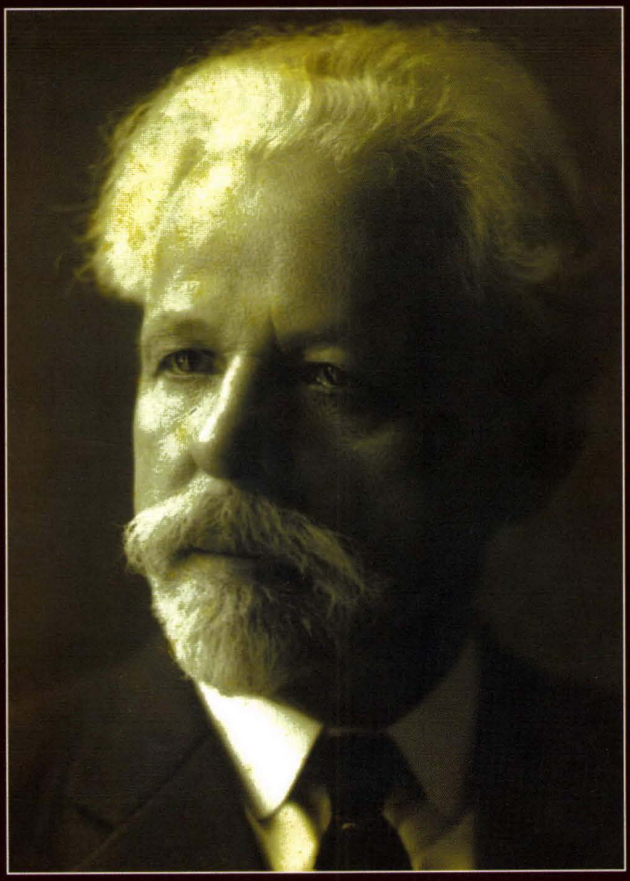
Zvi Hirsch Masliansky

MEMOIRS

An account of my life and travels



Ariel Publishing House, Jerusalem

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Translated from the Hebrew by
Isaac Schwartz and Zviah Nardi

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2026

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Table of Contents

Biographical Introduction	7
Foreword	11
Mother and Son Meet	15
Europe	23
America	233
To the Land of Israel	341
Afterword	421



The young Masliansky (most probably in Russia).

Biographical Introduction

Zvi Hirsch Masliansky was born in l856 in the city of Slutsk, Lithuania, then part of the Jewish "Pale of Settlement" in the Russian Czarist Empire. The city was an important center of Jewish learning and a bastion of the *Mitnaggedim* [opponents of the Hasidic movement]. He received a traditional Jewish education in his native city (his father was one of his teachers.) At the age of 12 he was sent for advanced studies at the famous *Yeshivah* [religious academy] of Mir. Like many youths of his generation he was also drawn to modern Jewish learning (*Haskalah* or Enlightenment) and even considered enrolling in the modern, government authorized, Hebrew teachers seminary in Zhitomir. En route, in the city of Pinsk, White Russia, the 15 year-old youth received a letter notifying him of the plight his widowed mother and younger brother, Abraham, were in, and was thus obliged to seek employment to support himself and help his family.

He was hired as a *Melamed* [teacher] to the children of Eliezer Rubinstein who lived in the village of Harinich where he farmed fields and operated a mill leased from the local church. While in the country the young Zvi Hirsch took advantage of any books he could find to further his Jewish learning by studying the works of the medieval Jewish philosophers and to acquaint himself with European culture (he thus gained knowledge of literary Russian through a Russian translation of the Biblical book of Isaiah.) At the age of 18 he married Yetta, the eldest daughter of his employer who was 15 years

old at the time, and joined his father-in-law's business. His longing for a more intellectual, city life persisted and was soon satisfied in an abrupt manner when the Russian government put an end to the family's source of livelihood in the village as part of its policy denying Jews the right to lease Christian property.

Zvi Hirsch, by then father to his oldest, Haim (Herman), made an attempt to engage in commerce in the nearby city of Pinsk. At that time the government-appointed Rabbi, A. H. Rosenberg, noticed the young man's intellectual ability by sheer chance. Rosenberg gave Masliansky part time employment as a teacher in the modern Hebrew school he had established and arranged for private students to supplement his income. The family thus settled in Pinsk where four children – Bertha, Pinchas (Philip), Fruma Gittel (Fanny) and Hanna (Anna) were to be born.

