken-hearted, we walked to the street.

There was a supermarket there. The guide went into the store inquiring if there were any Jews in the town who still lived there, and who might know the whereabouts of the tombstone. There were no Jews left. While she was in the store, I was standing in front of a house and a man was standing at the gate. I recognized that he was an oldtimer, not a new resident. I started talking to him in Hungarian. He was glad to talk to me and told me, "I saw it with my own eyes as they

came with a truck, removed all the stones which they later used for sidewalks or other building projects."

The guide offered to take us to the suburbs of Ungvar to show us the new houses that were being built for the new residents. I also had in mind to go and see the row of houses for which I had given my father many thousands of dollars, which he later wrote over into my name. When my brother left for this country, he told us that they were anxiously waiting for him to leave already so that the government could take over the houses and place new people into them (without paying one cent for them). However, I was so dejected, that I asked the guide to take us back to the hotel.

When we came back to the hotel, we met our cousin who was already in the lobby waiting for us. We were very glad to meet her. In the course of our conversation, she mentioned that there are two more cousins (brothers) who live right here in Ungvar. I asked permission to go and visit them. They gave me the privilege to go and see them. (See following newspaper article). That night, after coming back from the visit in their one room apartment, we all returned to the hotel where we spent most of the night together. We had lots of coupons left which we did not use to pay for food. We used up all the coupons to buy things that the cousins were able to use, including lots of chocolate bars, something which they never ate. They did not have the money to pay for it. We tasted one of the bars but they were inedible. To them they were the best that they ever had. We spent all the coupons and gave them the things that we had bought. We never had in mind that we would ever see them again, let them remember us. The cousin from Munkacs slept over in our room. All of us talked in a low voice.

Early in the morning, instead of taking a taxi to the railroad station, we decided to continue our trip and have him drive us direct to Chop, thereby avoiding the dragging of the baggage to the train which would take us there. We were not far from Kis Dobrony. I was toying with an idea to go there and see what was left of our property, the synagogue, the cemetery where my grandfather is buried. But, our cousin of Munkacs told us that there is not a Jew left. So, we decided not to go there and look for trouble. Seeing what happened in Ungvar, I felt that it was better that the former sacred places remain in my memory as I left them many years before.

Arriving in Chop which is the border city between Russia and Hungary, we went through the same procedure that happened in Moscow, being asked what we did, what we bought, whom we saw, checked our monies and bonds against the rcords that were forwarded from Moscow. After a long ordeal, we were finally permitted to board the train that was waiting to take the passengers to Budapest.

When we boarded the train to Budapest, the train was not too crowded. We were given a room to ourselves. The two conductors who examined our papers and tickets, when they were finished with their work, came back to our compartments to talk to us. They were anxious to know what was going on in America, whether it was really as bad as they were being told. And again, what does a person in America earn in a month (like people in their trade), what did we pay for clothing, etc. When we were through with our explanations as we had done with the interpreter in Moscow, one told the other, "You know, Shonyi, I think that we are being misled in this country with the sad pictures that are being painted about America, as you can see and hear what these people are telling us."

We arrived at and checked into a very nice hotel in Budapest. We toured the city. Here we were able to get kosher meals. We attended the services in the synagogue. Here not all the stores are owned by the Communistic Hungarian governemnt. Stores like food stores, clothing, and general dry good stores are privately owned. Jewish children attend Hebrew schools and yeshivos which are subsidized by the government. The salaries of the Jewish rabbis and other religious leaders are paid for by the government. The coupons for food that we bought in America, we used up in the kosher restaurant. People were better dressed than in Russia. There were not so many lines in the stores waiting to buy things. There were smiles on peoples' faces. We heard plenty of horror stories about what happened during the Second World War. We were shown a large grave in the yard of the Taback Temple, where thousands of people were buried in a tremendous community grave, which was of course covered up without a trace.

After a stay of three days, we left by train to the free countries of Europe. As we crossed the border of the land going into a free country, we breathed much easier. Now we were on our way to Israel. Since that time, I never went back for *Keyver Ohvos,* to the grave of my father. Rabbo Moshe Feinstein advised me that it has no meaning going back there anymore.

A Wedding in Haifa

A reprint from the Jewish Press

The following interesting incident occurred at this time:

We attended a wedding in Haifa. What is so unusual about attending a wedding? You and I attend many. However, this wedding was different. It took us back six years, when we were behind the iron curtain in a city which was formerly known as Ungvar, part of old Hungary. Now it is known as Uzhorod, a part of Russia.

While in that city I met two brothers who were born in the same village where I came from, namely Kis Dobrony. I had not seen or heard from them for over forty years. I did not even know that they had come back from the concentration camps. As a matter of fact, the rest of their family did not return. They were all cremated in the crematories. We visited their home. The two brothers were married and one had two daughters. All six of them lived in one room. Later they acquired an additional apartment. They were so happy to see us that they just did not know what to do for us.

After talking for a while, sort of taking an inventory of who remained alive and who did not, they treated us to a meal which consisted of black bread and some vegetables. For some years they had been saving a tin of sardines, keeping it with the idea that they would open it on some special occasion. Now they felt that by meeting up with us, coming from America and not having seen us for over forty years, it was the right time to celebrate. So the eight of us shared the tin of sardines, dipping the black bread in the oil of the sardines.

While sitting with them and discussing their way of life, the younger brother said that besides all the usual problems that he has, he is very much worried about his daughters. They were growing up and had no Jewish education. What would happen to them? They, like many other girls, would have to marry non-Jewish boys. He was very much discouraged. However, he said that at least he was happy that they were girls and not boys, as with boys the problem was still harder — no Hebrew school, no Bar Mitzvos, no attending of a synagogue, etc.

The elderly people came together very early in the morning, even before it was light, and they held a religious service in a small room that was formerly a "Shtibel" of a Chasidic rabbi. That was all that was left for them, as the beautiful world-famous synagogue of Ungvar

was turned into a Music Conservatory and the large Beth Hamedrash was turned into a factory. This small room was their synagogue to which they came every morning — weekdays, Saturdays, Rosh Hashanah and even Yom Kippur, before they went to work. There is no such thing as not working every day, no matter what the day is. On the door of this so-called synagogue there was a sign which said that anyone under eighteen years old was not permitted to enter this room. This excluded every boy of the Jewish faith and once a boy did not receive any Jewish education until the age of eighteen, what could be expected of him.

But what would happen to his daughters when they grew up? To which the other brother commented he is satisfied that he never had any children so that he would not have any problems. I almost choked on the piece of bread in my mouth when I heard this statement.

We learned that they earned about seventy or eighty rubels per month (a rubel is ninety cents), hardly enough to make a living, as you can imagine.

Since that time we undertook to send them clothing packages a few times a year. The cost of sending a package to Russia is about $75.00 per package because we have to send only new clothing and we pay all the duties here. It would cost twice as much, but we manage to receive the clothing free of charge from several friends. As a matter of fact, the sending of the packages is another project of the Pioneer Milk Fund. We send out many packages directly and through organizations.

About a year and a half ago I received a letter from the man who has the two daughters telling me that he had received permission to migrate to Israel and they were there now.

Last winter when we were in Israel we visited them and we both were happy to see each other. The father and mother, although sick, are working in a coat factory, the older daughter is attending a Nurses School and the younger daughter is learning bookkeeping. They keep a strictly kosher home. They set up a very nice meal where we all sat down to eat.

My wife and I were eating but we could not hold back our tears, comparing this meal to the meal we had with them a few years ago. A few months ago we received a letter from them that the younger daughter was to be married at the end of December, and they hoped we would be able to attend the wedding. The first thing we did was to advise them that we expected to be in Israel at that time and told them not to rent a wedding gown (as the supplying of free wedding gowns

to poor brides in Israel is another project of the Pioneer Milk Fund. We have a warehouse of wedding gowns in Jerusalem that we received free from the Biljoy Gown Co., from Fink Bros., both of New York. Also the wedding gowns that brides sent in to the Pioneer Milk Fund after their own weddings) that we would bring with us a wedding gown for the bride.

When we arrived at the airport in Lod, besides the other people that came to meet us, we were met by the father and mother of the bride, the father and mother of the bridegroom and by the bride and groom. Later on, we gave them a very nice gift of money, and a few hundred dollars from the Hachnosas Kallah funds that we accumulated. These funds come from the admission charge to the Social Hall of the Pioneer Country Club, and the wedding presents that they received and expect to receive and from a loan that I have arranged for them from the Free Loan Funds (a project of the Pioneer Milk Fund) they will start looking around for an apartment. I am very happy that I was privileged to be present at the wedding and helped officiate under the Chupa by reciting the last bracha. So you see that this wedding was different than other weddings, and I hope that you were not annoyed reading about it.

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Lakewood, N.J. was a winter resort, while only about a half an hour ride away, was the Atlantic ocean with the beaches which was a summer resort. I understand why the beach is known as a summer resort, because of the ocean bathing available there. But, even after having a hotel in Lakewood for five years, I do not understand why and what made Lakewood a winter resort. It is cold and snowing there just as much as New York. It was said that as the ground is of a sandy substance, it draws in the moisture of the air, and that makes the weather about five percent warmer. With the thousands of pine trees all around, the air was filled with the pleasant pine tree smell. Whatever the reason, people at that time were frequent visitors to the Lakewood area. Now, with Miami Beach and its warm weather, and only a two-hour trip by airplane, people fly there and to a dozen other warm resorts, like Acapulco in Mexico, Puerto Rico, etc. There is no question that in the summertime, the cool ocean air and the bathing facilities draw a lot of people to the ocean.

The coast of New Jersey, being close to New York and to the cities of New Jersey, was, and is a popular summer resort. As we were only a half an hour from Lakewood to the ocean resorts, we were toying with the idea of opening a summer resort hotel on the beach, so that we would have a mountain resort hotel and an ocean resort hotel. We also felt that we could spare some of the key help to operate two hotels at the same time. Also being that we were only a half an hour ride from our hotel in Lakewood, it would be economical to operate another hotel nearby, thereby saving a lot of money by using many of the things from one hotel to the other. We decided to open a hotel for the summer on the New Jersey coast.

We bought the La Reine Hotel in the town of Bradley Beach. The only strictly kosher hotel in that section was the small Goldstein Hotel in Asbury Park. We were sure that being just about fifty miles from New York City, and even much closer to Newark, N.J. and many other smaller cities in New Jersey, that there was room for a large strictly kosher and modern hotel at the beach. I remember discussing the

matter with Rabbi David Singer, who was the rabbi of an orthodox synagogue in Newark, N.J. (Now he is the spiritual leader of the large Sefaridishe Shul in Boro Park.) He encouraged us to open a hotel for the summer in New Jersey. He said, "Now, I will have a real kosher hotel to recommend to my members." So, the Bradley Beach Hotel was opened by the Gartenberg and Schechter families, as a strictly kosher and *shomer shabbos* hotel.

We started our operations in June with the convention of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada. Right after that, we had the annual convention of the National Council of Young Israel. These organizations were very happy to have a hotel closer to New York, than having to travel to the Catskill Mountains, a trip at least twice as long. Soon, we received hundreds of letters from various cities in New York State as well as New Jersey.

As I opened the mail, I noticed something peculiar. It seemed that being that we were only an hour from the metropolitan New York area, and especially the New Jersey area, people felt that the convenience of being so near to them, they could wait to come out after the rush hour traffic, and therefore made their reservations to arrive late Friday night and have a late supper, thereby spending the full day of Friday in their businesses. I also noticed that too many of the requests were for arrival very late on Friday or Saturday. They left their families there for the entire week, and the husbands returned late Friday night or Saturday. As we were located right on the main highway, they were to use our private parking lot to park their cars, as there was no room to park the cars on the main highway.

This was a jolt to me. I was positive that with such a large orthodox population in and around Metropolitan New York, we would be mobbed with reservations from people who were looking for the kind of hotel at the ocean that a Gartenberg and Schechter hotel was known for. Of course, I answered all the letters stating, that since we were a strictly Sabbath observing hotel, we could only check in those guests who arrived before the Sabbath. We blocked the entrance of the hotel with benches, so that no one could drive into the hotel on the Sabbath. The result was that because we did not check them in during the Sabbath, we did not have them as guests during the week either.

During the height of the season, when all hotels on the beach were filled up, and had no room to check in any of the guests who arrived on the Sabbath, some drove up to the front of the hotel and came to the desk asking whether we had any rooms available. In a case

like this, when the bellhop called me over to speak to the people, I told them what the Matesdorfer rabbi taught me many years ago in the Empire Hotel. "Yes, we have room, but I cannot discuss any terms with you now. If you wish, leave your car where it is. Come in, go to a room, come into the dining room where we will feed you and your family, and after Sabbath, we will discuss the terms with you. If you will not be satisfied, you will be able to leave tonight or tomorrow morning." In many cases, as they had no other choice, they followed my advice. As a rule, because they were agreeable people, I did my best to get along with them. However, this was only in rare cases.

There was a large Sephardic community in Bradley Beach at that time. Before we came there, they used to have their Sabbath services in the hotel, using the cardroom as their synagogue. When I opened the place that summer, a committee came to see me asking that I should allow them to continue their Sabbath services in the hotel. I replied that I would be very happy to accommodate them; however, it was our policy not to use a cardroom for a synagogue. They were welcome to join us as our guests in the same place where we held our services, which was in a special place on the lower floor, which I made into a synagogue, or they could have their own services after we finished ours. As they had no other choice, they did as I suggested to them. However, they were not too happy about the arrangement. Their services and praying and the reading of the Torah are different than our Ashkenazi way of services. They had to wait until we finished our services before they could start theirs, and that meant that they had to wait a long time. Some of them joined us, while others waited until we left the synagogue. Later on they came to tell me that because of me, they finally decided to build their own synagogue in Bradley Beach. I told them that I was very happy that they finally woke up and realized that they, as a rich community should have a synagogue of their own and not go around to hotels for permission to have their services in cardrooms or in dance halls.

Eventually a beautiful Sephardic synagogue was built. We remained on very friendly terms. As a matter of fact, as we had a large catering hall on the premises, many of them arranged to have their weddings or bar mitzvah affairs at our hotel. For some of them, we did the entire catering, while others rented the hall and had the affairs catered by their own caterer. As I had been doing for many years before, I gave a *Perek* class every Saturday afternoon. However, while up to now I gave my class in the Yiddish language, now because many

of the listeners were of the Sephardic community who did not understand Yiddish, or because many of the new guests that patronized us now, or the many local non-guest visitors of the town did not understand Yiddish either, I began to give my *Perek* class in English. Word reached me that the rabbi of the local synagogue was not very happy because I drew away many of his congregants from attending his own class. I felt uncomfortable about it, but what could I have done? I did not invite anyone to come to listen to me. I hinted to the listeners, that our place where we had our services was small, which made the place crowded and warm. Some did go back to their rabbi, but many did not do so. We closed the hotel after the High Holidays. There were not too many requests for us to remain open for the Succoth holidays. I do not remember whether we made any worthwhile profit during the summer. We decided to give it a try for another summer.

It was true, being very close to the Lakewood hotel that we operated for the winter, it was very advantageous to us. We were able to move the dishes, the linen, blankets, and other utensils to Lakewood, whereby we saved a lot of money in buying new supplies. But all in all, we were disappointed that it did not work out as well as we thought it would.

When we opened the La-Reine Hotel the next summer, we encountered the same problems as we did a year before. We did not want to make any compromises at all as far as the Sabbath was concerned. We did not like the environment. The boardwalk was right smack in front of the hotel. The nudity, the noise, the steady music especially on the Sabbath, disturbed us too much. The hotel had a few stores on the ground floor of the building which were there when we bought the building. One of them was a music store which sold records. From the minute that they opened the store in the morning, until late at night, they did not stop playing those records, especially the loud jazz music. It was actually deafening, especially on the Saturday afternoons when our guests wanted to take a nap.

I remember an incident in Miami Beach. It was the year that we operated the Edwards Hotel, sometime in the late forties. Television was still in its infancy. We were walking on Washington Avenue on a Saturday afternoon, with our daughter Chavele (Jackie was in the yeshiva in Baltimore). We passed a television store. Crowds of people were standing in front of the store window watching the television musical program. Not only did we not stop to watch and listen, but we noticed that Chave stuffed her ears with her fingers. When I asked her why she was doing that, she replied that she did not want to hear the

music which was played so loudly, because it was the Sabbath. That incident also helped us decide to leave Miami Beach.

We decided to sell the La-Reine Hotel. We found a customer who bought the place and because he paid a large amount of cash, we gave him the place very reasonably. We lost about $25,000 on the deal. We decided to heed the advice of Boaz who told Ruth, "My daughter, stay here and do not go picking wheat in other fields." We could not do the things that other hotel operators were doing. We had to be located in a place similar to where the Pioneer Country Club was located, on a private road and not surrounded by other hotels. There, we were able to run our business to suit us and those guests who were willing to follow us in our way of doing business.

After we opened the Pioneer Country Club, we found that we were now attracting a better class of clientele, who were better off financially. These people were not the type who appreciated the Clarendon Hotel in Lakewood, which was already outmoded. Most of them patronized the New Brunswick Hotel which was a more modern hotel. That hotel also began slowing down in their business. People began going to Miami Beach or to the other winter resorts. We decided to get out of Lakewood. We sold the place to a Mr. and Mrs. Cohen. We made a small profit on the hotel. Eventually, the place burned down while they still were operating it. They then took over the New Brunswick Hotel which they also eventually sold, as the hotel business in Lakewood was not going well. The building is now occupied by the Lakewood Yeshiva's students and families. The yeshiva bought the building and converted it into apartments.

After we gave up our winter operations, we rented furnished apartments in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, for the winter. We also spent several months in furnished apartments with kitchen facilities in Miami Beach. We took it very easy while driving down there by car, no more rushing to make the trip in two or two and a half days. We stopped on the way in many places to see all kinds of attractions. I did not drive late in the evening. We stopped while it was still daylight. We took along an electric stove on which we cooked and warmed food. We had two frigid boxes with dry ice to keep food and liquids cold. After suppers, we walked around the motels (by that time there were already motels erected on the highways). While we were walking, we reviewed the chapter of the week with the children, or discussed various talmudical pieces with Jackie. He tells me all the time, that those hours of study that we learned on those walks, he still

remembers to this very day. One day as we stopped to take a room in a motel, the manager asked for an unusually high price, more than we were used to paying. Chave who stood next to me, told the manager, "Mister, we are not buying the motel, we are just renting a room to sleep over for one night. Besides, my father is not a millionaire, he is just a "thousandteer." She was only a young child at the time. We all burst out laughing at her remark. I don't know where she had heard that expression. From then on, we always repeat the sentence, of, "my father is not a millionaire, only a thousandteer."

Now that we sold our winter places, life was much easier for us. The Schechter family spent their winters in a furnished apartment in Miami Beach, while we divided our time by staying in Brooklyn part of the time and a few months in the winter in Miami Beach. In the year 1958, both families decided that we would spend most of the winter in the State of Israel. In those days, by buying a regular airline ticket, one had the privilege of stopping in about ten different countries on the way to, or coming back, from Israel. The trip was to take several months. Jackie was attending a yeshiva and could not take off for the whole winter. Chave was much younger. I worked out a plan with the Beth Jacob school that I will give her private lessons myself which were assigned her class while we will be on the trip.

The two happiest people in the world at the time that we decided to give up our winter operations were our wives. They were very tired after working for so many years in the summers and in the winters. By this time, we had already operated together about fifteen hotels. They used to say, "When will the time come that we will settle down like most other hotel operators. They stay in one hotel all their lives, where after a season they close up and take a vacation for the winter months. They have their apartments in the city, or they make trips during the winter months and in the spring, they come back to their hotels, which is all ready for them from the year before. Before they close up for the winter, they have their places cleaned, doing the work in the fall, while it is yet not too cold. Mr. and Mrs. Liebowitz started their hotel business over fifty years ago, and when it comes after the summer (most of the time they did not have the hotel open for the High Holidays, but closed right after Labor Day) they take a vacation for the winter, and only come back to their hotel the next season all ready to start business again. They cleaned up the place before they left in the early fall. But what do we do? We stay open until after Succoth, many times even longer, because we are having the convention of the Agudath Israel at the end of November. Then we rush to

the hotel that we operate during the winter months, to open it in time for the season. We are already tired of *kashering* fifteen hotels. At least if we would have saved up some money, but we didn't. We made money in one place, only to lose it in the next one. It is enough already."

Mrs. Gartenberg was especially tired, although she was much younger than Mrs. Schechter. Because Mrs. Schechter had to take care of her children, we urged her several times to leave the hotel before we actually closed the season, go to New York, or perhaps to Miami Beach a little earlier, and that we would close and open the hotels ourselves. Mrs. Schechter was always thankful to us for this consideration. The two women were friendly and very close to each other. They would always try to make things easier for one another. During one winter, when the U.S. government took over the Park Central Hotel in Miami Beach from us, we decided to take a long car trip crossing the United States from New York to California and a part of Mexico.

One year, in December, after we had closed the hotel, Mr. Schechter sent his car down to Miami Beach, and we took our car and were ready to travel to California. Of course, I made preparations for the trip weeks ahead of time. Being a member of the A.A.A. (Automobile Association of America), I had them make up for me what is called a trip-tik, which is a booklet with dozens of pages of small maps, showing the way to go from town to town with the mileage from one place to the other, plus many large maps showing the way from New York to California. Besides the regular roads, I also had them make up for us side trips to various well-known places on the way.

Most of all, I did something else real worthwhile. I had read somewhere that there is such a thing known as due bills. It is a plan whereby one pays his hotel bills in advance, and thereby is entitled to various discounts on his bills. Then there is still another plan. This has to do with advertising. If one is connected with a newspaper, or a magazine, one can place an advertisement in the publications advertising or writing about certain hotels for which the hotel will, instead of paying cash for the advertising, supply the advertiser with either free lodging or give a large credit to be used towards the advertising. There are several firms in this country who do this kind of work. I was in touch with a few of the firms who sent me booklets of hotels and motels in the country who were interested in such plans. One of them sent me a list which enumerated several such hotels and motels between New York and California.

One was the motel/hotel which was known at that time as the Capitol Hotel. Their hotel/motel was the largest in the group. They were willing to give us free rooms on the whole trip in exchange for advertising their chain of hotels/motels or mentioning their name in the newspapers. My friend, Rabbi Sidney Klass (the publisher of the present very famous *Jewish Press*, which is now the largest Anglo-Jewish weekly newspaper in the world) was at that time printing a small newspaper which was known as the *Brooklyn Daily*. He was a regular guest of the Pioneer Country Club. I arranged with him that I would write articles about our trip in the paper, where I would mention the name of the Captol hotel/motel, as the place where we stopped at night during our trip. (I do not see the Capitol motels on the road any longer. They must have merged with a new named hotel/motel chain.) At that time, they were one of the nicest ones, comparable to the Holiday Inns or the Hilton hotel/motel chain that we have today.