In spring 1881, following the wave of pogroms in southern Russia, a new phase in his life started. He joined the *Hibbat Zion* [Lovers of Zion] movement and preached its ideology of Jewish nationalism and the return to the Land of Israel, while maintaining his full schedule as a teacher. In 1884 the first universal fundraising drive of the movement took place – the selling of pictures of the benefactor Sir Moses Montefiore in honor of his hundredth birthday. Masliansky directed the appeal in Pinsk and enlisted his students to distribute the pictures. An exceptionally large number of pictures were allotted to his pupil, a student of the polytechnic institute, who also aided Masliansky in his administrative work on behalf of the movement: Chaim Weizmann. It is not surprising that many years later the President of the World Zionist Organization called Masliansky "my very first teacher in Zionism," and added: "his speeches laid the foundation of my Zionist belief."

In 1888 he moved to Yekaterinoslav with his family, where the two youngest children, Batya (Beatrice) and Emmanuel (who was to die at the age of five) were born. He continued his work as Hebrew teacher and his activity and preaching on behalf of *Hibbat Zion*. Four years later the movement decided to send him on a tour of the various Jewish centers in Russia and Poland. His sermons, which combined some of the traditional techniques of the Jewish preacher (*maggid* or *darshan*) with more modern subjects and methods, gained great popularity and left a lasting impact on many listeners. They also raised the ire of the Russian authorities that harassed, imprisoned and expelled him from various towns and finally in 1895 ordered him to leave Russia.

Following the recommendation of the leaders of *Hibbat Zion* he "went with the people" to America. His wife and six children* soon joined him in New York, where he became a pivotal figure in Jewish life especially in the absorption of the mass immigration from Eastern Europe. He urged the immigrants to remain loyal to their Jewish tradition and at the same time adapt and integrate to life in America. He maintained that far from being incompatible these goals were actually complementary, as was the Jewish national idea: Masliansky, who was completely devoted to the ideal of American Freedom, could not conceive any inconsistency between it and the renewal of Jewish national life.

Masliansky furthered his message in three ways: in writing as regular contributor to the Hebrew and Yiddish press, including the brief publication of his own paper *Die Yidishe Velt*; through communal activity and involvement in all national, Hebrew and charitable enterprises (he served as Vice President of the American Zionist Organization from 1901-1910); and most

* His eldest son Haim (Herman) emigrated to America with his uncle, Abraham, before Zvi Hirsch

and foremost orally, preaching his sermons from the pulpit. He spoke in practically every city where there was a sizeable Jewish community, but his base for nearly thirty years was the Educational Alliance in New York, that remarkable pioneer "community center" established by philanthropic Jews for the immigrant East Side. The great impression his sermons made on the crowd is evident in the recollections of Abba Hillel Silver who, when reading the sermons in print, wrote of the "glory of...[Masliansky's] eloquence," and added: "it was like hearing anew the echoes of my youth. I could see you again, standing on the platform of the Educational Alliance... pouring forth a brilliant cascade of sparkling phrases, your wisdom and your inspiration. I could see again the eager, tense faces of the thousands who listened to you." At the memorial service to Masliansky Silver further described the audience as coming to hear him "with bleeding hearts and parched lips."

Masliansky, the "National Preacher," was thus also the "people's preacher," who felt great love for his people, whose love for him was beyond measure. Stephen S. Wise expressed these feelings in his eulogy: "He will be remembered by the masses who listened to him eagerly and loved him greatly."

Masliansky's contribution to the immigrant generation in America was especially great. By greeting them in Ellis Island on Sunday and by delivering his sermons in their own language, he revived their national feelings and traditions and managed to bring them consolation at this difficult point in their lives, bridging the gap between the old world they had left behind and the new unknown world ahead.

Zviah Nardi

Foreword

Zvi Hirsch Masliansky's book of memoirs was published in Yiddish in 1924, and in Hebrew in 1929. Masliansky wrote both versions that were based on his Hebrew itinerant diaries. The Hebrew book, which was our source, appeared as vol. III of Masliansky's assembled works published by the Hebrew Publication Company in New York, the first two volumes consisting of selected sermons and biographical sketches of Jewish historical figures.

This English translation that we are happy to present to family and friends was born on a pleasant July day in 2006, when four of the descendants of Zvi Hirsch Masliansky gathered for lunch in New York City. They were his grandsons, Jimmy and Marshall Weinberg of New York, and his great granddaughters Zviah Nardi and Meira Nardi Bossem of Jerusalem, Israel. The conversation turned to the Memoirs of their progenitor that have become inaccessible to the majority of his descendants, being English-speaking Jews living in America. The problem had already been addressed some thirty years earlier by Masliansky's son-in-law, Dr. Harold Weinberg, father of the two grandchildren present, who had commissioned an English translation of the Memoirs from another of Masliansky's grandsons – Isaac Schwartz, an accomplished Hebrew-English translator of both prose and poetry. The Weinbergs had in their possession a typewritten version of this translation, encompassing Ch. 1 - 29. Then and there it was decided to bring this work to completion by transcribing the existing

material on a computer and continuing the translation (a task entrusted to Masliansky's great granddaughter Zviah Nardi, also a professional translator) in order to produce an English version of the book. We wish to mention some of the other family members who contributed to this endeavor: Rebecca Schwartz Greene, who served as proofreader; Naomi Schwartz Pasachoff, who was our "trigger"; and Susan Turberg Resnik, who provided useful advice and comments; they and others shared with us many insights and little "discoveries" throughout the process, much to the enjoyment of all.

In addition to the sentimental value for family and friends we feel that accessibility of the book to the American Jewish reader is important as a historical source both for the formative years of the absorption of the mass immigration from Eastern Europe in America and for the pre-Herzlian Zionist Movement in Russia (*Hibbat Zion*) about which there are only few sources in English. This is not an academic publication - footnotes are few and far between, some were written by the author himself, and others were added by the translators in cases when the original Hebrew text was flawed, certain names were not easily identifiable or terms (especially concerning ancient history) had to be updated according to evolved scientific knowledge. A special "last minute" category consists of "Family Notes" added by Zviah Nardi following the correspondence among family members during the progress of the work.

We wish to point out that chapters 33 – 48 of the book, dealing with Masliansky's early years in America have already been translated into English by Dr. Gary Philip Zola as appendix of his dissertation: *The People's Preacher; a Study of the Life and Writings of Zvi Hirsch Masliansky (l856 – 1943),* Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, l982, p. ll0-209, which also includes extensive footnotes for these

chapters (p. 210 – 248). However, ours is a new translation not based on Dr. Zola's work.

Masliansky also published memoirs in the Hebrew newspaper *Ha-Doar* (1933-1935); some segments are parallel, even identical, to those published in the book, but mostly they are far more extensive, covering his early years, including a detailed description of his education, an account of the first stages of his career, his marriage and activity in the *Hibbat Zion* national movement till the mid 1880s. We decided to add a separate piece about his early childhood to this book: "Mother and Son Meet" published in *Ha-Doar* vol. 16 (1937), 39. The unpublished continuation of the *Ha-Doar* memoirs, written in Masliansky's handwriting is in possession of the family.

Three editorial decisions taken by Zviah Nardi should be mentioned: Though this is not an academic edition an attempt was made to give the reader an impression of Masliansky's Hebrew style, a style typical of the *Maskilim* [adherents of modern Jewish learning, *Haskalah* or Enlightenment] of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This style was imbued with quotations from the Jewish sources, especially from the Bible. It was decided not to burden the reader by identifying each source, but rather to quote the sources in an authorized English translation and enclose them in single quotation marks. Hopefully this method would shed some light on the cultural world of the writer, without interrupting the reader's progress. The second editorial decision taken after consulting lectors from the family was to clarify Hebrew and Jewish terms briefly in square brackets throughout the text (rather that in a final index or glossary) in the hope of serving the reader in the same way. The third decision concerns transcription – Hebrew names and terms were transcribed according to the Sephardic, rather than the Ashkenazic, pronunciation which

is used by the overwhelming majority of Hebrew speakers and students today (hence Mendele Mocher Sefarim rather than Mendele Moicher Seforim).

The following English translations of the Jewish sources have been used:

Bible:
A new translation of the Holy Scriptures, according to the Masoretic text, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962 –1982, vols. I-III.

Babylonian Talmud:
The Babylonian Talmud, translated into English with notes glossary and indices under the editorship of I. Epstein, London, The Soncino Press, 1961, vols. I-XVIII.

Midrash:
The Midrash Rabbah, translated into English with notes, glossary and indices under the editorship of Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, London, The Soncino Press, 1977.