The agency who arranged these deals, usually charged a 15% commission on the bills spent on the trip for lodging, but not knowing how much we would spend on this trip, we made up a flat rate of commission, something like $100 or thereabouts. It was a real bargain, because actually, we must have spent at least $1,000 or more for lodging. They sent me in a sort of certificate which I was to show to the manager of the hotel at the time that we checked in. Having the booklet with the list of the Capitol Motels, I was able to arrange our daily driving to be near one of the hotels when we were ready to stop for the night. Once or twice we came to a location where they were practically all filled up. Not wanting to continue driving to the next location, I settled for a cash discount of at least 50% of the bill.

The Schechters knew nothing of this arrangement, so they were simply amazed to see that we checked in nightly into one of the nicest places on the road without paying anything for the two rooms. In general, Mr. Schechter left all the financial arrangements, whether we were traveling on the road, or the ordinary financial transactions in the course of our operations of the hotel, entirely to me. The fact was, that at the start of our operations, he was obligated to do so, because he never had any money of his own at any time. I, being in the general insurance business, or dealing with securities in the stock market, always had a checkbook with funds available. While he, who had no other business, only what he earned as a tailor working on ladies coats, never had any money left after paying for his weekly expenses, to invest in anything else, or spend any money for anything

but his daily necessities. If it would have been entirely up to him, we would never have been able to make this trip or any other future ones. Of course, I eventually charged the expenses to him for his share.

So, one morning, after Mr. Schechter and the two women brought everything that they could think of out to the car, and used up every available inch of space, we started out on our trip across the United States of America. I made up with them that on the whole trip we would not discuss anything relating to business, just to relax and to take it easy. We did not sleep much the night before, being busy with the preparations and the excitement. As soon as the women were settled in their seats, they said 'good night " and promptly went to sleep. Mr. Schechter who, if not occupied with something else, always liked to fall asleep, followed suit. I did not mind it at all. I like to drive the car. I knew very well that Mr. Schechter would not be able to control himself, and would immediately talk about some future plans, so I let them all sleep to their hearts content, and just kept on driving and occupied myself with my usual diversion, and that is to sing to myself. Being that it was just after the Jewish Holidays, I repeated the songs that I recited during the services that I prayed before the altar. While it was understood that we would share the driving, I seldom let Mr. Schechter take the wheel. I drove 90% of the whole trip. When Mr. Schechter insisted that I should let him drive for a while, I reluctantly let him do so, until we made the next stop, and then I grabbed the wheel again.

One morning, about an hour after we checked out from one of the Capitol Motels, I happened to reach into the inside pocket of my jacket with my right hand, to check if the certificate of the Capitol motels was there. To my surprise it was not. I pulled the car to the side, stopped and checked my other pockets, but it was not in any of them either. I told my wife and the Schechters that I could not find the paper, and asked them if they had it, or perhaps had seen me put it away, but none of them remembered anything about it, as I was the only one taking care of that matter.

It was a question of what to do. It was agreed by all, to drive back the 50 or so miles, to check the rooms that we had occupied, or go to the office to see if it was left there. After all, it meant a loss of a very large sum of money. We were not pressed for time, so that an extra hour of driving meant nothing. We went back to the motel, checked the rooms, and the office. The manager even checked the linens which were taken off the beds, but no trace of the paper. I felt terrible. All of them did their best to console me. They said that it was *beshert*. We had

already used the certificate for a few nights lodging, and after all, what would we have done if I had not gotten that rare privilege of free hotels. We would still have made the trip. It was decided that we would all make one more thorough search for the paper. We all looked into our pockets and pocketbooks. I felt very warm, so I took off my jacket. As I did so, and folded it in half, what should I see? There was another inside pocket on the right side of the jacket, which meant that in order to get into that pocket, one had to use the left hand instead of the right one, something which is not usually done. (I never use my left hand to reach into the inside pocket on the right side of the jacket; as a matter of fact, only people who are lefties, do that in order to reach that pocket.) Some jackets do not even have pockets on both sides of their jackets. Now, that the jacket was folded, with the right hand side pocket plainly showing, I saw that a paper was there. Grabbing the paper, I saw that it was the certificate that we had been looking for all these hours. I was terribly embarrassed and ashamed of myself. I did not know what to do, as the saying goes, "If there woulld be an open grave, I would jump in and bury myself for shame." All of us were delighted, but I could not look into their faces. I told them, "You must do something in order that I should feel relieved. Somebody please give me a good smack in the face." Of course, none of them had the nerve to hit me, but as I insisted, Mr. Schechter finally gave me a light smack in the back of my shoulders; only then did I also begin to laugh together with them. This incident is nothing of great importance, but it taught me a lesson. One should never give up; never lose *bitochon* and to be sure that everything will eventually turn out all right.

We continued our trip, which brought us to Hot Springs, where we spent over two weeks taking the baths. We visited the Grand Canyon, Hoover's Dam, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and several cities in California. We stopped in San Diego and spent some time in Disneyland. From there we crossed the border of Mexico, to Tijuana. We returned to the Mexican border to the State of Texas, where we entered into the United States to Florida and Miami Beach. All in all, it was a five weeks trip. Most of the time we spent at the Congress Motels without any cash layout.

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Having no other hotels to be concerned about, we put all our efforts into running the Pioneer Country Club. If we thought that we had problems with the rooming house people and the free-loaders in the former hotels, it was like the saying goes, "You ain't seen nothin' yet."

The village of Greenfield Park was not known to the average Jewish family. It consisted of very few hotels. The rooming houses that were there, were not doing any business. Even the village of Mountaindale, was not too well-known at that time. It had no bank, no movies, the stores in the village were doing very little business, or were closed up. As soon as we took over the Pioneer Country Club, the people began to hear about Greenfield Park.

The rooming houses began to rent out their rooms and were getting good prices for them. People wanted to be near the Pioneer Country Club. There were two large houses on both sides of the hotel. Both of them were regular hotels at one time, or so-called boarding houses. Later on, as they became older and the owners did not make any improvements, they were turned into rooming houses where people rented the bedrooms and used the former hotel kitchen as their kitchen by having the owners install individual gas ranges and ice boxes for each tenant.

One of these buildings was located on the corner, in front of a small lake, on the road that came up from Mountaindale. The other one was located a block or so past the Pioneer, on the left side of the road. During the second year that we were operating the Pioneer, this second house was taken over by a group of people known as *Malochim* (angels). They were a sect that consisted mostly of people who recently repented and became fanatically religious. One of their customs was to marry off their children at a very young age; girls at the age of about thirteen, while boys at about the age of sixteen. Some of these youngsters had been lured away from their parents and became members of this sect. The older people of the sect, led by a well-known religious lawyer in New York, were very active in this work. If the parents did not want to give their consent for these young children to

marry at such an early age, the children were taken away without their consent to a city in another state, like Elkton, Maryland, where their marriage laws did not require the consent of their parents and they were married there. A group of these people moved into the large three-story building and bungalows right across the street from us.

The women did not wear the ordinary *sheytels.* They took very close haircuts, some even shaved off their entire hair and wore black kerchiefs. They wore *chasidic* clothing. They wore black or dark dresses, and were covered from their necks down to their feet. The men wore long dark clothing, large black *yarmulkes,* and wore their *talis kotons* on top of their outer clothing, not under their shirts. They did not wear the ordinary *talis kotons,* but very long ones with their *tzitzis* (fringes) reaching to the ground. If they would confine themselves to their quarters, it would not have been so bad, but they had no synagogue of their own. Therefore, they naturally came to our synagogue. Now, if they would have come to services and left afterwards to go back to their rooms, it too would not have been so bad. That was not the case. They spent most of their time on the grounds of the hotel, walking around and occupying the seats on the porch or the lounges on the grounds. Our guests who were the average religious people, felt uncomfortable in their presence. When a car with guests drove up to the hotel, they just turned around and left the premises. We did not know what to do with them. It was not a question that they took away the seats from our guests in the social hall, or used the swimming pool. It was their presence that bothered the rest of our guests. We did our best to explain to them our situation. We told them that we did not mind them using our synagogue for the services, but that their presence all day spoiled our regular business. Some of them understood and complied with our wishes, but others just laughed in our face. What we did was, we found the owners of the building and bought it for the sum of $19,000. It turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to us, because we made very good use of the premises. As I always say, "Whatever G-d does, He does for the good."

We eventually rented the house on the right side of the hotel from the owners and used it for help quarters. In the meantime, the tenants of that building gave us the same problems as we had with the tenants on the opposite side of the road, the one leading to Woodridge. On this road, there were about a dozen buildings which became very popular with families, especially those with youngsters. The houses were located within a walking distance to the Pioneer. In the first year of our operation, we were able to rent rooms from them whenever the

hotel was filled up. We paid them $5.00 per night per person, usually two to a room. However, the news quickly spread all over the Metropolitan New York area, that there is such a hotel as the Pioneer Country Club, that there are vacant rooms near the hotel where one can rent a bed for $5.00 a night, spend the weekend on the premises of the hotel with all its facilities free of charge. No longer were we able to rent the rooms there because instead of placing two guests in a room, the owners squeezed in as many beds as the room would hold, many times having as many as five or six occupants to a room. To these starving landlords, the Pioneer was their salvation.

The following is a true description of what was taking place during all the years that we operated the hotel. Five or six boys or girls would come out in one car, sharing the expenses of the car. They would go to one of the rooms in a nearby rooming house, pay $10.00 a person for the weekend. As soon as they entered the room, they would put on their bathing suits, walk or drive over to the hotel and jump into the swimming pool. From the pool, they would go to lay down on the lounges which were at the pool. They socialized with the other young people. Others, would go directly to the indoor pool, steam room, lay on the cots, put on the ultra ray electric lights over their bodies, for a good tan. After the swimming pool, or the indoor pool, or both, they would put on their robes, go into the large tea room, eat a pound or more of all sorts of cakes, have a few cups of coffee, tea, juice, or all of them. On Friday afternoons, with the great excitement of checking in a few hundred people, there was no control as to who was a regular guest and who was a free-loader. The cakes, fruits, juices, milk, coffee and tea were placed on a large table smorgasbord style. After spending a pleasant afternoon, they would go back to their rooms, change into clothing for the Sabbath, drive back to the hotel, where they parked their cars on our overcrowded parking lot, in order to have their cars ready on Sabbath evening. They went to our *shul* to pray with a *minyan,* went back to their rooms and ate the food that they had brought along with them from home.

There were plenty of them who did not even bother to go back to their rooms. With the hundreds of people that came into the dining room at one time, although we had a sort of list made up which the headwaiter used to seat the guests, but in a tumult like that, he was really unable to keep a correct list of all the guests. We gave cards to the new arrivals, but too many of them claimed that the seating cards that they were given hours ago in the afternoon were left in their rooms. Most of the rooms were in the surrounding bungalows. It was

therefore too far to go and look for the cards that they had left in their week-day clothing. We did not allow our headwaiters to use a pen or pencil on the Sabbath, so he was unable to make a check of the seats that he gave out. Once a person sat down to a seat on Friday night, that was his/her seat for the entire weekend. So they were already set for the balance of the weekend, without anyone bothering them.

Those who did go back to their rooms, ate their meals in a hurry and came right back to the hotel. While we had the gates closed for the Sabbath, so that cars should not be able to drive in on the Sabbath, the small gate to walk in and out of was not locked, because our own guests used that entrance to go for walks on the road. If we tried to lock the small gate our regular guests claimed that they were locked in like in a prison. So these free-loaders came right in. By that time our regular guests were already out of the dining room ready to mingle with the free-loaders, invite them to their rooms, to partake in the fruits or other kinds of food that they took along from the dining room.

Soon the tea room was opened. We engaged at least three people to serve the guests in the tea room. At this *Oneg Shabes* party, the staff in the tea room had laden the tables hours before, with a ton of food that was wheeled in on hand wagons loaded with all kinds of fruits, cakes, nuts, juices, tea, coffee, etc. The uninvited guests (the free-loaders) were standing at the entrance waiting for the doors to open, while our regular guests were still outside on the grounds or on the road, walking off the heavy meal that they had just consumed. These free-loaders were in a hurry to occupy the seats around the tables. After that, they packed up plates with different foods from the large tables. We usually had speakers, guests who were asked to sing and make others sing along. Everyone had a good time. Later on, they were the first ones to leave the tea room, after filling up their pockets with enough food to last them for a few hours. They occupied the choicest seats in the lobbies, spent a delightful evening, and after midnight, they returned to their quarters for a few hours of sleep, to be ready to come back to *shul* the next morning. Again, many of them did not bother to go back to their rooms, but slept over in our rooms, sharing the beds of their friends who were paying guests.

On the Sabbath mornings, we had two *minyonim*. As large as the *shul* was, there were many times that we had no room to accommodate all the guests of the hotel, for them to be able to sit down during the services. On Friday nights, we more or less managed, as not everyone came in to *daven*. The late arrivals did not attend the services. Others

sat or stood outside in the foyer or had an early *minyan* on the porch where the *succah* was, but Sabbath mornings, it was a must to have two *minyanim*. The early one started at seven in the morning. I, as a rule, came to the first *minyan*, arranged the *baalei tefilos*, sold the *aliyos*, called up the buyers to the Torah and made the *mi shebeyrachs*. After the *kedusha*, I left to see that the *kiddush* was prepared and to have breakfast. Mr. Schechter and later on my son-in-law, took care of the second *minyan* which started at about 9:00 a.m. By the time that they were ready for the reading of the Torah, I was back again selling the *aliyos*, and making the *mi shebayrachs*. Again, after the *kedusha*, we both left to check on whether the great smorgasbord *kiddush* was properly prepared. Although the people who attended the first services, had their breakfast earlier, many of them attended the second *kiddush* as well. Gezunterheit!!

Our paying guests were welcome to whatever their hearts desired. Being that the worhippers of the second *minyan*, as a rule had no breakfast, only juices, cakes, coffee and tea in the tea room, they were given a smorgasbord *kiddush*, which was the talk of the Catskill Mountains. Long tables were packed with everything one can think of. One large table was set with all kinds of liquors, scotch, bourbon, sweet drinks, wines, etc. Another table was loaded with all kinds of cakes, such as cheese cakes, danishes, parve cakes, dairy and parve puddings. Still another table was packed with gefilte fish, boiled carp, boiled white fish, pike, several kinds of herrings, etc. Yet another was filled with tuna salad, salmon salad, chopped eggs, sliced eggs, egg salad, jellos, and many other items too numerous to mention. Let the guest enjoy themselves.

But here the hungry mob of outsiders did not wait for the services in the *shul* to finish. They were the first ones to rush in and to pack their plates with everything that they saw from foods to drinks to coffee, milk, tea and you name it. By this time it was already 12:00 noon. Those that could still move, went back to their rooms. Others, just stretched out on the couches to catch up on their sleep. If they went back, they made sure to be back to partake in the afternoon tea room service, listen to the afternoon speakers, like Dr. Morris Mandel, my *perek* class and daven *minchah* in the *shul*. After the *minchah* services, while some went back to their quarters to change for the night festivities, a lot of them being concerned that they would have difficulties to get into our social hall to see the entertainment, remained on the premises, hiding in the public bathrooms, walking on

the grounds, or taking keys from their friends who were staying in the hotel, spent the time in the rooms until the social hall opened, so that they could occupy the choice seats there. They saw the shows, danced in the ballroom, partook of our midnite buffet consisting of all kinds of delicatessen either in the social hall or in the tea room.

Up to now, I have only described the system and behavior of the free-loaders that stayed in motels or in rooms within walking distance of the Pioneer. The real fun started on Saturday night. Before we even finished the *maariv* services, and not having yet made *havdoloh*, the gates were still locked and our guards were posted at the several gates, the mobs started coming. The roads leading to Mountaindale, to route No. 52, to Woodridge, to Ellevnville, were all lined up with cars. It was a known fact that we gave the best entertainment on Saturday nights, with headliners like Red Buttons, Jackie Mason, and other popular acts. Although our shows did not start until after 11:00 o'clock, because we wanted to make sure that the acts did not travel to our hotel until two or more hours after *Shabes*, the mobs of uninvited guests were ready to tear down the fences hours before. G-d forbid if there was a need for an ambulance or for the fire department trucks, there was no room for them to use the roads. The property across the street, that was occupied by our own bungalow colony, began filling up with strange cars while it was still the Sabbath, driving their cars over the low fences, blocking the cars of our own guests. Many times, the state Troopers who were patrolling the roads, had difficulties driving on the congested roads. They issued summonses left and right for illegal parking. (The irony of it was, that these illegal parkers came to me to try to squash their tickets.) Our bungalow colony guests complained bitterly that the noise made by people driving up and down around their bungalows deprived them and their children of sleep all through the night on Saturday. During the week, we put up fences around the property, on their side of the road, and on our side of the road, but by Saturday night, they all were torn down. The mob of drivers came prepared with wire cutters with which they cut up the fences. We just could not station enough guards on the roads to watch them.

Now one may ask, with all the precautions that we took, how did all these hundreds of people finally get into the premises and social hall? The answers are many. They were smarter than we were. They had all week long to devise means of outsmarting us. There were several entrances to the property, where we stationed guards to prevent the undesirable people from coming in. (There were many

undesirable ones, who were actually thieves, who maneuvered to get into rooms and steal valuable items. We were always busy settling losses.) Many of the guards were unreliable, and for a few dollars, they were bought off. Others walked to the end of the tall wire fences, where a low fence of wires began, crossed the wires, walked through the woods, tearing or dirtying their clothes. Still others, in groups, began walking as much as half a mile away from the side road, through the thick brush and trees, to come into the open. During the days of the week, or on Saturday, they were casing the land to find ways to get in. Many gained admission through the influence of some of the guests present at the hotel who pleaded with us to let in their children or very close relatives who were staying in camps, or small places, in order to visit them. The peculiar part was that as soon as they entered the grounds, they did not even bother to see their parents or relatives, but headed directly to the social hall. Many of our paying guests who were uncomfortable by not having seats in the social hall or in the tea room, were angry that after paying a high rate for their stay they had no place to sit down. After we explained our plight, they sympathized with us. While others, on the contrary, were angry at us for not giving free admission and services to their friends and relatives.

The question can be asked, once they were already on the premises, through various tricks, how did they get into the social hall? Here we also tried various methods to keep them out. We started by giving out passes at the *sheulos seudah* meal. Some of the guest claimed that it was not permissible according to the *halacha,* as it comes under the law of *hachanah,* preparing on the Sabbath for the weekday.The system of gaining entrance by showing a key to their rooms was tried out a long time ago and did not work because although we made ten keys for every room in the beginning of the season, a few weeks later, there were no keys left, as the guests took them along with them when they checked out of the hotel. The keys to our rooms were spread out all over the country. Finally, we tried the system of putting on an invisible stamp on their hands which showed up under an ultra violet lamp. This helped a lot, but was still not perfect, because the guests came to the desk, gave their name, their room number and showed the keys. We checked this information against a prepared list. We stamped their hands. A little later, others came and gave the same name, room number and key, so how did we know which ones were the right ones? If we told them so, they either put up a fight, or walked away, which meant that they were the wrong people. If all the tricks did not work, they just did not go into the show.

Their main interest was not always watching the show. They wanted to be in the place for the night and socialize with the other guests. After the show, the doors to the social hall were opened up anyway. They were able to go and dance all night. After the show, the tea room was opened for many hours. No one controlled that, so that they were able to use the tea room facilities anyway. The final result was that we were as the saying goes, "Behind the eight ball" and they won out, while we were the losers.

All day Sunday, the same procedure followed. The gates had to be open in full swing, as hundreds of people checked out and others checked in. Again it was a free for all. For the entire week, we just looked away, as we were not that crowded. The Talmud says, "If one inherited a fortune, and wants to lose it fast, what should he do? Engage help and don't watch them." Came a smart man and added on to the saying, "And if you want to lose your heart, do watch them." In the many years of our hotel operations, we were just at our wits' end. We were tired of supplying free vacations to thousands of people. These strangers spent a whole weekend at the Pioneer Country Club by employing many different kinds of *geneyvos* (stealing) for an expense of $10.00, while the honest ones spent $75.00 to $100.00 for the same weekend.

Up to now I have written mostly about the free-loaders who took our property from us for nothing. How about the regular guests? While the majority were fine men and women who appreciated our efforts for them, who are very sorry that we are not in business any longer (except for the Passover holidays) and tell me so everytime when they see me or my family, there was a very small minority who took advantage of us. They wasted a lot of our food, destroyed and took away many of our things illegally. Every year, we were short of tens of thousands of items, such as linens, napkins, books and other materials. But at least they were paying guests. We at least made some profit on them. I mentioned it before already, that many times before *Rosh Hashanah,* we used to receive in the mail packages of linen, *sidurim, seforim,* which some people may have taken unknowingly, while others took them intentionally, but before the High Holidays, their conscience bothered them and they decided to repent and make good their sins.

To the thousands of people who took from the Gartenberg and Schechters, and later on from the Gartenberg family all sorts of properties or services in the value of tens of thousands of dollars, I wish to remind them what the Talmud says (*Baba Kamah,* p. 103),

Hagozel es chaveyroh shovey prutoh — He who robbed from his comrade even only the value of a penny, *Yolicheno achrov afiloh lemohday* — He is to follow him even to as far away as Moday, and return it to him. Meaning that distance should not prevent a person to repay even the value of something that is worth only a penny. The Holy Vilno Gaon asks, "Why does the Gemoroh pick as an example exactly the city of Moday, and not any other place? He bases the saying on a verse in (Yeshayeh 13-17), *Hineni meyir aleyhem es mohday. Asher kesef loh yachshevoh, vezohov loh yecheftzoh.*" Even if the person from whom something the worth of a penny was taken, lives in Moday, where silver and gold has no value. It has nothing to do with the one who took the penny worth of an item or a service. He is obligated to return it. I say that everyday in the year which is a day after Rosh Hashanah, is already considered as a day before Rosh Hashanah. So everyone who ever took anything worth even one penny from me, is obligated to return it to me, whether it was something like food or drink, or a lawn chair from our grounds, whom a Mrs. Welfeld saw him pick up, fold and put it in the trunk of his car, and when she told him that that was just plain stealing, the person replied, "I stayed here as a paying guest. Gartenberg made plenty of money on me. He should not mind my taking this lawn chair."

I tell this person and to the thousands of other people, that I am not different than any other person who is in business, like all of you, who may be, businessmen, doctors, lawyers, or workers. That just as you mind it if someone comes into your place of business and picks up an article from your shelf and walks away with it, or, if you are a professional man, and someone uses your services without paying for it, so do I and the Schechter children mind if people took tens of thousands of dollars worth of things and services from us. We are only as human as the next person. Although I am not as wealthy as the inhabitants of Moday, to whom silver and gold had no value, I will go a step furter and declare, that for me, I do not ask anything. But those who are in debt to me, should take a pencil and paper and figure out the value of their debt (and maybe even add on a *chomesh* [a fifth] as required by Jewish law), and send in a check, cash or a money order to the Pioneer Milk Fund c/o Leo Gartenberg, 1519-59th Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11219.