Rashi's Commentary:
Bereshith, Chumash with Rashi's Commentary, translated into English, edited by M. Silberman, Jerusalem, The Silberman Framily, 5745.

Prayer Books:
Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book, with a new translation, supplementary reading and notes, The Rabbinical Assembly of America and the United Synagogue of America, 1946.
Service of the Synagogue, Day of Atonement, A new edition of the Festival Prayers with an English Translation in Prose and Verse, reprinted from the latest and best London Edition, New York, Hebrew Publication Co., n.d.

Mother and Son Meet

(In memory of my mother Rivka, on the120th anniversary of her birth)

By Zvi Hirsch Masliansky

A man over eighty is seated at his desk, looking up at an old picture, one more than fifty years old. His eyes meet with those of a beautiful old woman, a woman who was born a hundred and twenty years earlier, lived eighty years and passed away over forty years ago. Their glances unite and a sea of images and visions rushes through their minds bearing a flood of memories, of unfulfilled hopes and aspirations, of age old scenes deleted by time, few of which, still alive and existent, emerge from the dust of days long gone.

* * *

My mother Rivka, may she rest in peace, was beautiful and wise, renowned in the city of Slutsk for her wisdom and mathematical talent, which earned her the name "Rivka the Wise." She was born in the city of Mir, daughter of Rabbi Pinchas Popov, who served as a *Dayan* [judge according to Rabbinical Law] in that city his entire life, descendant of the Harkavi family of Novogrudok.

People who have heard me speak were amazed to learn that "the National Preacher" was mute as a child till the age of five - mute but not deaf. This is indeed an aberration of nature - a

future preacher and speaker who was mute in his childhood and could not even say "Mama and Papa." I heard everything said to me with my own ears, understood everything, but I could not utter one word. My father, of blessed memory, who was a great pedagogue and could explain anything, taught me to read Hebrew orally, without pronouncing the words, and all the worshipers at the synagogue were astonished to see me going through the prayer book, turning its pages with the congregation without moving my lips.

My good mother told me that when I reached the age of five I suddenly started to talk and the first words I uttered were: "Mama, I want to go to the *Heder* [school] with all the children!" You can imagine how happy my parents were to hear their son Hersely the mute speaking out clearly like all the children of his age... My desire was fulfilled immediately, my father wrapped me in his large *Tallith* [prayer shawl] and my mother carried me in her arms to the *Melamed* [schoolteacher] in the *Heder*.

I remember being frightened at first when I saw thirty boys in one room, with two youngsters, "assistant teachers," supervising them as they all repeated the lesson together out loud. The teacher, a tall thin and bony man with a long yellow beard split in two, seated me at a long table; some twenty boys sat around the table on long benches made of simple wooden beams with no back support, and seemed as though they were floating in the air of the room. The teacher brought a large wooden tablet on which the letters of the Hebrew alphabet were printed. He held a long slender wooden stick in his right hand, pointed to the first letter "aleph" and ordered me to read out loud after him: "aleph, aleph, aleph". I, who could already read Hebrew fluently, read the entire alphabet from beginning to end, aleph to tav, in a single breath. The *melamed,* shocked, stared amazed at my mother, and she, full of happiness and

satisfaction [*nachas*], could not contain her feelings and started to cry.

The image of this threesome - the beautiful woman, my mother, her face all lit up; the lean yellow man, the teacher; and I, the little boy - looms clearly before my eyes even now, seventy-six years later.

* * *

In my mind's eye I see my mother in her Sabbath clothes blessing her Sabbath candles. She takes hold of my little hand and stands on her right next to the Sabbath table, which is covered with a snow-white cloth in honor of the day. At the end of the table there are two *Challot,* loaves of bread, and a red bottle of wine with a silver cup my father inherited from the grandparents of his grandfather, from generation to generation, still emanating brilliant rays of golden light. On the other side of the table is the Sabbath candelabrum gleaming with its seven branches opposite the wine and the cup. It too is a family heirloom – my mother inherited it from her grandmother's great-grandmother. How great is the sanctity and awe of the sublime in these vessels that carry our trials and heritage from one generation to another; the descendants of an ancient people who have inherited both their Torah, their lore, and their holy vessels and then bequeathed them to their children. The father, holding the cup to bless the wine, knows and senses that he is passing his legacy to his descendants, from generation to generation. The mother too, as she lights the candelabrum in honor of the Sabbath, feels and senses that this is not a personal task, but rather a national endeavor she is handing over to her daughters for generations to come. The cup and the candelabrum – eternal symbols of an eternal people ever after.

As she lit the candles my mother would cover her face with

her pure hands, shadowing her light radiant eyes that faced the glow of the candles, and utter the supplication of the "blessing of the candles" with a 'soft murmuring sound.'

"'God compassionate and gracious' bestow this favor upon me: as the candles shine with their holy light in honor of the Sabbath, so may my son's eyes shine as he studies your Holy Torah that you have given the people of Israel on Mt. Sinai, and grant him a long and healthy life, so that we should mourn no longer, as we have for our six sons who were taken away from the tree of life when they were little children."*

As she spoke these last words, the sound of sobbing was heard, and when her supplication ended she kissed my cheek, wetting it with her warm tears.

* * *

When I was twelve years old I heard my late father speaking to my mother early in the morning, unaware of the fact that I heard his words: "Thank God, he has a complete knowledge of the Bible, also of two tractates of the Babylonian Talmud, and is capable of studying on his own, without a teacher. Rabbi Aharon, the son of Rabbi Mendele, has told me that none of the youngsters in the town are his equals, except Haimke the Rabbi's son (Rabbi Haim Soloveichik, the Rabbi of Brisk) and the prodigy of Rotgatchove;** but our son needs an advanced *Yeshivah* [religious academy] and will then be ordained in a few years time. Let us send him to Mir, your native town, where your relatives live, where he won't, God forbid, go

---

* The death of these six young children left the family with one daughter, Haya Pesya. Zvi Hirsch was born when his mother was forty years old, and his brother, Abraham, four years later. The descendants of his older sister live in Balfouria, Israel, and in Paris, France.

** See chapters 19 p. 139 and 20 p. 143-4 for later encounters with these "fellow students."

hungry and would be able to study in comfort."

My kind mother listened to my father's words attentively; she accepted his advice, but wiped her eyes in silence. My father spoke and my mother acted. She summoned Yoseph the tailor and Bir the shoemaker. The former prepared a suit of clothes for me and the latter made me new shoes. My mother prepared a white sack of good cloth for my possessions: three pairs of woolen socks for the winter, and three linen ones for the summer, three shirts and two under garments with fringes, half a loaf of bread, dry cheese and six hard-boiled eggs. Above all these she placed my favorite prayer book. The sack was full – my mother tied it on the top and her lips murmured in silence: "May this be a blessed hour for my son, and may the angels of the Lord escort my son along the way." She then lifted me in her arms and covered my face with kisses.

"Go in peace, my son, and write about everything that happens to you there," my mother cried out in a tearful voice.

"No, no," my father interrupted her. "Write only once a week, so as not to neglect your studies."

I will never forget the image of my dear mother in those moments of separation. She looked like an angel of mercy and the tears in her shining eyes seemed like pearls.

* * *

Twenty-eight years passed since that day. During that time my father died and my mother was widowed. At the age of fifteen I carried the heavy burden of supporting my mother and my brother, the orphaned child. I became both a teacher and a student. I taught my students during the day and studied diligently at night. I married, became a national preacher, traveled to various towns and countries, sacrificed my life and talents for the sake of the triple revival – that of the people, of the Land [of Israel] and the [Hebrew] language; I was

imprisoned ten times, locked up in the jails of Czarist Russia. I became 'disgusted with my life' and decided to become naturalized in America. And before leaving the land of blood I traveled to my native town of Slutsk to say farewell to my kind mother and weep at the graves of my father and the family.

My final parting from my mother was a dreadful experience; my eighty-year old mother hugged me without uttering a word. Her entire body trembled as she cuddled in my arms like a little girl, looking at me intensively while deeply absorbed in her thoughts. I too said nothing. Our last glances came together before we separated forever.

* * *

All these images flashed through my mind and I remained seated at my desk tired and spent. I dozed off and heard her familiar voice speaking to me, enquiring about the life of all my family members. She did not mention them by name, except for one – my son Pinchas [Philip] who bore the name of her father the Rabbi. She loved him above all others during her lifetime and used to call him "my father and my grandson."

Thus did the good, merciful, intelligent woman appear before her eighty year old son through her old picture,* on the hundred and twentieth anniversary of her birth.

The mother returned to her eternal place of rest, and the son – to his final days in this tumultuous world of fury, a world burdened in pain and suffering under the yoke of three evil rulers who have conspired to establish the kingdom of the devil over it.