If you will let me know what the money is sent in for, I will use it for charity. I am sure that after reading this page in the book, donations will come from all over the world. You will be able to supply

hundreds of poor people with foods and supplies. The donations will pour in not only from those who actually took things without permission, but also from the people who just used our hotels for their benefits. We find a *Mamar* in the Talmud (Bovoh Kamoh 20b), Rabbi Yehudah says, "He who lives in the courtyard of his comrade without his knowledge, the one who took advantage of the use of the premises, is obligated to pay for the privilege." In another place we find a *Mamar* which says, "If one stays over in the cottage of a caretaker, who uses this cottage to guard a fruit orchard in the fruit season, but at the time of use, the cottage was abandoned for the off season months, the one who took advantage of the use of the house, is obligated to find the owner and pay for the privilege of having used the place." These two examples go to prove, that *ZEH NEHENEH,* If one has a benefit, *V'ZEH LO CHOHSAR,* and the other did not have a loss, *LOH POHTAR,* The one who had the benefit is not free from payment. Especially in our case, it cannot be said that there was no loss at all, because as soon as one came up to the property and used it, the person did make the management take some kind of a loss.

Now that I have talked it off from my heart, as we say in Yiddish, *"Ohp giredt zich fun hartz,"* I wish to state that I forgive everyone who insulted me and my family, by pouring insults on us, and calling us all kinds of names. Let each person put himself or herself in our place, and honestly decide how they would act in a similar situation. Would you just sit idly by and watch your merchandise being taken away and your facilities just being used freely and say nothing about it? Just let your conscience be your guide. The subject is now finished.

Now that we were settled in the Pioneer Hotel, we started to build our famous synagogue. We picked the location on a spot where there was the caretaker's cottage, which was at that time at the end of the cultivated land. In the back of this cottage there were some wood sheds where some machinery and supplies were kept. In the back of the White Mansion and the Lilac and Diamond Cottages, there was a swamp with many frogs who made a lot of noise, keeping back the guests from sleeping during the night. We hired a bulldozer to move down part of a wooded hill to fill in the swamp. This operation accomplished three purposes.

1. It gave us a new piece of land instead of a swamp.
2. It gave us additional cultivated land instead of wild unusable land.
3. There was a line of cottages for the help which were very hard to get to. Now it made the quarters for the help more desirable.

On the spot where the swamp was, Mrs. Schechter and I planted a fruit orchard. (Mrs. Schechter loved to plant flowers and trees and so did I.) The bulldozer dug out a deep basement on the spot where the synagogue was to be built, so that we would erect the shul there and rooms for the help under it. As it turned out, these rooms were also occupied as guest rooms for young people, where we charged a very low rate. At the same time, we also added on a new cottage which was called the G & S Cottage. The initials G & S stood for Gartenberg and Schechter. That was the building intended for our families' use.

We hired an architect to make the plans for the building of the synagogue. At first it seemed that it was too large. It was really the largest one in the Catskill Mountains. As it turned out, it was not too large at all. As a matter of fact, there were times that there was not enough room to accommodate all the guests at one time. That was one of the reasons that we had to organize two *minyonim* on the Sabbath mornings, and yet we had an extra third *minyan* on the porch in the rear of the main building which was our well-known *Succoh.* We put up a movable *mechitzoh* (a separation wall between the men and women worshippers) so that we could move the walls to suit the needs of every occasion. The shul was packed with thousands of *siddurim, chumoshim* and several sets of *mishnayos, gemorah, meforshim,* etc. All these *seforim* were used by the guests day and night.

Our building projects never stopped. We kept on building new houses for guests as well as for the help, all the time. The property and cottages across the street that we bought from the Distelman family, we kept on repairing and remodeling. Some of the rooms were used as regular guest rooms and some were used as help rooms. We rented out the cottages in the rear as what is knwon as *koch aleyn,* where people rented the cottages and did their own cooking. Their rental charge included the use of all the facilities of the hotel, such as the sports, entertainments, etc. That was the reason why these guests kept these rooms year after year, willing to pay a higher rate than they would any other place. There were more demands for cottages than we had available. Eventually, we took all the ground floor rooms of the main building of that premises and turned them into apartments, so that we could accommodate more people. We also built a few more cottages on the premises. Eventually, we had about forty units.

Years later, we also built a very modern motel unit. This was on the premises of the hotel itself. It was a house of ten units, each unit having a large bedroom, a bath, and a very large modern kitchen which was called a Hollywood Kitchen. This room was very large, so

that it could hold either two beds or two large couches that could be opened into two beds. Each unit was built with two separate entrances, so that it could be used by one large family or by two separate close families — like a mother and daughter or two sisters. The ten units which were really 20 rooms with a bath in between cost us about $100,000.00 to build and furnish, but it paid for itself very fast. We used the house as guest rooms for the Passover, Shevuouth, Rosh Hashanah and Succoth holidays. The stove and frigidaire were on one side, so that when the room was not used for rooming house purposes, we just partitioned off that section, so that they were regular bedrooms with a bath in between. The building was air-conditioned and heated. When we had a convention before or after the summer, these twenty rooms were used as regular rooms like any other cottage.

We also built another house further up on the hill to the right of the property near the water reservoir. It was originally intended to be used as help quarters or guest rooms. Eventually, they became apartments with self service facilities. By the end of our construction plans, we had accommodations for about sixty families in these kind of units, which was a business by itself. Since all these guests were entitled to use the facilities of the hotel (except food in the dining room), there were plenty of customers for these units. Because they received the services of the hotel, we charged and the people were willing to pay premium rates for the facilities. We were never concerned much whether or not the units were completely rented as we were always in a a position to rent them out as guest rooms during the summer months.

Later on, these bungalow colony people came to our kitchen asking to buy milk, butter, cheese, salami, fish, blintzes, etc. In other words practically everything that they were short of in their own kitchens. Af first, when these requests were few, I did not mind it at all, but as these purchases became a way of life, and started to interfere with our usual hotel kitchen operations, I decided to open up a new department which was the "take home food business." Every afternoon, for an hour or two, I began to sell ready cooked or baked foods to our bungalow colony guests. I mimeographed a long list of foods that were available at the same rates as charged by similar stores in the city. The list was distributed to the bungalow colony guests who either came in at a specified hour to make their purchases, or they made up a list of the items that they wished to purchase and left the list in the kitchen for us to fill and which they would pick up later on. It

saved them a lot of work and they were assured of fresh wholesome food on a short notice. When other guests at nearby colonies found out about this food service, they also came to make their purchases. We were especially busy on Thursdays and Fridays, when they came to make their purchases for the Sabbath. They even left their orders for the *cholent* for Sabbath, which they got hot from the pot. They paid for it either on Friday or after Shabes at a specified price per container.

As we kept on building more rooms for regular guests and bungalow colonies, the population of the hotel doubled and tripled and so we had to constantly increase our help. There were times that we had about 700 guests and about 300 on the staff, or about 1000 people on the premises. A small town all by itself. Soon the water supply became short. We had to drill new wells, new water reserve tanks, because we did not have a connection to the water supply of the nearby towns. Everything had to be done on our own. The sewage system in the hotel also had to be enlarged constantly. These facilities required an outlay of hundreds of thousands of dollars. We always had to keep on building and spending huge sums of money. Of course, we took in large sums of money from the guests, but never enough to pay for the extra expenses needed to pay for everything. The worst part of the expenses were the large sums of monies that went for the sewer system. That was a "waste" in more ways than one.

This reminds me of a story that I heard from an actor by the name of Leibish Goldberg. He was an actor on the Jewish stage and at the same time he operated the Overlook Hotel in Loch Sheldrake (now closed). He was telling the following story: "A friend of his visited him in the hotel. While talking about the hotel business, he told his friend that he and his wife were working the whole summer, and now at the end of the year there was nothing left to show for all the work that they did all season." His friend was surprised that there was nothing left for them. He kept on asking, "You really mean it, that there was nothing left?" To which Leibish Goldberg replied, "All right, as long as you insist, I will show you what was left." He took a long stick, walked to the end of the property, picked up the cover of the sewage tank, pushed in the stick and pulled it out. The stick showed how much waste there was accumulated in the sewage tank, which showed let us say, three feet and 10 inches, and therefore he told his friend, " You see the mark on the stick? Last year we accumulated three feet of human waste. Now we have an accumulation of ten inches more. That is what we have left to show for the work of a while season." It was a funny joke. The audience burst out laughing. But it was the honest

truth. Many hotel operators, including ourselves, worked very hard for about nine months every summer and there were many summers that all that was left was the increase in the accumulation of the sewage tank.

It is true that business was done, but the continuous expenses of repairs and additions swallowed all the profits, so that at the end of the season, not only was there not enough to pay all the creditors, but loans from the banks had to be made, promissory notes were given to the creditors to be paid from the income of the following year, and hardly anything was left to draw out for our personal use. I remember many times, when it came to the end of the season, Mrs. Schechter came over to me (I was the financial controller) and told me in an embarrassed voice, "Mr. Gartenberg, I am going to Miami Beach for the winter where I will have to rent an apartment. Do you think that I can draw out some money to pay the rent there?" My answer usually was, "My dear Mrs. Schechter, the business is yours just as it is mine. Of course, we will draw out some money. We owe bank loans and promissory notes for hundreds of thousands of dollars, so we will owe a few thousand dollars more."

There was no way of ever stopping to build and repair. The first thing that guests asked at the start of every season was, "and what did you repair and/or add on this year?" And so we repaired and built every year. As we built more rooms, the public places became too small. We had to enlarge the main lobby. In order to do that, we had to take away a part of the dining room. Now the dining room became too small, so we had to enlarge it. We did this three times. Since the ground was slanty, as we enlarged the dining room, there was a natural large empty space under the dining room, which we built into a large playroom with ping pong tables, music boxes, etc. We even put up a stage where we presented shows when the crowd was small, as well as a luncheonette for light snacks.

As we began to attract a better crowd who wanted to have better rooms, rooms with semi-private or even private baths, we decided to build a new large modern building with a few semi-private and private baths. This was the "Golf Lodge." There were two floors of rooms having forty bedrooms. The building was on the right side of the main building, just before the social hall. As the main building was on a hill, this building was built on a slanty ground so that the left side of the building created a large space under the main floor. This space was quickly used up by putting up a line of small rooms. The side facing the social hall had rooms with semi-private showers. The other side which

was facing the entrance to the building was used as rooms with toilets and showers in the hallway. We had in mind to use the rooms with the semi-private showers for guests and being that they were on the ground floor, street level, we would charge a low rate, while the rooms with the toilet and showers on the floor would go to the help. But as usual, as soon as the rooms were ready, they turned out pretty nice so that they were immediately assigned to guests.

Since Mr. Schechter and I were great believers in *mikvos*, now that we had put up a real big house, we took the corner of this ground floor and built a very nice large modern *mikvoh* (ritualarium) for the use of our guests. The edifice was as up-to-date as any *mikvoh* in any large city. It was another "first" for Gartenberg and Schechter. No hotel ever did such a thing before.

Only those people who are experienced in building modern *mikvos* would have an idea what such a project costs. Especially, adding on the great income which a large corner room with private bath would bring in during the following years, one can get an idea that it meant a loss of tens of thousands of dollars. But that was our decision and we were very happy about it and so were the thousands of guests, especially the women to whom this was a very great convenience. Of course there was never a charge of any kind to the guests for this service. As a rule, the facility was closed up. The key was kept in the office, which was available to any guest who wanted to use the facility.

Here again a problem arose with the people who lived in the nearby bungalow colonies and rooming houses or even in the villages further away from us. As soon as it became known that the Pioneer had a modern *mikvoh*, all the men and women wanted to take advantage of using it. As we all know, a *mikvoh* has to be kept clean and fresh at all times, especially when it is located in a modern building. Before we made our own *mikvoh*, we went to the trouble of repairing and modernizing the *mikvoh* in Mountaindale. We collected large sums of money for this purpose. Mr. Schechter and I became officers in the project. Rabbi and Mrs. Goldstein and the very energetic Mrs. Louis Katz, whose husband was the only shomer shabes postmaster in the world (except in Israel) were the local supervisors of the project. A normal fee was charged for the use of the *mikvoh*. A woman was engaged to be the usual *mikvoh yidene*, the person to take care of the *mikvoh*. Now, by making our *mikvoh* free to the general public, it gave us new headaches, what with the upkeep and at the same time taking income away from the Mountaindale, Ellenville, Monticello, and other *mikvos*, who depended on this income. When a call came in for the use

of the facility from a non-guest, we asked them where they were calling from and we gave them the address and telephone number of the nearest mikvoh from where they lived and recommended them to go there. However, there were some women who insisted for some reason, like, it is late at night, or that the *mikvoh* is closed, or that they had no one to take them to such a far away place, etc. In such cases, we had no alternative, but to let them use the one on our premises. We charged them the price that other *mikvos* charges and we sent the money to the nearest *mikvoh.*

So, another job was thrown into our hands. I had to open the room, see that everything was in order, see that the water was warm, take out the plug between the *bohr* and the *mikvoh.* As a rule, the water was not warm enough, so I had to leave out most of the water, and fill it up with hot water, prepare a few towels, and if needed, prepare a hot bathtub in the side room. Many times, if the woman came alone without bringing along a companion, Mrs. Schechter or Mrs. Gartenberg, after a hard days's work, had to go there and act as the *mikvaoh yidene.* Very often this happened on a Saturday night. So, instead of watching the show, one of them, and most often, since they did not want the other to go, both of them went to do the job. Now, if we would have refused to do it, we would have been called "bad people" and they would write us up in a letter of complaint in the "Morning Journal." And who were the people who complained about us? Not our paid guests. They had everything that they wanted, more than they expected. The complaints came from persons with whom we had no connections, who paid us nothing, and to whom we had no obligations at all. They were the ones to complain and write letters to the Jewish papers.

As we kept on building additional rooms, we needed extra help to take care of the additional guests. In the hotel business, it is figured that for every three guests, there is a need of one employee. In a resort hotel which is far away from the city, the hotel operator has to supply the help not only with their food, but also a bed to sleep in. As we were always short in beds for our help, we decided to rent the rooming house which was located on the corner of the road coming from Mountaindale. It was owned by a Mrs. Miller. It was a "koch aleyn." There were about thirty bedrooms, a large kitchen and a dining room. Not only would we get rid of about thirty families of free-loaders, but it would solve our problem of sleeping quarters for a lot of our employees. Practically all of our waiters and busboys were placed in that building. Once in a while, some young people were also placed there, as regular guests.

It was the Friday afternoon of Shabbos Chazon. All of a sudden we heard yelling "Fire" and saw smoke coming from that direction. We did not know how it happened. Someone probably fell asleep with a burning cigarette, or a burning match was accidently thrown on the floor, or whatever. We all ran to the building, where we really saw smoke coming out of it. As it was in broad daylight, all the help saved themselves and most of their clothing. Shabbos Chazon, being a slow weekend, we had no problem where to place the help for the weekend, but what were we to do for the following weekend, Shabbos Nachmuh, which was the busiest weekend of the year. Where would we find beds not only for the misplaced help but we also had to hire additional help for that weekend? It was already close to the Sabbath. Nothing could be done for at least one day. According to the poet who wrote the song *"Mah Yedudith,"* he said, *"Hirhurim Mitorim."* One is permitted to think on the Sabbath about something to do after the Sabbath. And *"Ulshadeych Habunos"* to marry off girls. In our case, every check-in or waiter was a prospective marriage candidate.

So all Sabbath we were thinking. We came to the conclusion that we had to put up a new building for the help, even if it would be only a temporary one. Mr. Schechter, the habitual architect and builder became busy with the plans. As soon as we finished the *Mariv* services, we called our builder, Mr. Jacob Mayerson and told him to come over immediately. He came right away and we told him that we must have a building put up immediately, with room for about thirty people. The building had to be ready by the following Friday morning. Mr. Mayerson burst out laughing and said, "It has to take five weeks to do a job like that. First we have to dig out a foundation, order all kinds of material, find the help to do the job. The summertime is their vacation and most of them are away. We have to find plumbers, electricians, all of whom are busy taking care of other hotels. I replied to him with the well-known saying of the Talmud, *B'deikoh less man Depalig."* When there is, no one is arguing. When there is not, there are arguments. In other words, when there is an abundance of everything, like time, labor and material, there is nothing what to argue about. It is when there is nothing available immediately that we have to see what can be done. Mr. Mayerson began smiling and said, "It is my luck that I have to get involved with a Leo Gartenberg who is always ready to shake out a Gemoroh from his sleeves. I can argue with you, but how can I argue with a Gemoroh?"

He sat down at the telephone, ordered an excavator to be ready to dig the ditches for the foundation. He called a man who had mixing

machines to mix the cement; he called the Mountaindale Lumber Company and ordered bags of cement, all to be there early Sunday morning. He aso ordered some lumber to be used for cross boards for the floor. The lumber company was reluctant to promise all this material, this being that the next day was Sunday and some of the drivers did not work on that day. Mr.Mayerson told him, "Better don't start that, because I will send over Mr. Gartenberg to you and he will prove it with a Gemoroh that you have to send it out."

Early on Sunday morning, we chose the location for the building, and staked out the measurements for the "Diamond Lodge" building. The excavator came and started to excavate the foundation. The cement mixer started mixing the cement. As soon as a few feet of the foundation was excavated, the cement man followed him and poured in the cement. By late afternoon, the foundation was ready. The next day, the cross boards were put on and the floor of the building was started. I saw that the builder was doing his best to make the job ready.

We told him that what we were interested in, was to see the floors down, the walls up and the roof on the building. As far as the windows and doors were concerned, if they would not be ready, he could just cover them with plywood. We could put sheets where the doors were supposed to be. The ceiling could come later.

Joe Kraf, the plumber, was called and he placed the plumbing under the floor, even before the floor was put on. Harry the electrician was notified to prepare the electric wiring for the lights. The excavator prepared the ditches for the water supply and for the sewage system. Everything worked in a systematic manner. Laborers were called back from their vacations. We knew that we would have to pay a higher rate for everything, but it was an emergency and had to be done. That week, Mr. Schechter felt like a fish in water, seeing to it that everything was rushed. Sixty new beds were ordered.

Believe it or not, the five week job was done in five days. The furniture was moved in while the finishing touches were still being put on. On Friday, the maids made up the beds. In the afternoon, not only the busboys and waiters moved in, but as the nineteen rooms were very large, we put four or five beds into some of the rooms, so that a few youngsters who came without reservations were also accommodated in these rooms. Like all the rest of the buildings that we erected, the rooms turned out very nice, so that eventually this building also became a guest house for young people. Another house of ten rooms was erected to the left of the Diamond Lodge. This house, being that it was built as a guest house, also had a few rooms with semi-private baths.

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Trips

We made many trips in this country. To write long reports about them would take many pages which would fill up the book. I will therefore write just to describe religious life outside of cities like New York, Chicago, or Cleveland.

On a cross-country trip that we made with Mr. and Mrs. Schechter, we arrived at a city where we thought we would try to buy some kosher bread since we were running out of bread. We stopped at a garage, looked up the telephone number of the rabbi to inquire where such bread was available. When I told him that my name was Gartenberg, he asked me which one I was, the Gartenberg from the hotel business or the one who writes in the Jewish Press. When I told him that I am the same person, he was glad to hear from me. As to my question about Kosher bread, he told me that it was a good thing that I called, because there was only one particular bread that we could use and which was under his supervision. There are many strictly orthodox scientists living in that city who depend upon his personal supervision. He told us that the bread could be bought in a supermarket located on the main highway, or we could go to the bakery which was a few blocks off the main highway.

We stopped at the supermarket. The women went into the store and asked for the particular brand of bread which the rabbi had recommended. The person to whom they were talking to was slicing delicatessen. While his hands were still fat from the non-kosher delicatessen, he went over to the bread counter and picked up a bread to give them. Although the bread was wrapped in paper, they somehow did not feel right buying it, being that it was touched by those hands. They found an excuse not to buy it and walked out of the store after buying only a box of matzos. They came to the car and told us what had happened.

We then decided to go to the bakery instead. Coming into the bakery, we walked over to the counter and asked the salesperson for the kosher bread. She said, "Oh, yes. We have a special label for that

bread listing all the ingredients." She handed us the label and I began reading the ingredients. Among other things it read, "shortening," not "vegetable shortening." I asked her whether she was sure that that was the right label and she assured me that it was. I turned around to speak to Mr. Schechter, but he had disappeared. Knowing Mr. Schechter, I immediately knew that he went to the back of the store where the baking was done. He went to speak to the baker. The baker who was a Chinaman showed him a barrel of shortening and said, "You see. We use only pure fats." We looked at the label, and sure enough, it read, "Pure lard." Asking him again whether he was sure that this was the only fat in the place, he replied that that was the only fat that they used because, "It is pure." We ran out of the bakery holding on tightly to the label listing all the ingredients. We were flabbergasted and at a loss as to what to do. At night when we stopped at a motel, I sat down and wrote a letter to the rabbi telling him our findings.

As we were on our way to California, we had no chance of getting an answer by mail. In my column of that week in the Jewish Press, I wrote what happened and how one had to be careful when buying bread, even rye or Jewish style bread. For a day or two we ate only matzos. Would you believe it? We found kosher bread in the most unlikely kosher city in America. It was in the city of Las Vegas. When we arrived there, we called the local rabbi who happened to be not an orthodox rabbi. He assured us that there was one bakery in the city where we could get real kosher rye bread. We drove over to the bakery. We found in a separate section of a very large bakery, a special oven that they used for baking rye bread using only kosher ingredients. It was not baked in a pan, but on the bricks of the oven, with its special bin. The baker told us, "When we say that we sell 'Jewish Rye Bread' we mean not only Jewish, but also kosher." We stocked up enough bread to last us for a few days. When we arrived in Los Angeles, California, we did the same thing. We had enough bread to last us going to San Diego, Mexico, and back to the United States and to Miami Beach.

When we arrived in Miami Beach, people who read my article in the Jewish Press asked me, "You mean to say that we cannot eat ordinary rye bread?" To which I replied, "You cannot depend even on the label saying 'vegetable shortening' unless you are sure that the baker is a Shomer Shabos or under the supervision of a reliable rabbi." Several weeks later, when I returned to Brooklyn, I found a letter from the rabbi. In it he assured me that he made an announcement in

his synagogue stating that the bread in that bakery was no longer kosher, until further notice. The owner of the bakery came to him. He tried to convince him that the barrel with the lard came into the bakery by mistake, only that morning. I sent him a copy of the label which did not even mention vegetable shortening. He never replied to my second letter. It goes to show you how careful we have to be with everything that we buy.

After a hard summer and fall, a summer that starts before Purim and ends the week after Succoth, we felt that we needed a little relaxation. As a rule, we went to Israel or to Florida. One of our wholesalers in Liberty, N.Y. told us that on the way to Miami Beach, they stop in a place on the west coast of Florida, at a place called Warm Mineral Springs, where there is a body of water which has warm water coming out of the ground. The temperature is always 83 degrees and loaded with all kinds of minerals which is very relaxing and good for one's health.

It so happened, that after the Succoth holiday, I have yahrtzeit for both my parents within a five day period. I asked him whether there are any synagogues there where I would be able to observe the yahrtzeit. He assured me that that the place is near the large city of Sarasota in Florida where there is a large synagogue. Arriving in Sarasota, I found out that the city is not so near. It is 32 miles from Warm Mineral Springs. The man forgot that we are Sabbath observers, and that we do not travel to the synagogue on the Sabbath. So going to services was immediately out of the question.

Now I was concerned about observing the yahrtzeit and the saying of the kaddish. I drove down to the synagogue to see the rabbi. He was not there, but his secretary phoned him at his house. He immediately came to the synagogue, since he had heard about me and also had read my articles in the Jewish Press. When I told him that I would need a minyan a few days later on for my mother and the following Sunday for the yahrtzeit of my father, he replied, "I am sorry but I cannot guarantee you a minyan for the yahrtzeit of your mother which is in the middle of the week, but I should telephone him the day before and he will do his best to get together a minyan for me. However, there would be no problem for the following Sunday, as on that day they have Sunday school for the boys of the city and there are more than enough Bar-Mitzvah boys present to have a minyan. The day before the yahrtzeit of my mother, I telephoned him. He assured me that he was doing his best to get a minyan together for me for that day.

On the morning before the yahrtzeit, I again called the rabbi inquiring about the possibility of having a minyan. The rabbi was unable to assure me that there would be a minyan that night or the next morning. I was very disappointed, as I had never missed observing a yahrtzeit (although my brothers, Joseph and Sidney in Brooklyn observed the yahrtzeit, as did the husbands of my two sisters). I called the rabbis in all the nearby towns, but got the same answer. They were very happy that they were able to get a minyan together on Saturdays, never mind during the weekdays.

In the lake where we were bathing, there were many Jewish people. I told them about my problem. One of them told me not to worry, since in one of the nearby towns where they have a synagogue, they happen to have a bingo game that night and therefore I would have no problem organizing a minyan from the men that came to the bingo game. I was very happy to learn that I would be able to observe the yahrtzeit at least that night.

That night, I drove to the synagogue. As I arrived at the shul, I saw that there were already ten men about to start the game. I made an announcement and asked the ten men to join me in Maariv services. One of the men apologized to me that he was unable to join me as he was not of the Jewish faith. Soon another man arrived. We retired to a side room where we managed to find nine skull caps. Seeing that these are not people who usually recite the Maariv services, I told them that I would be satisfied to say a chapter of the Tehilim (Psalms) after which I would say the Kaddish. They all objected saying that once they were there, they insist that we should pray a regular Maariv since they all knew how to pray. We did just that. I prayed in front of a make-shift altar. All of them joined in. I was glad to pray in the regular way. As it was already dark outside, a man who was limping accompanied me to the street showing me the way to the main highway.

On Saturday afternoon, as we were taking a nap in our motel room, the telephone began to ring. Of course, I did not answer the phone. I knew no one in the area, and our families in New York would not call me, since they do not use the telephone on Saturday and I do not answer it. I was not concerned. I arose, went to the office and told them that my phone was ringing and that I did not answer the phone on Saturday. I asked them whether they had any idea who was ringing me. I was told that a person who was limping was asking for me and since I did not answer the phone, he left and said that he would return later.

Soon after that, we decided to take a walk on the road. We noticed

that a car was following us. As we turned around, he also turned his car around and followed us again slowly. I was anxious to find out why the man was following us. He stopped and told us that he never misses to attend Sabbath services and he had done that this morning. He drove the 32 miles to Sarasota to attend the services. While there, the rabbi who knew that we were in Mineral Warm Springs, sent a message to me through him to tell me that he was very sorry to let me know that although he had promised me that there would be a minyan Sunday morning, he must let me know that he forgot that this is the weekend of the Thanksgving Day holiday. All the students were given off for the weekend and would not return until the following Monday. He therefore wanted to let me know not to make the trip there as there would not be ten boys present. When it became dark, I telephoned him to double check. He repeated the message of the afternoon.

I again started calling all the neighboring towns with the same results. I called the rabbi in Sarasota asking him what advice he could offer me. He told me that as far as he knew, there was no synagogue in the neighboring towns with a minyan. The closest one was in St. Petersburg, Florida which was a distance of 180 miles away. The reason why there was a minyan there was because he had spoken to the Rabbi, who told him that being it was Rosh Chodesh that day, they would have a Sunday breakfast service in the synagogue at 10:00 a.m.

So, next morning, we got up at 5:00 a.m. while it was still dark and left for St. Petersburg. Arriving there at about 9:00 a.m. and wanting to make sure that I was given the right address, I stopped at a telephone to check the address in the telephone book. I noticed that there were two synagogues, an Orthodox one and a Conservative one. Naturally, I decided to go to the Orthodox one. I called the number and was assured that there would be a minyan there at 10:00 a.m.

I drove to the synagogue. The people were not there yet. I looked around for a mechitza (a separation between the men and the women worshippers). There was none. I asked the sexton, "Since there is no mechitza, what makes this place different from the conservative one?" He replied, "Here when we pray, we do so from a regular prayer book and follow all the prayers from the book, while in the other place, they pick out just certain pieces to recite." Of course, I remained there and when a minyan gathered, I prayed before the altar, read the Torah, etc.

When they served the breakfast, we took a piece of herring, but were reluctant to eat the cake that was served. A woman came over to

us and introduced herself, saying that she was religious and was an observant person. She herself opened every egg that was used. Only vegetable shortening was used. She gave us her word of honor that everything was strictly kosher. The rabbi who was an elderly retired rabbi, was in New York at the time. In appreciation of their kindness to us, I left them one of my books, of "Torah Thoughts."

A few weeks later, when the rabbi returned, he wrote me a letter, saying how sorry he was that he did not meet me and would I send him some more of my books. Since then, he bought everyone of my books and sends in a donation to the Pioneer Milk Fund every once in a while.

This incident gives one an idea of what is going on in the thousands of small cities and towns all over America, outside of the well-established communities in the country. I can write many more stories about many other places that we visited in the course of our travels all over the world. All of them are practically the same.

As a rule, when we travel to Israel, I do not let Rabbi Porush know that we are coming because if I would, he would come to meet us at the airport. He is a very busy man. I don't want him to waste his time on me. However, if he finds out that we are coming, he comes out to the airport and being that he is a member of Parliament, he does not wait for us outside of the arrivals building, but comes out right to the steps of the airplane and has everything taken care of. Without having to take the bus to the airport waiting room and staying in line for the checking of our papers, we are ready to pick up our bags in no time at all. When he is not there, my son-in-law, Rabbi Melvin Heftler and Chavie, my daughter, are there to meet us. I also stopped the government of Israel from providing us with a free car and chauffeur to take us around the country. During the twenty trips that we made to Israel we have seen practically everything. There is no reason why they should spend money on us.

I remember one particular time when the government tourist office called me to say that they were arranging a trip to the Suez Canal. A car would take a small group of writers for the Time-Life magazine and others and they were inviting me to join them. They told me to take along food and water as there was none available on the whole way. I of course, agreed to make the trip. A car with soldiers was driving in the front of us and another one was following us. On the way, I asked our guide as to when we would return. His answer was, "If with the help of G-d we will return alive, we will be back at

night." Arriving at the canal, as we were leaving the car, we were warned to keep our hands on the outside of our pockets, never to put them into our pockets. We were being closely watched by the Arab soldiers on the other side of the canal. They may think that we were reaching into our pockets for a gun.

Arriving back at the hotel, I noticed that my wife was in a sad mood. I first thought that she was angry that I did not take her along on the trip. I tried to tell her again and again that it was a dangerous trip and that the government office forbade me to take her along. She then showed me a telegram that arrived that day from my brother, Sidney, telling me that our brother, Mayer, had passed away and that his remains would be brought to Israel the next day. He would be accompanied by his wife, Frieda. He had been in Israel the previous year and bought a burial place for himself on the "Har Menucha" cemetery. I was puzzled how he could be accompanied by his wife, knowing that she had never been to Israel. Since he passed away on Friday night and this was Sunday, how was she able to get a passport on the Sabbath? The next day we met her at the airport. She told me that he had been sick for quite a while and he made her promise that she would accompany his remains to Israel. She had taken out a passport in advance, to avoid any problems later one.

Free Loan Funds

It was during our first trip to Israel in the year 1957, during a convention of Agudath Israel, at a meeting held in their offices when one of the leaders explained to the delegates that many members of the organization who were in need of a free loan were obliged to apply for such a loan to non-religious organizations. When it was election time, they were obliged to cast their votes with these non-religious organizations. If there would be a Free Loan Fund run by the religious organizations then they would cast their votes for such organizations.

It was then that I decided to open a Free Loan Fund of my own as the holy Chofetz Chaim declared that every person is obligated to observe the commandment of Gemilas Chasodim, to make funds available at all times when one asked for a free loan. I was the first one to open such a fund, depositing with them 700 Israeli liras. At that time, it was worth about four hundred American dollars.

When on my return to New York I was visited by Mr. Mayer Friend of Ellenville, N.Y. who was the owner of the Sanitary Fish Co. there, asked me what I accomplished while I was in Israel, I told him

that among other things, I established a Free Loan Fund. He told me that he would be in touch with me about such a plan later on. Imagine my pleasant surprise, when a short time later, he brought me an Israeli bond for $1,000, which also had an accumulation of a few hundred dollars in dividends. He asked me to add the proceeds of this bond to my existing fund. I told him that I would not do it that way, but instead I opened a fund in his own name. That was the second Free Loan Fund that I was instrumental in establishing in Israel.

I spoke to many guests at the Pioneer Country Club whom I urged to follow my example. Later on, Mr. Joseph Schapiro, *Z"l*, opened a third fund with a donation of $20,000.

From then on, I was able with the help of G-d, to establish over forty Free Loan Funds in various amounts by members of my family and friends. Some people who learned of these Free Loans that I started, opened such funds on their own when they were in Israel, so that at this time there are about 250 loan funds in existence with an original investment of about $500,000.

Among my friends who opened such funds are, Mr. Nat Glauber of Miami Beach, Fla., Rev. and Mrs. B. Samuels of Charleston, West Virginia, the Jacob Berman family of Clarksburg, West Virginia, etc. Also the Agudah Benevolent Society with two large accounts, one with the men's organization and the other with N'shei Agudath Israel. I just mentioned a few here. Some friends, like the Louis Klein and Sam Nat families wanted to open their funds with the Mizrachi organization. I therefore opened a few funds with the Mizrachi movement.

As we kept on enlarging the hotel all the time, our kitchens became too small to handle the cooking and baking for the hundreds of new guests. Now, we had to enlarge our kitchens and the bakery. This was the project on the agenda. During the following winter, we enlarged the kitchen space. New and larger frigidaires were added. The bakery was doubled in size with new ovens and frigidaires. A year or two later, we had to enlarge both the kitchen and bakery again, as we knew that new buildings would be added in the future. An additional section was added to the kitchen when we decided to put in electric dishwashers for both dairy and meat. The pantry from where the vegetables and fruits were served became small and therefore that had to be enlarged and new frigidaires installed. It became so spread

out that the kitchen reached just a few feet away from the well-known "White Mansion." This two floor building, because it was the nearest one to the main building, was as a rule occupied by families with small children. The space between the main building and the White Mansion was hardly wide enough for two cars to pass at the same time. It was a real bottle-neck. A serious problem arose for the safety of the guests and children who had to use that space to go to that building and to the three cottages in that section. It was too good a building to throw down altogether.

We decided to move the building. Men who were experienced in that line were called in. After a thorough examination, they agreed that the building was strong enough to be moved without any physical damage to the building. The spot selected was the space up on the hill next to the Diamond Lodge. The agreed upon price was the sum of $5,000.00. The following spring, after the snows had melted and the land dried up, the job was started. It was a fascinating sight to behold how such a tremendous job of moving a twenty room house would be accomplished. Large jacks were placed under the building. After the building was raised, heavy logs were placed under the building. After the jacks were removed, the building rested on the logs. Heavy boards were placed all around the building. The building was surrounded with heavy iron cables which were pulled up by a pulling machine on top of the hill. More heavy logs were placed along the whole length of the way up to the hill. Lots of grease was smeared on the logs and the process of pulling the building began. The guests who were present could not take their eyes off as the large house being pulled up by the iron cables from the pulling machine, actually started moving up the hill an inch at a time. It took about a week or more for the building to reach the top of the hill and to be placed on a new brick foundation which was prepared for it. After the White Mansion was removed, we widened the road near the kitchens and the safety problem was resolved.

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A Leader in Israel

Every week the Jewish Press will choose a prominent and outstanding man in Jewish life, interview him, and write a short biography of his life.

As reprinted from the "Jewish Press"

Leo Gartenberg

by Dr. Morris Mandel

"'Have BETUCHAN, It's only a little farther," my father often told me when I was a little boy, tired out from the long walks we used to take together. So, I would gather strength and struggle on a little longer, looking for some familiar landmark which would indicate we were back in our own neighborhood. One day, I asked how far a little farther really was. He answered, 'Have BETUCHAN, it's farther than you can see, but not as far as you can go.'"

"My father's answer," said Leo Gartenberg, "helped shape my philosophy of life. In meeting life's problems I always remembered his saying, "Have BETUCHAN, it's farther than you can see, but not as far as you can go."

With this story, Leo Gartenberg opened his interview with me as we sat in the luxurious splendor of the Pioneer Country Club. Throughout our talk I got the impression that to Leo Gartenberg, life is divided into three categories — that which was, that which is, and that which will be. "Living," he said somewhere during the few hours we spent together, "is like building a hotel. You have certain space in which to build it; only in building a life it is not a question of feet and inches, but of years."

But perhaps we are getting ahead of the story. To best understand the Leo Gartenberg of today, we must go back to the formative years of his life — back to old Hungary where Leo, his brothers and sisters lived. His boyhood was similar to that of other orthodox Jewish children. Boys and girls matured quickly. Leo's father was a merchant,

who, above everything else, wanted his children to be educated and able to stand on their own two feet. Life therefore was a mixture of school, chores, responsibilities, work, with little time for play.

During the year 1923, Leo and his father decided to leave the old country and find a new life for themselves in America. At that time Leo was sixteen years of age. "It took several years," he remarked, "before I could bring over the rest of the family."

Any popular story indicating a "RAGS TO RICHES" theme has the hero starting life at the very bottom of the ladder. Leo Gartenberg's first job in the new world was that of a porter in a bakery. Not only was he supposed to keep the place scrupulously clean, but he had to sift the ashes of the stove to salvage what bits of unused coal could be reused. The job paid $15 a week. When his employer suggested that cleaning ashes was not a future for any young man and that he ought to join the union and become a baker, Leo almost agreed. The prospect of earning $75 a week loomed large on his ladder of success. But when it was pointed out that he would be compelled to work on Shabbos, this dream of financial security quickly vanished.

Once again he looked around for a job which would not interfere with the Shabbos. He found one as a "chicken plucker" in a Boro Park meat store with a starting salary of $8 a week. Within a few years he was earning $32 a week. It was at this time that Leo's thoughts once again concerned the future. "G-d gives certain times to accomplish certain things, to learn certain facts, to achieve certain skills, to develop certain traits of character. One must take advantage of that right time in life." And so Leo embarked on a night school career. After a long and hard day of work he traveled to New York to attend evening classes. In his spare time, he organized a "BACHUREY SHOMREI SHABBOS" in Boro Park. This organization met in the basement of the LUBABITCHER SHUL, located on 12th Avenue and 40th Street. There, the members met, davened, and learned. And there Leo Gartenberg reached his eighteenth brithday.

Plucking chickens paid well. However, Leo found it difficult to work until the late hours of the evening, travel to New York to the Preparatory Evening School he attended and be in the store in the early hours of the morning. And so he left to become an apprentice operator in a tie factory. Interestingly enough, during the seasonal slack, he turned his attention to belts, caps, straps — anything that would supply him with adequate funds and at the same time not compel him to work on the Shabbos.

One Friday evening he was invited to have supper at the home of

a fellow apprentice. Leo gladly accepted. The thought of a good home-cooked meal with interesting company appealed to him. He did not know that his fellow-operator was also an amateur match-maker and that he had invited a certain gentleman to "look Leo over."

"I came totally unprepared," chuckled Leo, "for the Torah Bechina that Rachmiel Ringler gave me. However, I must have passed to his satisfaction because it wasn't long before his daughter Gertie and I were engaged. When I was twenty-one, after a two-year engagement, I became my own baal habais, and Gertie and I became Mr. & Mrs. Gartenberg."

"More than fifty years of living," said Leo Gartenberg, "put a great deal more into my face than a few wrinkles and some unwelcome folds around my chin. In that length of time I became acquainted with pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow, life and death. I struggled and survived, failed and succeeded. As a result I became mellow, more patient and more tolerant. I felt that the great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it."

Somehow, Leo Gartenberg found himself in the insurance business, which indirectly caused him to meet Jacob Schechter.

Their meeting is a story in itself.

The weather experts had predicted a hot summer, and Leo and Gertie decided that it would be best to "take a room" in the country. This was the day of the "Koch-a-lain." It was the year 1935 when Jacob Schechter had decided to enter the rooming-house business and had leased a 15 room house. It is almost obvious to surmise that fate made the Gartenbergs the first Schechter customer. Was the Pioneer Country Club already a glimmer of hope in Schechter's heart?

"You are an insurance agent and know a great deal about contracts," said Jacob to Leo one day. "I have to sign the lease on this bulding and would like you to come along as my expert." And so Jacob and Leo started on their road together.

It isn't difficult for anyone to picture the long days in the country with Jacob Schechter sitting at the Gartenberg table, drawing beautiful pictures of a dream hotel he would own someday. Nor is it difficult to imagine the practical Gartenberg succumbing to the Schechter smile and charm. The result was that the following summer Gartenberg was no longer a rooming house guest of Schechter, but a partner in a 30 room house. Half of the house was going to be devoted to roomers and half to boarders. A first class room with good food and "milk straight from the cow" went for $15 a week.

What a hotel it was! The Gartenbergs and Schechters served as bell-hops, handymen, waiters, busboys, shoppers, dishwashers, and in an emergency as the social staff as well. The wives pitched in as cooks, bakers, maids, and baby-sitters. The day of the camp counselor had not yet arrived. From this beginning, in small measured steps, the largest orthodox Shomer Shabbos hotel in the world was developed.

Listen to Leo Gartenberg speak about the hotel and you will hear him boast not only of the golf course, the swimming pools, the lake, the athletic facilities, the luxurious Playtorium, the health club — not only about the magnificent lobbies and dining rooms, but he will mention with great pride the daily Daf Yomi, the Perek classes, the hotel Mikvah and the Yiddishkeit that is practiced.

With a warm twinkle in his eye, Leo will tell you that he derives greater satisfaction collecting a dollar or two for the Pioneer Milk Fund than getting a two week reservation. "Through the efforts of the Gartenbergs and the Schechters," said Leo, "one million dollars in charity has been collected and distributed to almost every Yeshivah and religious institution in the world. All this without one cent of expense to the organization."

I learned that the Pioneer Milk Fund, one of the institutions organized by Leo Gartenberg, now receives $5,000 a year in donations, all of which is turned over to the undernourished nursery and kindergarten children.

"Real wealth," remarked Leo, "comes to the man who has learned he is paid for the things he does for nothing. And so, Mrs. Gartenberg and I send wedding gowns to Israeli brides who cannot afford to purchase their own. We collect and ship to Israel thousands of pounds of clothing. We install water coolers in some of the schools. We establish Gemilas Chesed Funds in Israel as well."

"Years ago," said Leo Gartenberg, "I felt that there were people in Israel who didn't need charity but needed loans to purchase necessities in life. With this thought in mind I organized Gemilas Chesed funds in our names, in the names of friends, and guests of the Pioneer. Today, with the help of other interested people, these Gemilas Chasodim Funds, boast a working capital of about one-half millions Israeli pounds.

In 1946, Leo Gartenberg spent eleven weeks in Europe doing Hatzalah work. Details of what he did and the daily dangers he met cannot be published even today.

"To merely be alive isn't important," said Leo Gartenberg, "to be creative and productive is the real answer."

I guess it is this philosophy that keeps Leo Gartenberg pounding out a weekly Torah article for the Jewish Press. It must be this philosophy that makes him spend hours late at night after his long 16 or 17 hour day is finished, preparing his Shabbos Perek Talk, a Perek talk, by the way, that has gained in popularity through the years. It must be this philosophy that compels him to pore over hundreds of Seforim to collect, compile, and write a series of books on the Sedrahs of the week and another series on Perek. These will soon be in the hands of publishers to be made available to rabbis and laymen everywhere.

"To sum it up," said Leo, "my life is pretty much tied up with the life of the Schechter family. Together, we hope to make the Pioneer Country Club the pride of Orthodoz Jewry.

"What final message can I give the Jewish Press readers, I asked of Leo Gartenberg?"

"Tell them," he answered, "that a happy life is made up of little things in which small favors are given habitually — gifts sent, letters written, checks submtted. These acts done without hesitation make up a full life. Kindness isn't sacrifice so much as it is being considerate for the feelings of others, sharing happiness, the unselfish thought, the spontaneous charitable act."

On the walls of an ancient temple was found this picture: A king was forging from his crown a chain, while nearby a slave was making his chains into a crown. Underneath was written: "Life is what man makes of it, no matter of what it is made."

This, then, is the life of Leo Gartenberg.

Temple David / 2001 Swann Avenue / Tampa, Florida 33606

December 28, 1982

My dear Mr. Gartenberg:

First, I would like to express my delight upon meeting you recently at the Barcelona Hotel. For, I have been an avid admirer of your weekly Pre-Shabbat columns each week for many years. Furthermore, it is the uniqueness and manner in which you expound various Pesakim via the medias of Rashi, Midrush, Talmud and Mifrshim with simplicity understood by all readers which exemplifies your writing "Par Excellence."

Mrs. Mallinger and I are thrilled with procurement of your books. I feel they are tantamount of a "Groise Matziyeh." In fact, I have already begun using them prior to "Krias HaTorah Devar Torah — Sunday Morning Breakfast, etc." Please continue with your precious, sacred work.

May the Almighty shower His manifold blessings upon you, granting you excellent health, courage, bliss and peace. Kol Tuv.