My 'day is declining, the shadows of evening grow long.'

---

* An old picture of Rivka Masliansky, which is in possession of the family could well be the one mentioned here.



Rivka Masliansky, born 1816, mother of Zvi Hirsch, Abraham and Haya Pesya. This photograph could be the one described in the memoir above.

כתבי מאסליאנסקי

נאומים
זכרונות
ומסעות

מאת המטיף הלאומי

הרב צבי הירש מַסְלַנְסְקִי

כרך ג׳

ספר הזכרונות והמסעות

ארבעים שנות נדודים ונפתולים

תרפ״ט
הוברו פאבלישינג קאמפאני
ניו יורק, ארצות הברית

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Title page of the Hebrew edition, 1929.

Europe

Chapter 1

From my earliest childhood I was irresistibly drawn to the pulpit. One Saturday afternoon – when I was seven years old and already familiar with the whole Bible - I brought my friends into our courtyard and as usual we played various games. Suddenly I thought of a new game: I entered the house silently; I removed the snow-white cloth from the table and wrapped it around myself like a *tallith* [prayer shawl]. Dressed in this manner I came out to my friends and began preaching to them. I spoke with great heat, with the enthusiasm and innocence of a child, and cast a spell of terror over my audience who were all children of my age.

This was during the first nine days of the month of Av [days of mourning for the destruction of the Temple] preceding *Tisha B'Av*. The adults were not exactly in mourning but much more grave and serious than during the rest of the year. You could already feel the mood of the destruction in the air. I preached to my friends on the subject of the destruction of the Temple. I began with the last chapter of The Second Book of Kings depicting the destruction of the First Temple. I drew powerful pictures of the siege of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzer and his army and of the increasing famine in the streets of Jerusalem. I remember, as if it were today, how clearly I described the enormity of the tragedy and the ravages of hunger. My friends burst into tears and I wept with them.

When I came to Nebuzaradan, the chief of the guards, who

smashed the golden pillars, Yachin and Boaz, causing the whole Temple to totter and fall, my listeners wept so loudly that my father was awakened from his Sabbath afternoon nap. My father, who was a great scholar, a rationalist and a "complete *Mitnagged*" [opponent of the Hasidic movement], emerged from the house furious, drove out my audience and punished me doubly – for disturbing his rest and for uncovering the table which resembled an altar.

When I grew older, I would attend every sermon of the preachers who would visit Slutzk. When I got home I would repeat their speeches miming their movements and rhythms. People in the know prophesied that I would become a preacher in Israel. The greatest preacher of his generation, my relative Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Dainow, the Slutzker *Maggid*, said, when he heard me repeat his words and saw me imitate his motions, that I was destined to take his place.

But many years passed before their prediction was fulfilled. When I went out into the world -and my world then was the city of Pinsk - I became a teacher of Hebrew. During those years I was busy teaching and I had no opportunity to step on a pulpit. But every Saturday I would deliver a lecture on the Psalms before a large audience, for no remuneration, of course. But this was the occupation of a Rabbi not of a preacher. I lived as a teacher during the week and a Rabbi on Saturdays until 1881.

In that year I had an experience that I cannot explain to this day. And it was this experience that determined the course of my life.

It happened on a mid-summer Saturday after the assassination of Czar Alexander the Second and the ascension of his son Alexander the Third to the throne. The terrible pogroms against the Jews were beginning and Ignatiev, the Minister of the Interior, was issuing his evil decrees against

Israel. The first pogroms broke out in Yelisavetgrad. When I read the headlines, "Slaughter of Jews in Yelisavetgrad," a fire was kindled in me and I had a burning desire to speak to an audience. I could not rest. I ran from synagogue to synagogue to find an audience until I came to the big Synagogue of the Tailors where the well-known preacher, Rabbi Aaron David, was speaking. The synagogue was full and the preacher had just finished his address. With tears in my eyes I ran to him and implored him to give me permission to go up on the pulpit and address a few words to the congregation. Rabbi Aaron David took pity on me and granted my request. I ascended the pulpit and delivered a passionate speech on Zion and the Land of Israel. The weekly portion from the Prophets, the *Haftarah*, was "But Zion said, 'The Lord hath forsaken me'" and it served as the keynote of my sermon. I preached with such passion that the whole congregation was moved to tears and even Rabbi Aaron David, that cold critical analyst, wept with them.