Sincerely, Samuel M. Mallinger, Rabbi

On the occasion of one of my visits to Israel, Rabbi Frankel wrote the following article:

Sofer U'Moneh (An Author and Numerator)

by Rabbi Kalmen Eliezer Frankel

(On the occasion of the visit of Mr. and Mrs. Gartenberg to Israel)

Our Father Jacob, when he blessed his children, he told his children, Shimon and Leyvi, *"Achalkeym b'Yaakov, v'afitzeym beYisroel,"* I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel. Rashi remarks, "There are no poor men, scribes or teachers of children save of Simon's tribe. From that time on, it was an accepted fact that not only scribes but also authors of books and newspaper writers are as a rule not well-to-do people. Although our sages tell us, "There is place on the head to put on two pair of Tefilin at one time," but there is no place in a head to gather monies and at the same time also write books.

However, there are exceptions to every rule. Mr. Gartenberg is one of those exceptions. He is a famous writer and at the same time also a "Moneh," numerator, not only in monies, but also in good deeds. In his youth, he came to America from what was formerly Hungary (now it is Russia) and together with his partner, Mr. Schechter, organized and operated the famous Pioneer Country Club in Greenfield Park, N.Y., a resort hotel famous in modernity as befits a large hotel in the United States and is at the same time strictly glatt kosher, having their own large synagogue, a ritualarium, etc. This hotel serves thousands of guests who wish to spend their vacations in an environment of strict Sabbath observance and kashruth. The hotel with its 300 modern rooms can accommodate about 700 or more guests, and supplies its guest not only with the best of food, accommodations, sport facilities, entertainments, etc., but also with spiritual requirements such as a daily class of various studies, including the teaching of Perek, Ethics of our Fathers, which he himself teaches and which many hundreds listen to. He also writes a weekly column on the Chapters of the Weeks that is printed in the "Jewish Press," in the English language, for the young and middle aged generation to bring to them the wisdom of our sages and Chasidic rabbis.

During the winter months when the hotel is closed for business, he and his wife spend the winters in Israel. During the

summer months he gathers tens of thousands of dollars from his guests for charity which he distributes in this country. Mr. Gartenberg is a believer in the *CHOVER ANI LECHOL ASHER YEREYUCHOCH.* King David says in the Psalms, "I am associated with all those that fear thee." He supports all religious organizations in Israel, including the Mizrachi organization. He is very close to the Agudath Israel movement, Poalei Agudath Israel, Agudath Israel Women, Beth Jacob schools, the Chinuch Atzmai, etc. He looks and find the good accomplishments of every movement and supports them all.

We wish to bless the honored guest that he should be well for many , many more years to come and to see the fruits of his plantations which were established in his name, to help in whatever is badly needed, whether it is Children Homes, Yeshivos Free Loan Funds, supply wedding gowns for poor brides, give out free Tefilin for the poor Bar Mitzvoh children, supply food at discount rates, or completely free food, clothing, household goods to the poor residents, soldiers and their families with monies and goods whether on the battlefield or in their homes. Continue to be a Soyfer Umoneh. It is not every person that has the privilege of being a *Zoche Shtey Shulchonos,* Merited to two tables. Upon him is said, *"Ure'ey Betuv Jerusalem Kol Yemey Chayechoh"* — See only the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

Rabbi Kalmen Eliezer Frankel

The following is a Book Review of my book, *Torah Thoughts."*

Book Review
Much Wisdom Found in "Torah Thoughts"
by Ben Chaim

Moral lessons in the form of stories, anecdotes, and inspirational quotations have long been the basis of successful talks of the Talmud Chochim as well as ito the person who is dipping into Talmudic lore for the first time. There is a great demand for stories with a purpose, and quotations of value that can be understood and that teach a genuine religious way of life.

"TORAH THOUGHTS," by Leo Gartenberg is the answer to this ever-growing need. The volume is filled with rabbinic wisdom, moral teaching; it seeks to light a torch for better living, moral growth, spiritual enrichment, and greater understanding of our Jewish heritage. Rich in anecdotes and episodes from the lives of our immortal sages and rabbis, the book unfolds before the reader a panoramic view of true religious Judaism.

The study is an outgrowth of the author's contributions to many newspapers and magazines throughout the country. Perhaps Leo Gartenberg is best known for his popular column on Torah which has appeared regularly for the past five years in **The Jewish Press.** The author is a world-traveler who is as well known in Israel as he is in the United States.

Gartenberg calls himself a "Melaket," a "gatherer." "Whenever I saw or heard a beautiful piece of Torah," he confides in his preface, "I jotted it down so that I might be able to share it with others." And the items he gathered range from light humorous anecdotes to deep gleanings from the Torah.

The book presents the average Jew with an opportunity to transcend the present and learn from the words and deeds of the greatest Sages of Israel. The reader can almost feel that he is seated at the feet of Rabbi Simeon Bar Yochai of Talmudic fame, or listening to the parables of the famous Dubner Maggid of more recent time. He can imagine himself in the home of Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, as the sainted sage holds a monologue with G-d. He can believe he is one of the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov, as the humanitarian Hassidic leader teaches the greatness that can be found in the ordinary Jew.

The lasting value of any book is not in the pleasure it affords, but in how the reader is able to absorb and use the ideas found for his own self-improvement. For this reason it is suggested that the reader does not attempt to complete the volume in one or two sittings. Greater enrichment can be achieved if he

immerses himself fully in each selection, savors each delectable morsel with spiritual joy. Only then will he emerge with the ability to live a more meaningful religious life.

"Torah Thoughts," published by the Jonathan David Publishing Co. (131 E. 23rd St., N.Y.) is Volume 1 of a seven volume set which is contemplated. This first volume concentrates on the holy days. The other volumes will concern themselves with the Five Books of Moses and Ethics of our Fathers.

For inspirational reading, for religious motivation, for understanding the deep meaning of our Holy Days, this "Fountain of Religious Inspiration" is a must in every Jewish library. It should be kept within easy reach at all times.

My Listing in "Who is Who in America"

PERSONAL: Born December 13, 1906, in Hungary; son of Morris (a merchant) and Mali (Lebowitz) Gartenberg, married Gertie Ringler; children: Jacob, Eva Gartenberg Heftler. *Education:* Educated in Jewish and public schools in Europe; also attended night school (high school) in United States. *Religion:* Jewish. *Home:* Pioneer Country Club, Greenfield Park, N.Y. 12435.

CAREER: Operator of resort hotels in New York, New Jersey, and Florida, 1936—, now a partner in Pioneer Country Club, Greenfield Park, N.Y. General insurance broker, 1930—. Children's Salvation, vice -president; Ohel Children's Home, vice-president; Pioneer Milk Fund, Inc., organizer and secretary. *Member:* Agudath Israel of America, Mizrachi Organization of America (life member).

WRITINGS: (With S.Z. Kahana) *Legends of Israel,* Volume 1, 1964; (compiler) *Torah Thoughts,* Jonathan David, Volume 1, 1964, Volume 2, 1965, Volume 3, 1966, Volume 4, 1967, Volume 5, 1969, Volume 6, 1972; *Israel*

Through Eight Eyes, Jonathan David, 1968; *Israel: The Story of a Miracle,* Jonathan David, 1969 (with Morris Mandel); *Sidra by Sidra,* Jonathan David, 1970. Contributor to religious periodicals.

WORK IN PROGRESS: Volume 7 of *Torah Thoughts:* Volume 2 of *Legends of Israel.*

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In the winter of 1958 when we, together with Mr. and Mrs. Schechter made our trip to Europe and Israel, Jackie was attending a yeshiva and as the trip was to take a long time, it was not advisable to break up his studies. Since Chavi was much younger, and as we did not want to leave her alone in New York for a long period of time, we took her along with us. The system at that time was, that if the airline ticket that was bought was an open one, it was good for as many stops in Europe as one wanted to make. We did take advantage of the privilege. We stopped in many countries.

While we were in Paris, France, I rented a car and we drove out to Fublaines, the place where I found the children. The building where the children 's home was before, was turned into a Beth Jacob School. We spent a few hours there reliving old memories. The trip was very pleasant driving out there, but the return trip to Paris was not pleasant at all. We arrived back to Paris during the rush hour. The traffic was very heavy, the same or even worse than in New York. I had a hard time finding the car rental agency, even when I showed people the address. In the great rush and tumult, no one was anxious to stop to give directions, but we finally made it. We came back to our hotel all knocked out.

The last country that we visited was Turkey. We arrived there on a Wednesday night. The next day we went around the city of Constantinople, saw everything that we wanted to, including the "underground market place." The synagogue that we were to attend on the Sabbath, was quite a distance from the only hotel that we were able to get. We were tired, cold, and knocked out.

The women remarked that if there would be a way to leave here and make our way to Israel to spend the Sabbath there, it would be wonderful, since they were already tired of living out of satchels. I immediately got in touch with an airline (I believe that it was El-Al) and was told that on the next day, on Friday, there was a flight to Israel at about 11:00 a.m. There would be ample time to reach Tel-Aviv in time for Sabbath. Truthfully, we never undertook to make an

extended trip on a Friday, for fear that something might come up and we might have a problem with the Sabbath. Since we were assured that there would be no problem at all, and that we would arrive in Lod many hours before sunset, we had a quick meeting and came to the conclusion that with the help of G-d, and in the merit of being in the Holy Land for Sabbath, we should take the chance. We figured out that even if the aircraft should be delayed a few hours, there is always a hotel or motel near the airport. If necessary, we could always stay over in the hotel over the Sabbath. As it turned out, not only were we on time, but as we had a tail wind, we even arrived a little earlier than expected.

It is hard to describe the thrill that we experienced in arriving in the Holy Land. Descending from the airplane, and actually kissing the ground, we rushed to the airport. We arranged our arrival papers at the immigration counter and getting our bags, we hastened through customs. We had ten or more suitcases and as the officer was about to open the first bag, I told him in Yiddish, "My dear man, we are religious and are very anxious to arrive in Tel-Aviv at an early hour before the Sabbath. Please accept my word of honor that we are not carrying with us anything illegal, just our personal belongings. Please be so kind and let us go as soon as you can." The man replied, "As you say that you are religious, and that you want to be in Tel-Aviv before the Sabbath, I will not bother to examine any of your bags. Go "Lechayim Ulsholom" and have a good Shabbos and enjoy Israel."

Before we left New York, we were told to stop at one of the kosher hotels in Tel-Aviv. Either the Hotel Savoy or the Hotel Israel. Both of them were located on the ocean. I had in mind that we should stop at the Hotel Israel. They were within a block of each other. I described the location of the hotel to the chauffeur of the taxi that we took. However, he took us to the Savoy Hotel instead. Being that both were recommended to us as strictly kosher, we remained at the Savoy Hotel.

It turned out alright, because that Friday night I had the privilege to meet Rabbi Dr. S.Z. Kahana, the Director of the Religious Department of the State of Israel. He was conducting what is called there a "Tzavta," a sort of get-together, every Friday night. He is an exceptionally good lecturer and writer. We became very close and in later years we wrote two books together. One was the "Legends of Israel" and the other was the "Legends of Zion.'" I may never have met him if not for the fact that we were there at the Hotel Savoy at the same

time. The Savoy Hotel was the place where Premier Menachem Begin, dressed as a Chasidic rabbi all the time, made his headquarters there. In later years, when a group of Arab terrorists, in the dark of night made their way in a small boat and landed on the shores of Tel-Aviv, bombed and destroyed that hotel. The hotel did not have all their rooms equipped with private bath or toilets. Only one room that was available had these facilities. We insisted that Mr. and Mrs. Schechter occupy this particular room, which they reluctantly agreed to do. On Sunday, we moved over to the Hotel Israel, which was a small modern hotel with all the rooms having private baths.

In those days, practically all tourists stayed in Tel-Aviv. There was no reason to stay in Jerusalem. The average tourist spent a day or so in Jerusalem by taking a bus or a taxi there. There was also the train which went to Jerusalem in the morning and returned at night. The saying was that there was never a train collision in Israel. The reason was that there was only one track and never did two trains go and come at the same time. When we wanted to make the trip from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, with Koppel Tours, being that we were five people, and that they had also heard about "Gartenberg & Schechter," they supplied us with a small van with a private chauffeur for the five of us. There was really not much to see there at the time. The highlight of the trip was to stop and look at the shot-out army tanks that lined the side of the road. These were left from the War of Independence.

The greatest attraction was the Mount Zion or Har Tzion, which was reached by walking up 150 steps, which represent the 150 chapters of the Psalms, composed by King David who is buried on the mountain. His grave, according to legend is located there in a room. The grave is covered with a large "covered wagon like" cement structure at which people visit and light candles on. Nearby is the room where the Last Supper was to have taken place.

In the basement of one of the buildings are several rooms in which there are various showcases with the remains of torn pieces of Taleisim that were brought from the various excavation places of the last war, together with pieces of Sefer Torahs and other momentoes like urns of ashes of the remains of the holy martyrs of the holocaust. In other rooms, there are marble tablets set on the walls on which are inscribed the names of the cities and/or towns in the various countries

of Europe of which the Jewish inhabitants were deported to the various concentration camps. These tablets are set up in their sacred memories.

On top of the mountain, there is a sort of tower, having narrow circular stairs, on which one can climb up to the top from which one can see the "Mekom Hamikdosh," the golden dome, which is the place where the Holy Temple was located. Of course, at that time the place was in the hands of the Arabs. This was all that we were able to see of the holy place. In another place where we were taken we were able to see from far away, Bet Lechem, which is the burial place of Mother Rachel. We were also shown the site of the Heichel Shlomo where the large synagogue and the Jewish court was being built. This was about all that there was to be seen in Jerusalem. We were there for less than two days. Later on, we went there several times on our own.

We spent a Shabbos at the home of Rabbi and Mrs. Menachem Porush whom we have known from his previous trips to America. One day, Rabbi Porush took us to visit the great rabbis who lived in Jerusalem. One of them was the great revered Brisker Rav. While there, Chave said that she would like to get a Brocha, a blessing from the great man. The rabbi was sitting at the head of a large table and we were sitting at the rear end of the table. When the rabbi heard that Chave is anxious to receive a blessing, he stretched out his hand towards her and gave her a blessing. Chave was not satisfied. She said that as far as she knew, if a person is being blessed, then the one who gives the blessing puts his hand on the head of the one who is being blessed. We were all embarrassed because we knew that the rabbi would not place his hands on the head of a female. The great man saved us by saying, "In answer to your request, I bless you that you will marry a rabbi, a great Talmud Chacham." This remark did satisfy her. Now, in a joke, my son-in-law, Rabbi Melvin Heftler says, "Not only do I have smicha from Harav Hagoan Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, but also from the great Brisker Rav who said that Chave's husband would be a rabbi and a Talmud Chacham."

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Lecturing — Articles — Books

During the mid-fifties when Rabbi Sholom Klass was a guest in the Pioneer Country Club I started to write articles about trips that we made in the United States, in his first newspaper which was known as the "Brooklyn Daily."

Later on, when he started to print the weekly, "The Jewish Press," at his insistence and those of many of my friends, I started my well-known weekly articles entitled, "Torah Thoughts." That was in the year of 1958. At first the paper was made up of only two pages (four sides).

Since that time, with few exceptions, there appeared in the paper one or more articles of mine every week. One was the "Torah Thoughts." Every once in a while there appeared articles of interest about trips that we made in this country, in European countries, and of course, about Israel. Such articles as the Eichmann trial, which took place in Jerusalem, timely topics about happenings in Israel appeared in the paper. I was in Israel practically every year since 1958. Various stories about practically every Jewish holiday, interviews that I had with great leaders all over the world, etc., appeared in the paper.

My first book which described our visits in ten countries of Europe and Israel appeared in 1959. Book No. 1 of "Torah Thoughts" came out in 1964. Like the rest of my books it was printed in hard cover. When I brought back the first case of books, it was in the summer. We were in the Pioneer Country Club. Without my knowl-

edge, Mr. and Mrs. Schechter arranged a "surprise party" for me. In the presence of hundreds of guests he proudly introduced me to them and told them the good news of the appearance of my first book. Everyone was delighted. Many of those present bought the book on the spot. From the beginning on, the income from the books, except for the expenses of labor, printing and distributions, was donated for charity, the largest amount going towards the upkeep of the 26 Children Homes in Israel and "Children's Town" in Jerusalem.

Book No. 1 of Torah Thoughts deals with all the Jewish holidays, starting with the "Days of Awe" (Selichot) and on till after Tisha B'Av. Right now I wish to thank Dr. Morris Mandel (who was connected with me in the Pioneer Country Club as the Cultural Director, in connection with my articles and books. He corrected my typing (or retyped) everything that I wrote, arranged the publication, edited and proofread the typeset pages, etc.)

The first book of "Torah Thoughts" was soon followed by Book No. 2 which starts with the Chapter of Bereyshis which came out in 1965. This was followed by Book No. 3 which continues the Sidras. This book came out in 1966. 1967 saw light of Book No. 4 which came out in that year. Book No. 5 was printed in the year 1969 and Book No. 6 appeared in 1962. Those six books reached until the Sidra of Mikeytz.

Except for a few books of No. 6, all of those which were originally printed in hard cover at least twice, were sold out. Since then, I reprinted them twice already in soft cover, by printing two books in one. Thereby they came in three books. As the supplies are practically all exhausted, and there are demands for them from all over the world, I am now in the process of reprinting them again.

Since then, I co-authored seven more books, all in hard cover. I wrote "Israel through Eight Eyes " together with Dr. and Mrs. Morris Mandel when we visited Israel together in 1967. We saw most of Israel that was in Jewish hands at the time and wrote all about it. "Israel, the Story of a Miracle" was written by Dr. Mandel and myself in 1969, when we visited Israel after the Six-Day War. We wrote about such places that we were not able to write about before, like the Grave of Rachel in Bethlehem, the "Double Cave" where our Patriarchs and Matriarchs are buried in Hebron.

"Legends of Israel" I co-authored with Rabbi Dr. S.Z. Kahana, the Religious Director of the Religious Department of the State of Israel. This book contains legends from all over the world. It came out in 1969. "Legends of Zion" by the same authors, contains legends of

occurrences in the State of Israel and especially with unknown legends on or about the Mount of Zion, came out in 1974.

The book, "Sidra by Sidra," was written by Dr. Morris Mandel and I. This book is a selection of words of Torah and little stories about the chapters of every week and the holidays and came out in 1970. "Tomorrow is Today" by the same authors, with lectures of how to live a complete life as an observant Jew, designed for Rabbis, lecturers and the layman alike, came out in 1977. The latest book, "Treasures of the Torah," a new book on every chapter of the week and holidays, came out in 1980. This book, which is the "Story of My Life" is No. 13.

My book, "Ethics of our Fathers," will contain all my lectures that I delivered for the last 45 years in the various hotels that I operated, and the articles that I wrote in the Jewish Press for the last years. This book was ready to go to print several years ago. As a matter of fact, many people paid for the book in advance. However, when the Pioneer Country Club burned down, all the material that I had ready to typeset, burned down to ashes. It took me all these years to prepare them again for publication. Book No. 14 will be Book No. 7 of "Torah Thoughts", to continue the words of Torah and stories from the Sidra of Mikeytz onward. I have the material for both the Book of the "Ethics of our Fathers" and the Book No. 7 of Torah Thoughts, but I do not have the money to advance for the publishing of them. If I could find a kind-hearted person or persons who would be willing to sponsor the printing of these books, or to advance the funds as a loan to pay for the publishing of the books, I can start the process of publishing them right now.

My books and articles have been, thank G-d, enthusiastically accepted by the public. They are read and enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people, who have either bought the books, or read the articles in the "Jewish Press." Hardly a day goes by that I should not meet someone who tells me, "I have some, or all of your books." Others will say, "I read your articles every week in the 'Jewish Press,' While others will comment by saying, "When I open the 'Jewish Press,' your article is the first one that I look for." Practically every rabbi has some or all of my books. They are also bought by priests who use some of the material in thir sermons. At one time, one of my articles did not reach the "Jewish Press" in time to be printed that week. The article was printed in the next edition. For the next few weeks, my weekly article was one week behind. Rabbi Klass told me that he was besieged by telephone calls from rabbis who complained that they insist that

the articles should be printed at the right time, as they needed some of the material to be used as part of their weekly sermon.

Rabbi Yoles, the chief rabbi of Philadelphia, was a guest at the Agudah Convention at the Pioneer. He made some comments about an article of mine. I told him, "Rabbi Yoles, my articles are not written for people like you. They are intended for ordinary people, not for Talmidei Chachomim like you." He replied, "Do not belittle yourself. No one knows evrything. I do find your articles helpful to me in preparing my sermons."

A conservative rabbi from New Jersey told me, "Mr. Gartenberg, since I read your weekly articles in the 'Jewish Press,' fifty percent of my sermons are solved by using some of your material."

I have a letter from a non-Jewish reader who writes me, "I am a steady reader of your articles. I am not too well off, with limited funds. I have the sum of six dollars and I wonder whether I should use this money to buy food for my body or shall I use the six dollars to buy one of your books, to feed my mind? I decided to forego my desire for food and instead to buy your book to satisfy my spiritual desire for learning your words of wisdom. So, enclosed please find a money order for $6.00 and please send me your book of Torah Thoughts.

Signed _____

A Dr. Sultan of Franklin Square, N.Y., whom I met in Acapulco, Mexico, bought all my books which I sent to him. The total price came to $79.00. After he read some of them, he sent me back a check for $100.00 saying, "I liked the books so much that I am sending you the extra money in appreciation." A book store by the name of Treasures on Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida, sent me a check to cover a bill for books that he had previously received. Enclosed was a letter in which he wrote, "Please send me a supply of "Torah Thoughts" as I sold all that I had in stock and I have a list of names from people who are waiting for the book. Please rush them to me by return mail. A similar letter was written to me by the Amzalak Bookstore in Sydney, Australia.

Marietta, Ohio, October 18, 1979

Dear Esteemed Rabbi Gartenberg:

Please send several volumes of your Torah Thoughts. What a great storehous of knowledge you have, and I enjoy reading these volumes and share them with family and friends. Not knowing the price of each volume, please do send me as many as forty dollars will buy. Also enclosed please find a check for $14.00 for Children in Israel. Thank you for your kindness for distributing charity. May Hashem bless you.

Mrs. Louis Goldish
49 Second Street
Marietta, Ohio 45750

(I am embarrassed to print this and other similar letters. I am only doing it to sell more books and collect charity for the poor children in Israel. L.G.)

Here is an interesting unsigned letter that I received. I copied it word by word with his mistakes.

To Leo Gartenberg:

I am sending six dollars to cover the cost of the books. This is my Teshuva (repentance) of two Jewish books which my wife and I took. Please forgive me. For my fear of Him (Lord) has worsened his ways. I am nothing but a worm, about to bite an apple. A sorry shaking, trembling over who shall share for sin offering. I rather have love of the Lord now. Thank you, please accept my profound apologies and memories and my embarrassment and guiltiness. Never again my promise hashem.

Please forgive my sending cash, a money order would reveal my name. bless you.

The following are more interesting letters which I received.

March 8, 1982

Dear Mr. Gartenberg:

I finally received the books we so longed to get. We have not stopped reading them. All of us are enjoying them very much. In the box came "Sidra by Sidra, Torah Thoughts, Tomorrow is Today, and Treasures from the Torah." You never did send or perhaps forgot to send the book, "The Story of My Life."

Each book I picked up was more exciting and so warm and fascinating. I couldn't stop reading one page after another. My children wre taking them one from another. I still would love your book, "The Story of My Life." If you can get a chance to send it, please do so.

Sincerely,
Minnie Schoff
2400 North 101st Terrace
Sunrise, Florida

November 12, 1982

Esteemed Mr. Leo Gartenberg:

My fondest Friend: In retrospect of (your book) "Torah Thoughts" which I study every day and enjoy, mostly with tears of joy, reminding me of my own past and present hopes, etc. I'm enclosing a "Gamzu L'Tovah" (This is also for the good) check in the amount of $840.00 (this is his 84th birthday — L.G). In your discretion, where possible, use this free will donation for Free Loans or gifts to the poor.

Very fondly yours,
Max I. Koch.
Address in my files.

I could write down dozens of more letters like these. However, I will bring just one more incident and remark. I was invited to be a guest speaker on a certain Saturday by the manager, Mr. Mickey Montal of the Echo Hotel in Ellenville, N.Y. and by Mr. Frolich of the Young Israel of Brighton who were having a gathering there on the same Shabes. As I finished my lecture, Mr. Frolich and Mr. Nat Saperstein, former president of the Young Israel Council congratulated me for the fine speech that I delivered. While we were talking, a young girl of abut ten years old, came over to me and thanked me for my talk. I told Mr. Frolich and Mr. Saperstein, "What the two of you are praising me for, can be very much true and I am thankful, but the words of this young girl means much more to me. She is real serious and I am flattered. Children, as a rule, say what they really feel.

At the same time, I told them something that happened a year before in Acapulco, Mexico where I was engaged as the Cultural Director in a hotel there. One young boy by the name of Adler who was a guest there, listened to my daily shiur of Mishnayos. He was not yet bar mitzvah, but as he liked to pray as a cantor by the ohmed, I let him do that until we reached *Yishtabach.* One Friday evening, it was announced that I would give a lecture on the portion of the week at the Oneg Shabbos. The boy came over to me and told me, "Although it is late, (I was to start about 9:00 p.m.) I will come to listen to you at a great sacrifice." I wanted to know why it would be a great sacrifice on his part to do so. He told me, "I am not allowed to be up so late at night. Being that I want to pray as the cantor in the morning, my mother told me that I can either rise at an early hour to pray by the altar, or stay up late at night to listen to your lecture, but that I must choose between the two. After thinking about it for a long time, I decided that to pray as a cantor, I can do some other time, but to listen to

your lecture, I may not have another chance.' So I made the decision, that I will sacrifice the pleasure of being the cantor and better listen to you." These two statements from the young boy and the young girl, gave me a lot of satisfaction and was of great value to me.

I have included a facsimile of the invitation to the 31st Testimonial Dinner of the Agudath Israel of America which was held in my honor.

Testimonial Dinner
in Honor of
Leo Gartenberg
tendered by
Agudath Israel of America
הסתדרות אגודת ישראל באמריקה
on its
Thirty-first Anniversary
Sunday evening, the third of May
nineteen hundred and fifty-three
ל״ג בעומר, תשי״ג
Hotel McAlpin
New York City

The Man We Honor

Leo Gartenberg, a true son of his people, has earned the heartfelt gratitude of religious Jewry for his selfless service to the cause of genuine Judaism, in all its multicolored facets.

Mr. Gartenberg is a living demonstration of the successful Jewish businessman who, endowed with the ability to elevate himself above his enterprises, channels his resources into traditional Jewish philanthropic productivity.

Jewish Press Correspondent, Leo Gartenberg and wife,shown arriving at Idlewild Airport from a tour of Israel and the countries behind the Iron Curtain.

The following article was printed in the "Synagogue Light" publication concerning our charity activities.

Torah and Charity

by Stanley Garten

The highest form of Tzedoka exists when the giver does not know who is the recipient and the recipient does not know who is his benefactor.

After the men who compiled the Talmud, no greater sage has illumined Jewish life than Maimonides, or the Rambam as he is known among Jews. In one of his writings, he discusses charity and says that it may be classified as having eight degrees, the highest form being that which exists when the giver does not know who is the recipient, and the recipient does not know who is his benefactor.

We Jews have long been known as Bnai Rachmonim, easily moved to sympathy and to philanthropy. We respond readily to appeals to our heart. Without minimizing the virtue of our response to such appeals, it must be emphasized that, while Jews and non-Jews have benefited thereby, Judaism as our faith also requires our assistance. After all, what has preserved us as Jews? Not hospitals, or homes for the aged or similar institutions. They are very necessary, but their service is to the individual, not as a Jew but as a human being. If we want to do something to help preserve Judaism we must uphold the synagogues, the institutions of Jewish learning, and the organizations which seek to keep alive the spark of faith among our people. The head as well as the heart is important.

Opportunities for doing good work in both of these ways suggested themselves to Mr. Gartenberg and to Mr. Schechter, who have been partners in business for a number of years and who have used their business not merely for their own advantage but also as suggested in the Eighth degree of charity by Maimonides.

Operating hotels in Lakewood and Miami Beach in winter, and in Ferndale and Greenfield Park in the summer, they devised a method by which large sums are annually raised at their hotels for charitable purposes, without any public appeals. When a patron of one of the establishments gets his bill for his sojourn at the hotel, they talk to him or her about adding a percentage of

the bill as a charitable contribution, and then add their own donation. A committee of guests distributed last Succoth to over 100 worthy causes, the sum of $7,500.00, of which two-thirds came from the guests and one-third was given by the hotel proprietors.

They give to Jewish religious causes not only money but service. Mr. Gartenberg organized the Welfare Board of Agudas Israel and was formerly chairman of the Board of Directors of its Youth Council. Mr. Schechter is President of the Daughters of Israel.

With Rabbi Menachem Porush
Member of Israel Parliment.

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This particular year, after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, we could not decide whether we should spend the next few months in Miami Beach, Florida, or go to Israel. After the war, the days in Israel were very sad. Many soldiers were killed or wounded. We made our reservations to Miami Beach and at the same time, we thought about going to Israel like we had during previous years. We had an affair at the Pioneer Hotel at which Rabbi Moshe Tendler of Monsey, N.Y. was a guest.

He was telling us that he had a telephone call from his daughter who lived in Israel. She asked him a question. Namely, how many shivah calls can a person make in one day. Since there were so many people sitting shivah for a lost son or father, several calls had to be made in one day. He replied that a person can and should visit as many mourners as possible. By doing so, the mourners are being consoled. He added, that this particular year, whoever has an opportunity to visit Israel, should do so in order to give the people in Israel a chizuk, a strength, and consolation which could be accomplished by going to Israel to show that we are with them wholeheartedly. It was this remark that made us decide to go to Israel.

It was also the year that our grandson, Shlomie Heftler was about to become Bar Mitzvah, a few months later. It was therefore the plan of his parents to go to Israel that winter and celebrate a pre-Bar Mitzvah affair at the Kotel Hamarovi (The Wailing Wall). They made preparations to leave for Israel. Unlike any other winter, when after the guests left, we remained in the hotel for about a month or so, to clean up, scrape all the pots and pans and kasher most of them for Passover of the following year, and to take down the chometzdige dishes to the basement. This time, we did not do anything, but did a fast job of cleaning up, left everything as it was, and arranged our tickets to go to Israel the first chance that we had. My daughter, son-in-law, and the grandchildren were to follow us a few days later and stay there for about two weeks.

There is a Jewish saying, *"Der kop geygt, vie the fees fihren,"* The head goes where the feet lead. It was beshert (destined) that we should be in Israel during the next few weeks. Since this was our grandchildren's first visit to Israel, we revisited many of the holy places in the land that we had visited on our previous visits.

One day we were advised by the management of the Chinuch Atzmoi that it was their wish to honor us with a banquet at the Beth Jacob Teachers Seminary. We agreed reluctantly. On a certain afternoon, Rabbi Avrohom Wilhelm took us there. When we arrived, we were met by hundreds of people, such as Roshe Hayeshivos, teachers, seminary students and children. They were lined up on both sides of the narrow street. We walked between two lines while the gathered people were clapping their hands as we passed by. My former wife told me quietly, "Why did they have to do this? I am very much embarrassed by all this unnecessary honor." I replied, "We did a lot for the Chinuch Atzmoi movement. We were instrumental in gathering tens of thousands of dollars for them. If they want to show their appreciation, it is alright. Let our children and grandchildren witness it and follow our deeds." The banquet hall was packed. A great many speeches were made in our honor. After this reception, the children and grandchildren left Israel for America.

A day or so later, my former wife complained that she did not feel well. I immediately took her to the doctor who was connected with the Merkaz Hotel. It was his opinion that we should see a professor. We went to see him. After a thorough examination, he advised that we go back to America immediately. Of course, we would not hear of it as we felt that we belonged in Israel where we had prepared our graves.

The following Sunday was the yahrtzeit of my older brother, Mayer, *Z"l,* who is buried in Jerusalem. After breakfast, I went out to get a taxi or bus to go to the cemetery. There was some kind of transportation problem that day. I had to wait a long time until I was able to get to the cemetery and it took me several hours to get back. When I returned in the afternoon, she showed me some very nice large apples that she bought in the fruit market. When I asked her why she had to go to the trouble to walk to the market, she answered that she felt alright. Being that I liked these apples, she went to get them. Later on, she got dressed and we were sitting in the lobby of the hotel, waiting for the dining room to open. While waiting, she talked to a few people, among them, were our old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Katz. The subject was the mikvos (ritualariums) that we were instrumental

in building in Israel. By the word "mikvoh" she put her hand to her head and said to me, "Oh, my head." "Mikvoh" was the last word that she uttered in public. To me privately she said, "Don't leave me." She started breathing very rapidly. We immediately called an ambulance from the nearby Sharei Tzedek Hospital. It was too late. She passed away before their arrival at the hotel. To this day it is not clear whether it was a heart attack or a stroke. The death certificate did not give the cause of death, except the words, "Dead upon arrival." They could have ordered an autopsy, but Rabbi Menachem Porush arrived immediately and he stopped everything. As is the custom in Israel, funerals are made immediately, even though it was already late at night. However, I insisted that I wanted the children to be present at the funeral. Again, Rabbi Menachem Porush intervened and it was postponed until the next day. As there is a difference of six hours between Israeli and New York time, it was only after twelve in the middle of the day in America. Rabbi Porush called the children in Monsey, New York, and even though it was on a Sunday, they were able to get airline tickets. Jackie and Pinky, Mel and Chavi left the same evening to Israel and arrived in time for the funeral.

Some fifty years ago when I was one of the organizers of the Agudath Israel in America, I already belonged to several organizations so called "landsmanshaft societies" who, among other benefits, also provided burial grounds to its members. I purposely belonged to a few of them in order to meet future clients for my insurance business. After I became active in the Zeirei Agudath Israel, I decided that we organize our own "Chevrah Kadisha." All the members were young, in the twenties or less, and were not interested in cemetery plots. However, I looked into the future and saw that there will be a need for it, especially as some of us married and started raising families. At first I began by visiting the various branches in the Metropolitan area. I brought up the subject, but the members were lukewarm to the idea. However, there were a few who looked at the matter with open eyes and agreed with me to pursue the matter. The very first one to join me was my good friend, David Schonfeld, followed by Irving Schonbrun, Alex Steinberg, *Z"l*, the brothers Strahl, etc. As soon as we had a handful of interested people, we organized the Agudath Benevolent Organization within the framework of the Agudath Israel.

The first thing to do was to look for and buy cemetery graves. We found it in Long Island, N.Y. in the Wellwood Cemetery. We bought 15 plots which make up about 225 graves. We paid about $115.00 per

plot, or about $8.00 a grave. We had to put down several hundred dollars as a deposit. We had no money at all. An idea struck me which worked out beautifully. I was already an insurance agent at the time. When we began to discuss the financial arrangement with the owners of the cemetery, I told them that I was an agent (which was the truth, although not a real estate agent). The cemetery was a new one. The owners were very anxious to make the deal. They said that they recognize agents and would pay commissions on business brought to them. They paid me a commission of about $250.00 which I used as the down payment. (I gave the income from the commission as a donation to the organization.) Soon we began to charge members $8.00 a year as dues, with which we paid off the balance for the land in the next few years. As our membership grew (we now have a membership of over 475 families) we bought additional cemeteries. We have three and are about to acquire a fourth. Mr. Louis J. Septimus donated a large tract of land to us free of charge. We also organized a "Free Burial Society." We bury and pay for all expenses for deceased people who are referred to us, which is known as "Chesed Shel Emes." We also have a health insurance plan, free loan fund, blood banks, etc.

In recent years, it has become a trend that after 120 years, some people wish to be buried in the holy land of Israel. I foresaw the need of providing burial ground for those members who are interested in being buried in Israel when their time comes. A few of our members decided to look for cemetery in Israel. Again my friends, Schonfeld, Schonbrun, Steinberg began to think seriously about it. On one of my trips to Israel, I visited the offices of the Chevrah Kadishos there, and told them that I was interested in buying 300 graves at one time in one section and to have a fence put around it. They looked at me peculiarly. They had never heard of such a thing before. They told me that they could sell me a few graves in one section of the large cemetery and a few graves in another section. They had never yet sold a complete section with hundreds of graves in one place. The price that they quoted me was about $1000 per grave. (At the present time, they are charging about $5000 per grave.)

At that time, they were about to open a new cemetery to be located between Jerusalem and Lud, near the city of Beth Shemesh. We went to look at the place. It was a desert. We finally picked out a section which was on top of the mountain. Sometime later, Dave Schonfeld, Irving Schonbrun, and Alex Steinberg, also picked out the exact spot. Eventually, after a lot of negotiations and internal problems within our own organization where many of the members were

against the whole idea, we did buy 300 graves at the very low price of $100 per grave. As we needed money immediately to finalize the deal by giving a large deposit to hold the property, it was decided that those members who were loyal to us and did not join those members who were opposed to the project, should get their intended graves at practically the cost price. We charged them the rate of $110 per grave. After we bought the property, other organizations began buying plots there. The largest organization was the Ezras Torah Organization. They immediately began charging $300 and more per grave. We also began raising our prices. At this time their prices are over $1000, while ours are $750, even though ours are on a more choice spot. Our plots are now fully paid for.

When we sell a grave, we give the money away to charity. Fifty percent of it is used in this country for educational purposes of the Pirchei Agudath Israel. The other fifty percent is sent to Israel, where we opened a Free Loan Fund, meaning that we give out loans to needy families without charging them any interest at all. This is a very important function in Israel. (The present rate of interest in Israel is about 85% a year, legal interest, while illegal interest may go as high as 200% a year.)

Now to go back a few years. When we saw that the rate of graves was going up every day, we, the committee, felt that being there was no risk involved in buying cemetery lots, decided to buy another 300 graves. We persuaded the owners to sell us more land at the same price of $100. However, in order for them to agree to this price, they said that it would have to be a cash deal, meaning, that we would have to put down the full sum of $30,000 immediately. We were not in a position to do that.

A thought came to me. I was very close with Mr. Ike Regenbogen, the president of the Ellenville National Bank. We were on a first name basis. One morning, I walked into his office and told him, "Ike, I need a loan of $30,000." He took out a blank note and told me, "Here, fill out the date and the period of the loan." I felt that I should give it to him slowly, so I said, "The loan is not for me, but for a charitable organization of which I am the president. It is not for the usual short period, but for a duration of several years, and it will be paid off in indefinite installments." Ike became more serious, and said, "In that case, you will have to tell me what the loan is for, and what is the security that you will offer for the loan and this will have to be presented to the Loan Committee of the bank." I started out by telling him that the security was vacant land. "The land is not in this country but in the

State of Israel. It is not ordinary land, but a cemetery and the payments will be made as we sell individual graves." I noticed that with each additional statement that I made, he smiled more and more, until finally, he burst out in an uncontrollable laughter. After his laughter subsided, Ike, in a serious tone told me, "Look here, Leo, I am not the owner of the bank; the stockholders are represented by a loan committee which is made up mostly of old style retired farmers; they are the ones who decide on the loans. Can you picture for yourself how I would look in their eyes if I would present to them the following deal. A $30,000 loan which would be secured by:

1. Vacant land
2. In a foreign country
3. It will be used for a cemetery
4. The loan will be paid off, if and when they will sell a grave

They will think that I am nuts. But I admire your courage and from your description I can see that a fortune can be made on this deal. This is what you should do. Sign the note. Have a few more people sign the back of the note. Never mind the installment payments, and I will advance the money."

I thought that I had made a very good deal. However, when I called the rest of the people, they could not decide what to do. I explained to them, "What can you lose? If the organization will not make the payments we will take it over ourselves." As a matter of fact, two of our members took advantage of our former deal and bought land there at our prices and it is now worth many times as much. In the meantime, as we did not come up with the money, there is nothing that we could do. I am sorry to this very day that I listened to my co-workers.

On the day of the funeral of Gertie, I called my friend, Schonfeld in New York to find out where the grave should be made and the answer was, "Leo, you are there. You are the president of the organization. Choose any place that you want." My friend, Abe Reiss, *Z"l*, and I went out there to pick the place. Personally, I wanted to have the grave at the very front of the property, all the way up. However, Abe Reiss was against it. He said, "I advise you to pick the place right at the beginning of the land, so that whenever a person will enter the place, he or she should pass your and her graves and I am sure that they will stop at the spot and say a few words of prayer for her and you." The property has a fence around it. The entrance has a gate with the name of the organization and a sort of platform and right there under a

shady tree on top of the mountain, she rests. May she be a "Meylitz Yosher" for all of us.

While we were sitting Shivah in the Central Hotel, Rabbi Porush and my son-in-law, arranged for her tombstone to be erected. A few days later, after we got up from sitting Shivah, her tombstone was unveiled and we all returned to this country, leaving her in Jerusalem, Israel, the place that she loved, in the cemetery that she herself had chosen.

Life must go on. A few months later, we celebrated the Bar Mitzvoh of my grandson, Shlomie Heftler. It took place in the Yeshivah of Monsey. We made it a weekend affair. Everyone was satisfied.

Soon the Passover holiday was getting close. As usual the hotel was booked to capacity. All of us knowing in advance how much work is waiting for us, left for the hotel earlier than usual. We made arrangements with Rabbi Abraham Fried, the mashgiach to be with us. Rabbi Fried is not only an ordinary mashgiach, but a friend as well and a person who understands the workings of a kitchen. He was most helpful and did an excellent job. It was a cold winter. I was under the influence of a cold and spent most of the Chol Hamoed in bed. In general, the holiday went by fairly well. The guests went home satisfied. As usual, many of them made their reservations for the coming Shevuouth holiday. When we completed the building of the modern Tropicana wing in the main house, we decided that we were large enough already and that we would not build any additional rooms. Instead of new rooms, we would modernize the old rooms that we already had and install private baths wherever we could. A few months before the last Passover holiday, we applied for a $35,000 loan from the Small Business Loan Corp. who were giving loans for improvements on a low interest basis. We took four rooms that were facing towards an open court, extended that part of the building, using the old rooms for a bathroom on one side and a walk-in clothes closet on the other side. We added on a large modern room facing the court. It was a very good idea. The rates were increased by at least 40%, so that the additional yearly income on the four rooms would come to about $10,000 a year. The loan and interest charges would all be paid off in about five to six years. For Passover alone, we took in an additional $1,000. We were now making plans to do this kind of alterations all over the building.

It was two days after the holiday. I had to be in Kingston, N.Y. by the Liquor Board in reference to the renewal of our liquor license. After I was finished there, I returned to Ellenville and I stopped at the bakery to buy some breads. It was our custom that whenever anyone of us were in the village, we called the hotel to find out whether they needed anything to be brought up. I picked up the phone and called the hotel, but there was no ringing sound. We had several telephones which I called with the same results. I went as far as calling the public telephone which was in a booth in the side lobby. In desperation, I called the telephone company to find out what was going on. The operator told me, "Don't you know that the Pioneer is burning and all the utilities are cut off?" I grabbed the bag of bread and ran out to my car, rushing to the hotel. As soon as I left the village on Route No. 52, although the hotel was about 8 miles away, the smoke was already going up towards the sky. My children who expected me back from Kingston and not wanting to scare me when I would see the smoke, sent one of the plumbers to meet me at the turn-off on Route No. 52 to tell me what was happening and above all to assure me that no one was hurt. The side road leading to the hotel was packed with many cars, so that I was unable to drive my car to the hotel. I left the car on the road and walked over to the hotel. Arriving there, I saw that the main house and golf lodge were practically burned down to the ground.

The morning of the fire, my good friend, Rabbi Fried, the mashgiach, who remained there for a few days after the holidays, undertook the task of watching some of my workers who were repairing the roof. While there, he smelled smoke. He and the workers ran down to the first floor below them and saw that the heavy smoke was coming out of a room. As they opened the door of the room, they saw that a mattress on one of the beds was burning. They ran downstairs and had someone call the Fire Department in Mountaindale. Of course, until they came up, the houses were burning full blast. I was told that one of the workers who was laid off, was seen running and hollering something like, "You dirty so and so, there you are; I said that I would burn the G.D. house, etc." Later on he was caught and arrested, but eventually, as no one actually saw him make the fire, he was freed after sitting in jail for a few weeks.

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During the years before Chave and Mel left for Israel, my former wife and I lived together with them in the house that we had built in Monsey, N.Y. When the house was built, we paid a few thousand dollars more than the going price was at the time. Therefore, it was built according to our specifications. It was a large corner house. The Heftlers and their children occupied the first floor, and we built a regular apartment for ourselves on the ground floor.

After my first wife passed away and we sold the house at a handsome profit for those days, I remained alone. Jackie and Pinky invited me to move into their house, also in Monsey. I did not relish the idea. It was therefore agreed, as the Torah tells us in the very first chapter of Bereshis, that it is "not good for a person to be alone." It was therefore decided by all of us that the best thing for me would be to remarry. Offers of marriage came to me from all sides, as Mel so clearly stated that at that time, I was the most popular bachelor. When my present wife, Devorah, was recommended to me, and I came to see her at her home in Boro Park, I walked into a real Baal Habatische house.

Devorah had been a widow for several years. Her first husband, an active Rabbi was a successful real estate investor. Their apartment located in the heart of Boro Park was tastefully furnished and stimulating like an Orthodox Jewish home. Torah books and seforim could be found throughout their apartment.

Each of their children were involved in Torah pursuits. Their son, HoRav Pesch Korb, married to the former Elky Katz, is presently the Rav of the Bais Yisroel Synagogue in Boro Park and of the Beis Din Tzedek of Boro Park. Their daughters, Kay, Chaya, and Yocheved Miriam married Talmidei Chachomim, Rabbi Dr. Aaron Skaist, Rabbi Ehud Hubner, and Rabbi Yosef Greenfield, respectively.

As impressed as I was with her family it was Devorah herself who enthralled me. She epitomized Chen, Yofi and Chochma — grace, beauty and wisdom, with love of G-d and His commandments. After our first meeting, I knew that she was for me. After a few visits to her

house, I came to the conclusion that she will make a good wife for me. As I found her to be a warm and intelligent person, I felt that I should not look any further, as I did not believe that I would find anything better.

I took Devorah to see my children, and they all agreed with me. So, we decided to marry. Devorah had made plans to visit Israel at that time. I felt that perhaps it would be more practical for us to marry there. A short time later, I followed her there and we were married there a few days before Rosh Hashanah. We spent the holiday there and soon after, we came back to America. So, after an absence of about fifty years, I am back in Boro Park.

The Boro Park of today is unlike the Boro Park that I left in the late twenties, not physically and surely not spiritually. Most of the houses that are made of stucco construction were, or are being demolished and replaced by either apartment houses or one or more family brick houses. There is a complete change in the spiritual living of the residents. The majority are strictly religious, while in the twenties there was very little religion, especially among the young generation. As I had written before, I had a difficult task to gather a few Sabbath observing young fellows when I organized the Chevra Bachurey Shomrei Shabbos. Today, an organization like that would sound ridiculous, as practically the majority are Sabbath observers. Most of the residents are of the Chasidic type. Although the population has increased at least tenfold, there has been no synagogue built for the last fifty years. People attend smaller places known as Chasidish shtiblach of which there are as many as three and more on one block.

When I came back again, I immediately attended a shtibel. At present, I attend the Komarne Shtible, organized by the Komarna rabbi, Hurav Alter Yitzchak Elimelech, his wife, the great Baal Habosta Shoshana Reizel, and assisted by his two sons, Rabbi Avrohom Mordechai and Rabbi Tzvi Aryeh. The shtibel is located across the street from where I live. I was immediately elected president, so that I am obligated to pray there whenever I am at home. I really should attend the synagogue of my wife's son, Rabbi Pesach Korb. They are really very nice to me and whenever I come, they give me the greatest honor and ask me to say a Devar Torah. But it is a much further distance from where I live. Devorah, who used to go to the Shomrei Emunah Synagogue where she is a life member, left there and attends services in the synagogue where her son Rabbi Pesach Korb is the rabbi.

Now came the time to settle the fire loss. The fact was that up to about 3/4 of a year before the loss, we did not have enough insurance to cover our debts. The reason for that was twofold. The insurance companies were not too anxious to write insurance on properties located in the Catskill Mountains. The business was mostly seasonal. Every hotel, with few exceptions, closed up after Labor Day, or after the Jewish holidays. The properties remained vacant with no one to keep an eye on them. All the properties were constructed from wood covered with cement. Such buildings, once a real fire started, were practically burnt out entirely. There were no regular established fire departments. The fire department was made up from volunteers, so by the time they were notified, and they assembled and drove out to the scene of the fire, the buildings were demolished. There were no fire hydrants available near the properties. Water was brought up in the fire truck, or was taken from the swimming pools or lakes, or reserve water tanks. Very few hotels are fireproof or have fire sprinklers. Therefore, they were reluctant to give insurance to cover the properties in full.

The situation was so serious, that the hotelkeepers and the bungalow operators were forced to organize their own insurance companies which they did. They are located in Woodridge, New York. Even if we were able to secure insurance, the rates were prohibitive. To give an idea as to the rates, on the main and adjacent building known as the golf lodge, we had to pay the price of up to $7.00 per hundred worth. We had to work half the season just to cover the insurance premiums. We had covered only the debts of the mortgages, since we could not obtain the mortgage unless it was covered by insurance.

We had to write this insurance through various insurance agents in the neighborhood, as no one, or two insurance agents were able to get enough coverage. I will always be thankful to the insurance firm of Berger and Solomon of Ellenville, N.Y. and especially to Mr. Solomon who came to me during the previous summer and advised me that a group of insurance companies with their main office in California, joined together and are now not only writing insurance on properties, but also they are offering it at a reduced rate. Not only did he rewrite the existing insurance that they controlled at a lower rate, but he was also in a position to add a few hundred thousand dollars additional insurance, plus writing a policy known as Business Interruption Insurance, and arranged to pay the premiums on a monthly basis. It was this act on the part of the firm of Berger and Solomon who in their

farsightedness saved the situation, making it possible for us to settle all our debts.

It took the whole summer of meetings with inspectors of the various companies and adjusters and waiting for the final settlement. After our making many calls and having our adjuster call California we were finally advised that the check would be forthcoming. It was a day before Erev Yom Kippur that we were told by the company that the check was ready to be mailed. Every day was important to us, because we had to pay high interest rates on our mortgages and promissory notes which came to thousands of dollars. We had a very good friend in Los Angeles, a man by the name of Mr. Joshua Lax, whom we helped out with a job in our hotel at the time when he came to this country from Israel. He and his family eventually moved to California where he established a catering business (a trade that he learned in our hotel). We advised the insurance company that he would pick up the check that day and mail it to us not by regular mail, but he would take it to the airline and have them deliver it to us. Ordinary air mail would take a few days. By the time we would get the check, cash it, wait a week or so to have the check clear the bank, the Succoth holidays would be here and we would be unable to transact business. By having Mr. Lax pick up the check, we would save many days of interest and we would be able to satisfy our creditors. This was promptly done.

Early on the next day, which was the day before Yom Kippur, I was at the airport waiting for the carrier to arrive. The night before, my son-in-law, Mel Heftler wrote out a checkbook full of checks to every creditor and which we were ready to distribute just as soon as the check cleared the bank. Imagine my disappointment when I entered the office of the mailroom at the airport, looking through all the mail, our letter was not among them. I ran to a phone and as I was dialing the number of my friend in California to check with him, a thought hit me. Perhaps he deposited the envelope with the check, not as an airmail letter, but as an air package. I immediately ran back to the office and asked the man in charge to look among the air packages for it. There it was. The letter was placed in a cardboard package, with a charge of $32.00 instead of the usual rate of a letter.

I met my son-in-law, who lived in Monsey, N.Y. on the Quickway where he had come with his car. He left his car at a station, and joined me in my car and we rushed out to the mountains. I remember that our first stop was in Mountaindale where we left a check for about $140,000 for Joe Kraf, who had a mortgage on the Pioneer. From

there, we went to see Mr. Mike Regenbogen of the First National Bank in Ellenville, N.Y. where we deposited the check from the insurance company. He told us although he should hold back any payments on this check for about ten days since it was an out-of-town check, however, knowing me personally, and seeing that it was an insurance company check, he would allow me to draw funds on it immediately. Mike was that kind of person. He was the president of the bank. He and Leo Rosick, the vice-president of the bank, treated me like an older brother. They always went out of their way and beyond the usual relationship between a banker and a depositer. Of course, we gave him a check for something like $100,000, which was what we owed the bank. We authorized him to pay all the promissory notes that our creditors left in his bank.

We then proceeded to the Ellenville National Bank which was across the street and paid the note that they had against us, plus all the creditors' promissory notes. Then we went to the Empire National Bank in Woodrige, N.Y. and took care of their outstanding notes, so that most of the check was practically drawn against. We also mailed out the checks that we had made out to the rest of the creditors to whom we owed various amounts of monies.

A year before the fire occurred, creditors came to see me offering me as much as a 25% discount on our outstanding debts, because there was a rumor that someone wanted to buy the Pioneer. They all wanted to make sure that they would get their monies. Of course, it was only a rumor. We had no intentions of selling the place. The hotel was renovated and fully equipped and looked like we would be starting to make a profit from then on. However, now that I had money to pay all bills, I took no advantage to take off any discount from anyone, although I was told that every creditor would have been willing to give me a 10% discount on the debt, which would have meant a nice cozy sum for me. No, no advantage was taken of anyone. Everyone was paid in full. Therefore, if I am ever in the neighborhood, everyone gives me the greatest of respect and admiration.

It was already late in the afternoon when I arrived home. Devorah told me that she was much concerned that I was not home earlier. I related to her all that happened, adding on that I wished that our accounts with the Lord should be cleared up the same as my accounts were cleared with all my creditors. She was glad to hear this remark, since she was not happy to get into a marriage with a husband who owed monies to so many people.

After paying all the debts, the question arose as to what to do with the place. There was very little money left to think about rebuilding the hotel to run as we had done previously. When the fire was burning, the fire departments from all over the neighborhood came to help to put out the fire. I understand that as many as ten various departments were present to extinguish the blaze. All of them saw that there was nothing that could be saved from the main building or the golf lodge. They were too far gone. They were wooden constructions. The flames spread out fast devouring everything. The nearest two buildings were the new social hall and the synagogue. The back porch which was used as a Succoh for many years, was made of boards and started to burn with the flames reaching close to the synagogue. Everyone present helped to save the five Torah scrolls and prayer and study books. They were all taken out and placed in the next warehouse which was built of bricks.

Some of the firemen used whatever water they were able to get out of the large water tank to spray water on the building which was eventually saved. The roof of the new social hall which was located very close to the golf lodge started to get very hot and was ready to started burning momentarily. Personally, I would not mind if the social hall would have burned down also. It was insured for $250,000. It was the only building that was fully covered and if it would burn down, that amount would have been remained for me. I would have been able to retire very comfortably. However, we were not in a position to tell the fire department what to do. When they saw that nothing could be done with the main house and golf lodge, they concentrated all their efforts to save the synagogue and social hall. These two buildings remained intact. The only water that they had to save the building was what they pumped from the small lake across the street. The rest of the buildings, like the cottages and the larger houses in the rear remained untouched.

During the course of the settlement with the insurance companies, they asked to get an estimate as to what it would cost to replace the main building and the golf lodge. The building department would not allow to build any structure only if it would be made of steel and bricks, fully fire-proofed and with water sprinklers. The question of having water sprinklers was out because we had no city water near us which was needed for a sprinkler system. To bring in water from the nearest village of Mountaindale, and build the houses as per required rules of the building department, the cost would run into the millions. So there was no question of rebuilding the hotel.

During the summer and winter following the fire, people who passed by and saw the ruined walls standing with all the debris, stopped their cars and looked, sighing, some of them wiping off a tear, remembering the pleasant vacations that they had spent in that place. To many, it brought back very fond memories, pointing out the spot where their rooms were located, where the dining room, lobbies, etc. were located. To this very day, when people meet me they complain that they did not yet find a hotel in which they feel as much at home as they did in the Pioneer. Some say humorously, "We are looking for a third Pioneer, because a second one we will never find." Some people remarked sadly, that "Lehafdil elef havdohlos," to separate thousands of separations, looking at the ruins of the place, looked like a miniature churban and it looked like the ruins of the Holy Temple when it was destroyed.

We were not allowed to clean up the ruins until after the final settlement was made. By the time it was settled, it was nearing the winter months. The ruins remained until the following summer. My daughter, Chave and children and I spent a few weeks there during the summer, occupying our former bungalow. It was not a pleasant vacation. After we left, we hired a caretaker, but the thieves came at night and cleaned out most of the furniture and supplies that were left in the remaining rooms and warehouses.

Truthfully, there were still about 132 rooms left, with a social hall, a new steel swimming pool, a children's camp and pool and a large synagogue. It was an ideal place to be operated as a bungalow colony. Personally, I did not want to undertake an operation like that, although I am sure that it would have been profitable. The children did not care to go into such an operation. Not after operating a hotel like the Pioneer. It is true, that when we went into the business, we started out as rooming house operators. With Mrs. Gartenberg gone, the whole burden would fall upon me, and I did not want to undertake it.

When Chave and Mel were married years before, they spent their belated honeymoon in Israel. They were there for sixteen weeks as it was wintertime and the Pioneer was closed. They crossed practically the whole land by foot (the land was small then). They fell in love with the land. When they returned, full of praise for the land, Mel told me that he was wondering what excuse he would give when he would come to the next world after 120 years. He would be asked why he did

not settle in Israel at his young age. At that time, Mr. and Mrs. Schechter had passed away. We remained the sole owners of the hotel and I needed him here. Their hearts were set on settling in Israel someday.

As a matter of fact, when the Central Hotel was built, Rabbi Menachem Proush, who represented a group of investors in America, wanted it to be a Gartenberg and Schechter operation. I was there at the time that the foundation was laid. We felt that in the Gartenberg and Schechter families we already had more captains than soldiers. That there was room for some of the captains to spend part of their time in Israel operating a hotel there. By the time the Central was ready, Mr. and Mrs. Schechter had passed away. The Gartenbergs remained the only owners and operators and therefore there was no way for us to take over the operation of another hotel in Israel.

A few weeks after the fire, I received a call from Rabbi Porush asking me what excuse I had now for not coming to operate the Central Hotel in Jerusalem. I told him that as far as I was personally concerned, I was not in a position to undertake the operation, but I would speak to Mel about it. Mel was away at the time. When he returned, he said, he would go there and fulfill his cherished dream to settle in Israel. He did so a few months later.

So here we were with the remains of the Pioneer Country Club. It was decided to sell the place. We notified real estate agents and they began looking for customers. In the spring, I came out with several prospective buyers. We were offered various sums from many prospective buyers. Although I was offered practically double the price that I sold it for from an interested buyer, I eventually settled to give the place away to an organization called B'nai Torah, to be used as a camp for young men. I use the word *give* because the prices that I was offered, and what we eventually settled for, was practically a give-away. Any part of the hotel was in itself worth the full price that we made a deal for. For instance, the large swimming pool by itself, the synagogue, the new motel, the social hall, especially. Each one was worth the purchase price. It was getting late in the spring. We paid real estate taxes for the year before, and if I did not sell the place at that time, I would be taxed for another year. I therefore, reluctantly, agreed to give away the place to the Yeshiva B'nai Torah, for a small fraction of the true value.

The place remained a Torah place. Hundreds of young men sit and learn practically day and night the Holy Torah. It does my heart good. I made a deal that I should reserve one of the rooms in the

cottages where my wife and I would spend our summers every year. We have room and board privileges. At the time of this writing, there are over four hundred people consisting of young students and families.

The former social hall was turned into a kitchen and dining room, still having left a large part of the front hall as a lecture room. They built an additional swimming pool for the women. The large synagogue became too small to accommodate all the people, especially since more than one Yeshiva has its students there. At this time, there are prayer services and study rooms located in various places. The downstairs rooms of the synagogue are also used as a synagogue and study rooms. The walls were taken out. The building which is located next to the synagogue which was used as a warehouse, is now used as a study hall and synagogue, as is the building which was fomerly used as a laundry warehouse and counting room. So Torah is learned and prayers are offered all over the place. If they would have more funds, they could still use the eleven large bedrooms that are located on the ground floor of the large social hall. We utilized them for sleeping purposes for about 70 people. They cannot be used because there is a public kitchen in the building. It ccould be used for sleeping or for study purposes if they had about $25,000 to spend to make it fireproofed. The building department is very strict in this respect. It will be done in due time. So, if I did not do well financially, I did very well spiritually.

As I sit here in my room typing these pages, it makes me feel good to look through the window and see young men, who after their periods of learning are finished, use the tennis courts with their *talis kotons* (the fringed miniature talis) with the *tzitzis* flying, or using the many other sport facilities, or coming from the swimming pools, wearing their robes with the *talis kotons* on top. These are modern American boys, not exactly the Chasidic types.

So much for the Pioneer Country Club located on one side of the road. All that property now belongs to the camp, which was changed to Camp Horim.

Now we will talk about the property on the other side of the road, which was called the Victoria House property. Once there was a hotel there which was known as the Victoria House. We acquired the property a few years after we bought the Pioneer Country Club. We improved the property which consisted of a main house and several

bungalows. We even built more bungalows. All of the property was rented by us for rooming house facilities, giving the people who rented the rooms privileges to use all the facilities of the hotel. While the Pioneer was operated, the rooms there were rented and we made a nice profit on them. We invested about $40,000 in building a lake which was very popular with all the guests. We had about a dozen rowboats on the lake.

After the fire, everything there became useless. It was not sold to the Camp Bnai Torah. After the fire, the insurance companies cancelled their insurance on the buildings. As a matter of fact, the main house that was insured for about $20,000, was burned down by some person who slept there (probably by a burning cigarette). On a Friday morning, we saw smoke coming from there. We called the fire department who put out the fire. Whoever spent the night there, must have fled. The building was a complete loss. The walls fell in, the debris is still there covered by the tall grass. As there was no insurance in force, I received nothing from the loss. Thieves came and stole everything out of the bungalows, the furniture, the sinks, the toilets, the plumbing. Everything that had any value was taken.

The vagrants still stay there. One day the building department will probably come and make me hire a bulldozer to wreck the walls and remove all the debris. It will be a large expense, but it will have to be done. We spent thousands of dollars to remove the debris from the Pioneer. I gave the camp the privilege to use the lake, but they do not take advantage of it, as they do not care to have the responsibility of operating the lake. So the property of about 100 acres just stays on. There is no demand for vacant land, so we will have to wait for something to happen. Perhaps sometime in the future it will have some value. Like many other people in the county, everyone is waiting that perhaps casino gambling may come to New York State. In that case, vacant land may be worth something. So far, the State of New York is not passing any bills to allow gambling like it was done in New Jersey, although the existing hotels would like to have casino gambling.

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My daughter, Chave, and her husband, Rabbi Mel Heftler, are in Jerusalem, Israel. He is the manager of the Central Hotel and is doing an exceptionally good job. He has already wanted to leave them several times to go on his own, but they just don't let him. The first few years they were not too happy with their living quarters, which they had rented. Eventually, they bought their own apartment in Bayit Vegan.

Now they are very happy living in Israel and would not think of living anywhere else. They have six children. (They had eight children, but unfortunately, they lost two boys while they were still living in America.) The oldest one, Shlomie, is a big boy and they are already looking for a shiddach for him. He is at present 21 years old. He is very studious and attends the Hebron Yeshiva. The next one, Ruchel, is also a big girl. She graduated from school. I understand that she will do volunteer work in the Sharei Tzedek Hospital during the summer months.

Years ago, Chave decided that she wanted to be a nurse. She began taking courses while she was still in Monsey, N.Y. Arriving in Israel, until they got settled, she did not pursue it regularly. The last few years, she started studying very seriously. I understand that she will graduate as a regular nurse during this year. My son-in-law, Mel, had a hobby of collecting Israeli postage stamps. At one time, I gave him a supply of stamps that I had accumulated. Eventually he did it on his own, spending a lot of time and money collecting every stamp that the Israeli government ever printed (even before they had a land of their own). He eventually sold the whole lot. He received a nice sum of money for it which was helpful towards the purchase of their apartment. Now he has another very interesting hobby, that of collecting miniature whiskey bottles of every type and design. He has two special cabinets with glass doors in which there are displayed over a thousand small bottles. He was written up in a special publication with his picture and his bottles in a special magazine that is published in that field. I myself sent him several dozen bottles from Mexico. All his friends who travel to various countries in the world, already know that they have to bring some whiskey bottles for Rabbi Mel Heftler,

especially if they want to be sure to get a room in the Central Hotel. I understand that the Jerusalem Museum expressed a desire to have a display of these bottles in their museum.

Besides operating hotels for the Passover holidays, Devorah and I travel around the world a bit. Except for the particular summer of 1982, we spend a few weeks every summer in Israel. We usually go there the weeks between Passover and Shevuouth. After spending a few days in Jerusalem visiting my children and grandchildren, we make the trip to Tiberias where we take the mineral baths. While neither of us are in particular need of the chemical hot water for our health, we find it very relaxing. Perhaps, the reason why we don't need the hot mineral waters for any particular ailment, is because we take these baths every year. I personally took the baths for many years before, during the nineteen trips that I made to Israel.

After a few weeks in Tiberias, we come back to Jerusalem, and do some sightseeing. There is hardly anything in Israel that we have not seen yet. We also spend some time with Devorah's daugheer, Kay and Professor Dr. Rabbi Skaist who live in Petach Tikvoh. He is connected with the Bar Ilan University in Israel. We again see my children in Jerusalem and visit many relatives and friends. (To say nothing of the shopping tours that Devorah makes and drags me along reluctantly.)

When we come back after Shevuouth, we spend two months in the Catskill Mountains. Devorah is not too much in love with the Catskills. She is always bitten by bees and mosquitos. Therefore, she goes into the city for a few days during the week. Her son, Rabbi Pesach Korb, has a bungalow with his family in the mountains. He usually takes her into New York on Monday and brings her back on Thursday. As for myself, for my part, I would stay in the mountains the whole year round. After all, I have spent summers in the Catskill Mountains since the year 1933.

After we return to New York towards the end of August we spend the Jewish Holidays, from New Years until after the Succoth Holidays, at Simcha by the Sea in Staten Island. It is very convenient, since we are only about a half an hour by car away from our home in Boro Park. We drive into Brooklyn every day for a few hours.

We spend the winter months in Florida. We visit a place called Mineral Warm Springs which is located on the west coast of Florida. It has a warm outdoor lake that is 84 degrees, filled with various chemicals. We go either by car, when I drive, or rent a car in Miami Beach to go there. For the last three winters, we spent a few weeks every year in Mexico.

Pioneer Milk Fund

During my first year in Israel, Rabbi Menachem Porush took me to several of the twenty-six Childrens' Day Nurseries which are located in various places throughout the land. I was very much impressed with the work that is being done there. They take care of thousands of small children who come from broken homes or who are the children of parents both of whom have to work and cannot hire anyone to take care of the children. The very first thing that is done for them is to give them a glass of milk upon their arrival. Later on they are served a regular lunch. Counselors take care of them all day. I immediately decided to start an organization whereby each child would be provided with a glass of milk. Therefore, I named the organization, The Pioneer Milk Fund. Eventually, this expanded into many other branches as explained in the following article.

Many more Children's Nurseries are needed all over Israel, if only the funds would be available. One of the homes in the Katamon nieghborhood in Jerusalem is known as the Gartenberg Home. The greatest achievement, was the erection of the famous Children's Town in Jerusalem. This is a childrens' home accommodating hundreds of children who are orphans or who are taken from broken homes. These children are housed there all the time. It is a regular "town" with all facilities. The children are taken in at all ages and kept there until they grow up. They are educated there and eventually sent to larger yeshivos, or sent to a trade school. I am very happy that I had the merit to be one of the organizers of this project. As a matter of fact, I placed the "cornerstone" of the original building, many years ago. It is now the pride of Jerusalem as well as of Israel.

Jewish Life in America in the Early Twenties

Today it is very simple and easy to be an observant Jew in this country. Everyone can be a Sabbath observer, eat kosher or even glatt kosher. After the Second World War, such rabbis as the Tzelemer rabbi, *Z"l*, and the Satmarer rabbi, *Z"l*, came to this country and started a movement for glatt kosher. (There was a shochet and a butcher, a Rabbi Lamm, who had started such a business years before, but it was on a small scale.) It was only after the above-mentioned rabbis and later on the Breuer Kehillah and the Lubavitcher movement, that the idea took off. When I came here in the early twenties, it was very difficult to have shomer shabbos jobs, get strictly kosher

food, Cholov Yisroel, etc. The leading rabbis who were here at that time did their very best, but it was a difficult task, especially when it came to the observance of the Sabbath. Many people who could not withstand the nisohyon (the temptation or self-sacrifice), made many compromises in regard to the observance of the Sabbath. I can give hundreds of examples, but it would take away a lot of space. I will give just a few examples.

I lived in the Bronx next door to a family where the husband was a member of the synagogue. As a matter of fact, he was one of the Board of Directors. He thought that he had to work on the Sabbath in order to hold on to his job. He attended the first minyan in the synagogue on the Sabbath morning, went to work and as soon as he came back, went to the synagogue for mincha and maariv services. In another instance, this man, like hundreds of others, drove a truck in which he delivered food to stores in his neighborhood. He was an officer in a large synagogue. In this case, being that he was the president of the synagogue, it was required that he wear a "full cut" suit like a groom, with a black top hat. He rose early in the morning, made his deliveries, came home, took off his working clothes, changed into the special suit and hat, and went to the place of worship where he sat next to the rabbi on the raised platform. He then went home, had his regular Sabbath meal, slept for an hour or two and then again went to deliver orders to the stores. When he finished his work, he went back to the synagogue where he spent the rest of the Sabbath afternoon. His wife kept a strictly kosher home. They did not eat any delicatessen, being afraid that it was not kosher enough, until they found out about the famous "Goldberg's Delicatessen" on the lower East Side of New York whom everyone trusted for their kashruth.

Just one more example. When I was in the insurance business, I had a client who operated a shoe store on Pitkin Avenue in Brooklyn. One Friday afternoon, I received a telephone call from him asking that I come to see him to discuss a matter of insurance. He assured me that it was not an emergency. We agreed that I would come to see him right after the Sabbath. Being that they had their place of business in a non-Jewish neighborhood, they thought that they had to keep their store open on the Sabbath. As I came there after the Sabbath, being that both he and his wife were very occupied with customers, they asked me to sit down in the room in the back of the store. They had their apartment on the floor above the store, but down here they had a kitchen and living room. Sitting there, I noticed that they had a metal cover on the stove over the gas burners where the gas was still

burning. When they finished their business and came to speak to me, the woman noticed that I was looking at the covered stove with the "Shabbos blech." She explained to me that being they were in a non-Jewish section of the city, they would not be able to operate without being open on the Sabbath. However, as far as their private lives were concerned, they were strict observers of all the Jewish laws. The woman also told me that when she has to go into a dark closet where they keep a stock of shoes not displayed in the store, she would go in there, but would not put on the light. "I have to work in the front of the store," she told me, "but when I go to the back for my convenience, I will not put on the light on the Sabbath. I do the same in my rooms upstairs."

I had a great influence over them, but I was unable to persuade them to change their way of life. They had an only son. I did use my influence and persuaded them to send him to a yeshiva. Years later, I met this boy. He was already married with children of his own. He thanked me for making his parents send him to yeshiva. He was a real religious man and the president of a Young Israel branch in New York

These few examples give you an idea of life in this country when I arrived here. Of course, as the years went on, it became much easier to be an observant Jew. Today it is almost difficult to find a position where one has to work on the Sabbath. Never mind about kashruth and finding resort hotels that observe kashruth and the Sabbath and Jewish Holidays. Today, one can travel all over the world and find kosher food in any of the most fancy hotels. I told the tour operators, like the Atlas-Ambassador Tour Operators, that they deserve a medal for seeking out hotels in the far corners of the world where they deliver glatt kosher food products for the religious public to enjoy by airplane, places where one would not dream that one could visit without the problem of kosher meals. It took many years to develop.

Instead of using the phrase, *"shwer tzu zein ein Yid"* (it is difficult to be a religious Jew), we can say that it is easy to be a Jew. The same things apply to arranging weddings, bar-mitzvahs, etc. in the luxury hotels all over the country. I remember the first wedding that I attended in this country. It was held in the basement of one of the synagogues in Brooklyn. After the guests came down from the synagogue where the ceremony was held, boys who were members or friends of the two families, brought in trays of delicatessen sandwiches which were grabbed by the guests. Some of them were lucky to grab a few sandwiches, while others only got one. After eating the

sandwiches, we stood in line for the punch, made by someone in the family.

Compare that to the present day system where affairs and banquets are catered. It also took many years to reach this stage. In olden days when the parents of the bride were well off, they arranged a sit down meal, where the usual fruit cup in a glass was served. After the fruit cup, the waiters brought out either sandwiches or chicken fricassee, roast chicken and ices. After the meal, the waiter went around with plates collecting tips from the guests. They had toothpicks on the plate for the convenience of the guests, but the idea was to collect tips.

The custom at the time was to bring gifts to the newly-weds that consisted of dishes, a few napkins or a tablecloth. For a bar-mitzvah, they brought the usual fountain pen or a book. Today, a gift has to be equal to the cost of the price that the parents pay the caterer for a couple. If you give less, you are considered cheap. That is progress for you. Except in the case of extremely religious people where the bride and groom remain at home for a few days for Shevah Brochos, which are arranged every night in a different house of members of the family, which is also an affair by itself, the new couple escapes to a honeymoon, where they spend most of the monies that they received as gifts. But as my friend Arnold Fine, my fellow columnist in the "Jewish Press" ends his very interesting and amusing article, "I remember when" with the sentence, "It is a different world."

Through the years since the fire at the hotel, I keep myself busy. I was operating a hotel in Sackett Lake with the caterer Irving Mehl for a few holidays. Later on, I was the first one to operate a hotel for the Passover holiday in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, also with the Mehl family. We made a few dollars. Before that, no Jew operated a hotel in that area. Now, quite a few hotels rent out their places for the Passover holidays.

Later on, I was connected with a partner who took in Mr. Mehl, my son, Jack and I as partners in a hotel known as the Tamiment Hotel in the Poconos. The first year, we lost money. In the following years, Mr. Mehl was not connected with us any longer. Only Jack and I remained as partners. The hotel lease was not in our name. We did make some money for a few years.

I continue to be connected with the hotel for the Passover holidays on account of my son Jack who has a nice sized family, a wife, three boys and two girls, and needs the extra income. His children are grown up. The oldest, Nuti (Gary) is already married. He did a good shidduch with the well-known Harris family of Scranton, Pennsylvania. He has a very good job with Philip Bros. His wife is also working at this time and they are getting along. The youngest son, Levi Yitzchok is becoming Bar Mitzvoh this week. He is in Camp Tagola now. He will be called to the Torah. As a matter of fact, Rabbi and Mrs. Appelman called me this morning to spend the Shabbath with Devora in the camp and give lectures to the various groups in the camp.

My grandchildren are *keyn ayin horoh,* all grown up. Jackie and Pinky already married off the oldest son, Nuti (Garry) who already has a child of his own. They live in Long Island. The oldest daughter, Robin Joy, recently married and is now Mrs. Bochner. They also from Stern's College in New York. Both of them are right now in good looking and fine girl, and will soon be grabbed up by a nice boy. Bryant (Pesach Pinchas) already worked as a cashier in a bank, but his parents decided that he should continue his studies to be a Business Administrator. Whenever he has a chance he does some work in the catering line to earn some extra money to help him in his studies. Scottie (Levyi Yitzchak) is now already fifteen years old and is receiving very good marks in school. For this summer, he took a job as a waiter in the Hillel Camp in the Catskills.

By my daughter, Chave, and son in law, Mel, who live in Israel, Shlomi the oldest son is studying in the Hebron Yeshivah. Ruchel finished college and will take up a business career. Suri graduated from Stern's cCollege in New York. Both of them are right now in New York. Mimi (Miriam), the image of her beautiful mother, was the first to get married, and is expecting in November. Mordechai is a big boy, and will become Bar Mitzvah this coming summer before Shevuouth. The youngest one is Gitti, a wonderful little girl, who is loved by everyone. I have great *Naches* from every one of them. They should all be well, and a great joy to their parents and family. Amen.

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Acknowledgements

At this time, I wish to thank the many relatives and friends that were of tremendous help in the publication of this book and my former books as well. Also, those people who helped me during my lifetime, and who helped bring forth this particular book.

My wife, Devorah, who read all the pages as soon as I typed them, corrected the text and made suggestions. My children, Jack and Pinky Gartenberg and Rabbi Mel and Chave Heftler, as well as all my grandchildren who read the material before giving the contents to be printed.

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People that were kind and helpful to me were the Kronowitz and Laszlo families, who brought me to this country and who gave me my first job upon my arrival here. The many other employers who gave me jobs in the various occupations that I worked in.

A special thanks to my brother-in-law, Joseph Fuchs, *Z"l*, and to my sister-in-law, Ethel Fuchs, who among many other things, were so helpful in raising my children, Jack and Evelyn. Her son, Rabbi Sey-

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To the hundreds of people who were my clients in the insurance business and to the tens of thousands of guests who patronized our various hotels in the past. To the thousands of donors of the Pioneer Milk Fund, Childrens' Day Nurseries and hundreds of other charitable organizations whose donations gave me the opportunity to distribute about five million dollars to charity. To the hundreds of devoted employees who worked for me in the various hotels which I operated.

The Gross Brothers, who are so helpful in printing my books and who treat me very fairly. Shamai Hartman, who started working for me just a few days after he arrived from the Telzer Yeshivoh in Cleveland. He wanted to work in a "Heymishe hotel" where he will earn a living and feel at home, which was exactly what he found with us. He stayed with us for several years. As a matter of fact, I took him along to my hotel in Miami Beach by car. He is a very successful businessman and is very charitable. He donates regularly to the Pioneer Milk Fund. Mr. Marty Bodner, who started out as a busboy and is now active in the hotel business; and Mr. Bernard Drang for their help in connection with the Atlas Ambassador Tour operators. To Dr. Hyman S. Frank, who is not only an exceptionally good doctor, but also a good friend.

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Mrs. Buchsbaum (Mrs. B) was connected with us as Chef for about twenty-five years. She was loved by everybody, guests as well as staff. Mr. and Mrs. Buchsbaum are buried on the same cemetery as my mother. I never fail to visit their graves whenever I am there.

Mr. Moshe Lovinger was a second chef and later the first chef for about twenty years. He is now a very famous glatt kosher caterer in New York; Chanah Berkowsky, was supposed to be in the Salad room, but she was all over the place. She gave lessons to many of the chefs regarding how to make a good "Jewish Meal.".

Phil, the baker, was connected with us for over twenty-five years, and was one of the best bakers that we every had. He knew that I liked cheese cake and he never failed to bring me a hot piece of cheese cake right from the oven into my office; "Chu," the head dairy chef. Everyone loved his meals, especially his blintzes. He was with us for about twenty years; Charles the salad man, was with us for about twenty-five years. He was very loyal and devoted; Jack Kaufman, the butcher, a real friend. He met his wife there. He is now retired and lives in Israel. His brother, Al, who followed him as butcher, was with us for many years. Both were very loyal and devoted to us; Jack Green (may he rest in peace), our head waiter for about twenty years; Max Schnitzer, head waiter for fifteen years; both were real friends.

Mr. and Mrs. Moshe Klapper who were running our famous tea room in the Pioneer for many years. Both of them were very pleasant to the guests. We gave them a free hand to satisfy everyone with anything that they wanted. Eventually they moved to Israel where they are semi-retired. Mr. and Mrs. Indig who operated the "concession" and cocktail lounge. They moved to Israel, but came back every summer to run the large business of supplying the guests with their needs. They are now in Israel for good.

Mr. and Mrs. Shimon (Sam) Wachtel of Brooklyn, N.Y., who were operating our store, selling all kinds of merchandise to the guests. They met in our hotel. Mrs. Wachtel originally came to the hotel from Canada. Mr. and Mrs. Schechter, and Mrs. Gartenberg made a special trip to Canada to be present at their wedding.

Mr. and Mrs. Armin Newhouse of Brooklyn, N.Y. They operated our tea room very efficiently, satisfying the guests with very good service.

Mr. Andy Yurowitz, who worked for many years in our dining room. He is now a Vice-President with E.F. Hutton and Company, Stockbrokers.

Thanks also to a dear friend for many years, who advised me in my investments, — Mr. Maurice Rotenberg, of New York City. He is now a Vice-President with Drexel, Burnham, and Lambert Co.

I especially wish to thank the various organizations who honored me with awards for the help that Mr. and Mrs. Schechter (while they were alive) and I gave them. I said it before, and I say it again, that the thanks really belongs to the thousands of people who gave and are still giving donations to these organizations. I was only the collector. I was in business where I had the opportunity to collect funds for charities. By using my influence, I was able to gather the large sums of money and all kinds of merchandise which I distributed to individuals and organizations. Some of these organizations rewarded me with plaques and letters of thanks. One large organization offered to name a street in Jerusalem in my name, like Rechov Eliezer or Rechov Gartenberg. I declined the offer. At first, I refused to be honored with these plaques, but later, I felt that perhaps it would be advisable to accept them for the sake of my children and my grandchildren. Perhaps it would inspire them to follow in my footsteps and do the same in their lifetime.

I wish to thank Mr. Joseph Dweck of Brooklyn, New York for his help in raising large sums of monies for the Pioneer Milk Fund. The Silber Family for supplying me with hundreds of wedding gowns. To Mr. Yasser of Clinton, N.C. for sending in hundreds of children coats which I distributed to the poor.

When I was in the Pioneer Country Club, I had a room off the main lobby which was called the Trophy Room. There, the walls were filled with these trophies and plaques. They were all burnt at the time of the fire. My son-in-law, Rabbi Melvin Jacob Heftler, went to the trouble to call some of the organizations who sent in copies of the rewards (which I will list later on). My best reward is when I receive letters from the organizations as well as from hundreds of individuals, like brides who thank me for the new wedding gowns that I sent them (which I still do). I recently sent a wedding gown to a bride in Russia; for the hundreds of clothing packages that I send to Israel and to Europe as well as those distributed to Russian immigrants in this country. I am very happy that I was able to help with tens of thousands of dollars to open a general food and household supplies store in

Jerusalem, where we supply poor people with supplies at a discount of 35%, or accept whatever they can afford to pay. Before Passover, we supply them with merchandise free of charge. My son-in-law, Rabbi Melvin Jacob Heftler, even delivers the supplies to the homes with his own car. The feeling that I have, knowing that hundreds of people are being helped with loans without paying one cent of interest. I started the Free Loan Funds over twenty-five years ago. These are my best rewards. I only hope that *Im Yirtze Hashem,* I can continue doing these things for many more years to come.

A special thanks to Mr. Steve Cotler, Juliett Bridals, of Pottsville, Pa, for supplying me with over a hundred wedding gowns; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Rothenberg and son, Neal, of the Barcelona Hotel; Mr. and Mrs. Eli Schwartz who with the Rothenbergs are operating the Atlas-Ambassador Kosher Tours, for their kindness to us; Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Klass, who are good friends. He also supervises my weekly articles in the "Jewish Press." Mr. and Mrs. Paul and Hannah Lazarus and daughter Laurie. They, together with Ruby Lazarus, have been very nice to us at all times when we needed help at the beginning of our hotel ventures. By the way, Mr. Ruby Lazarus is the best Baal Koreh (reader of the Torah) that I ever met. The Lazarus families and their children (we called them Angels) spent a lot of time with us in the various hotels that we operated. Mr. and Mrs. Murray Berkowitz of Miami Beach, Fla. have been very gracious to us and made us very welcome in their hotels.

I acknowledge the Newhouse family of the Simcha by the Sea of Staten Island. Their mother, Rebetzin Newhouse, Rabbi Shimon Newhouse, Rabbi and Mrs. Menashe Newhouse and families. We spend most of our holidays with them. I am the Cultural Director there for many years. Our friendship with the Newhouse families goes back to the year 1940. At that time, we operated the Empire Hotel in Ferndale, N.Y. If I remember correctly, it was at that time that we heard that there was a nearby farm for sale. We went and gave a deposit of $500 for the place. We had no use for the farm, but we thought that it would be a good place for some religious organization to operate as a camp. We were sure that as soon as it was found out that we bought the place for that purpose, we would be contacted by interested operators. Soon enough, we were visited by Rabbi Avrohom Newhouse, *Z"l,* who was very much interested in opening a Beth Jacob Girls' Camp. He returned the $500 deposit to us. That is how the model Camp Beth Jacob for Girls became a reality.

I acknowledge the friendship of Rabbi and Mrs. Sherer, executive president of the Agudath Israel Organization; Rabbi and Mrs. Borchard, the manager or supervisor of the Camp Agudah for boys and Camp Bnos for girls in Ferndale, N.Y.

Among the plaques that I received (I will not describe what they say, because I believe the statements are exaggerated) are:

American Friends of Children Day Nurseries in Israel and Children's Town in Jerusalem.
Chevra Gomley Tov shel Agudas Yisroel.
Emunah Women (Formerly Hapoel Hamizrachi Women).
Founders Award — Ohel Childrens' Home.
Founders Award — Agudath Israel Benevolent Organization.
Chinuch Atzmoi (Torah Schools for Israel).
Shaare Tzedek Hospital in Jerusalem.
Beth Medrash L'Torah Vehoroah (with a beautiful letter from Harav Moshe Feinstein).
Mizrachi Organization of America (with a life membership certificate for Gartenberg and Schechter).
Bayis Lapleitos in Jerusalem, Israel.
Pioneer Founder of Zeirei and Agudath Israel.
Poalei Agudath Israel Organization.
Young Israel Council of America (The very first Shofar award), to Gartenberg and Schechter
Children's Rescue Organization (During and after World War II).
A large beautiful menorah from theChildren's Homes in Israel.
Beth Jacob Schools in America (Founder's Award).
Bais Yaakov Schools in Israel.
Vaad Hatzalah Organization of America (During World War II).
Letter certificates from practically every major organization in the world, too numerous to mention.

For the winter of 1983, we were in Miami Beach, Fla, as the Cultural Director in the Barcelona Hotel. For July and August, we expect to be as usual in the "Camp Horim" which is the former Pioneer Country Club in Greenfield Park, N.Y. where we have our apartment every summer.

Greetings

Gerson and Naomi Adler, *Cleveland Heights, Ohio*
Mr. Isidore Ashkenazi, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*
Mrs. Sylvia Axelrod, *Houston, Texas*
Mrs. Adolph Beren, *Marietta, Ohio*
Mr. Charles Berkowitz, *Forest Hills, N.Y.* Berman Family, *Clarksburg, West Virginia*
Robert I. and Miriam Block, *Highland Park, N.J.*
Allan and Esther Chopp, *Edison, N.J.*
Joel E. and Jaelene Danishevsky, *Elizabeth, N.J.*
Haghnaza M. Dory (Karmel), *Sherman Oaks, Ca.*
G. Friedman, *Montreal, Canada*
Mrs. Freda Gartenberg, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*
Meyer and Anna Godofsky, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*
Mr. and Mrs. Alex Hartman, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*
Ronald D. Huppert, *New York, N.Y.*
Yale S. Levine, *Cumberland, Md.*
Bernard and Edith Mandelbaum, *Phila., Pa.*
Moe and Pearl Marcus, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*
Selda Narotsky, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*
Arthur Palestine, *Scarsdale, N.Y.*
Mr. Isidore Rand, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*
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Rabbi and Mrs. B. Samuels, *Charleston, W.Va.*
Mrs. B. Schneider, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*
Dr. and Mrs. Alexander Schoenfeld, *St. Louis, Mo.*
Israel and Diana Schwartz, *Providence, R.I.*
Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Seif, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*
Mr. and Mrs. William Shapiro, *Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.*
Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Silber, *Palm Springs, Ca.*
Morris and Sandra L. Speter, *Stamford, Conn.*
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Spira, *Houston, Texas*
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Sturman, *Memphis, Tenn.*
Menachem and Dora Taub, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*
Murray and Anna Tevelovitz, *Fallsburg, N.Y.*
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Weisbord, *Woodridge, N.Y.*

Memorials

In memory of my beloved sister,

Fruma Dvora Crane

by Mrs. Max Bieberfeld,

Southfield, Michigan

Yosef ben Schraga Favel Fuchs. *Yahrtzeit 19 days in Kislev.*
Hurav Aryeh Shlomo ben Yosef and Ethel Fuchs, *Yahrtzeit 6, Kislev.*
Moshe ben Mordechai Gartenberg, *Yahrtzeit Rosh Chodesh Kislev.*
Miriam bas Mordechai Leib Gartenberg, *Yahrtzeit, 26, Cheshvan.*
Meier Yehudah ben Moshe Gartenberg, *Yahrtzeit, 7, Kislev.*
Gitel bas Yerachmiel and Eidel Ringler Gartenberg, *Yahrtzeit, 8, Kislev.*
Yerachmiel ben Pinchas Ringler, *Yahrtzeit, 2, Cheshvon.*
Eidel bas Aryeh Shlomoh Ringler, *Yahrtzeit, 2, Iyar.*

L'iluh Nishmos, Reb Shlomo ben Yechiel Mechel V'Ishtoh Ruchel bas Yaakov Heftler

In memory of Jean B. Marks

In memory of Abraham Nosenchuk, by the Nosenchuk Family,

Jacob Schechter, *Yahrtzeit, first day Chol Hamoed Succoth.*

Celia Schechter, *Yahrtzeit, 12, Adar 1.*

In memory of Sidney D. Weisman

In loving memory of Albert J. Wagner, Avrohom Yosef ben Getzel,

Devoted husband, father, and grandfather

by . . . Mrs. Stella Wagner

Theodore W. Wagner, Rabbi

Dr. Stanley M. Wagner

Yehi zichroh baruch. May his memory be a blessing.

Fruit distributed to Children
in a Camp Near Praga C.S.S.R.

Menachem Begin; Leo Gartenberg; Devorah Gartenberg; Rabbi Porush

At a convention in Jerusalem

Food packages made up in America to send to Europe

SCHATZ
GIVE
HELP TO THE HELPLESS!
Thru The
113 W

Packages distributed to poor children

Group of poor people receiving packages that were sent from America

"My brother Sidney and grandson
Aharon Jeruchem Gartenberg"

Jack & Ann Gartenberg
Rabbi Melvin & Chavy Heftler
Sisters & Brothers & Families
Congratulates
LEO GARTENBERG
and wish him long life and happiness

The Family