From that Sabbath on I became a preacher in Israel. Every Saturday I was invited to speak in a different synagogue and I never refused. It was 'like a raging fire shut up in my bones.' The tragedies of Israel, the pogroms and the evil decrees determined my fate. But I was granted the privilege of appearing before my audience not only with trials and tribulations, but also with the eternal hope of the People of Israel to rebuild its life in its own land. Those days saw the beginnings of the *Hibbat Zion* [The Love of Zion] movement and with all the fire of my youth I dedicated myself to this great ideal and it became the subject of my discourses. At this time the organization of *Hovevei Zion* [Lovers of Zion] was founded in Pinsk headed by Rabbi David Friedman. Rabbi Friedman was sent as a representative of this group to the famous Kattowicz Conference [1884]. From Pinsk, Aharon Eisenberg was also sent to the Land of

Israel. Our organization played an important role in the great movement of those days.

In 1888 I moved to Yekaterinoslav. There too I was a teacher and preached on the great ideal of *Hibbat* Zion. Together with Chaim Levanda (the brother of the Russian Hebrew writer), Maidansky, and the writer Rashi Stanislavsky, I founded a kind of center of *Hovevei Zion* in Yekaterinoslav. After four years of local work my comrades encouraged me to visit the large cities and to make converts to Zion. I agreed to their plan and the first city I visited in the course of my travels was Odessa.

Chapter 2

A new world was opened to me in the beautiful city of Odessa - 'A new heaven, a new earth,' and new people, renowned men with fine manners and refined customs. I was entranced by the sight of wide streets, large buildings and people full of life and joy, well-dressed and living in truth "like God in Odessa". I was especially impressed by the boulevard, which adorned the shore of the Black Sea.

As soon as I arrived in Odessa, I visited its sages and writers, Mendele Mocher Sepharim, Ahad Ha-am, the new thinker who had just made his mark in the world of Hebrew Literature with his essay "The Wrong Way" in *Ha-melitz*, and the essayist, Moshe Lev Lilienblum, a man of solid logic. It was only the greatest of the *Hovevei Zion*, the chairman, Dr. J. L. Pinsker, whom I could not visit. He lay on a sick bed, ravaged by dreadful suffering and his death was imminent.

One day as I sat in the meeting house of *Hovevei Zion* with Rabbi David Solomon Slouschz, the father of Nahum Slouschz, we were given the awful tidings that Dr. Pinsker had died. Heartbroken and thunderstruck we visited the house of our dead leader, with awe we gazed upon the departed, who lay as if in sleep. His close friends who were in the room before he died told us that just before his last gasp he opened his eyes and looked at the people standing about his bed and said:

"My pain and my suffering are leaving me, but O my people, my poor people...!"

It was with these words that he expired.

I remained in Odessa several weeks and preached in seventeen synagogues. My speeches had a great impact upon all segments of the population, old and young, rich and poor, orthodox and free thinkers. The Russian papers wrote about me practically every day as I was preparing to speak in the remaining synagogues; it was this publicity that forced me to leave the city.

One evening as we were sitting over a glass of tea in Lilienblum's house, the "national preacher" Yevzerov was there with us, and the subject of conversation was, of course, the death of Pinsker. Our host suddenly looked up from the Russian paper he was reading and said to me: "This evening is the last time you will spend with us".

"What?" we all cried in amazement.

Lilienblum read to us a complete article from *Odessky Listok* about me and my speeches, which moved an audience to tears over our terrible situation, described our national spirit and the idea of *Hibbat Zion*; It said that my words were making a very strong impression on our younger generation, etc., etc.

"You can be sure," added Lilienblum, "that the prefect of police of the city, General Zhlyoni, will read this article and will order the preacher to be expelled from Odessa at once."

Many of our comrades laughed at the pessimist Lilienblum and his ideas, but I remembered his words only too well.

I left Lilienblum's house about midnight and returned to my hotel, the *Alexander*. As I entered the lobby of the hotel the officer in charge of the section and his assistant stepped up to me. "Are you the preacher Masliansky?"

"Yes," I answered with bravado.

"Hurry, open the door of your room. We have a message for you from the Prefect of the city."

I opened the door, put on the light, and they fell like wolves

on my bags, they gathered all my papers and articles, stamped them with the seal of the government and confiscated them. They put me under house arrest and ordered me to appear at nine o'clock in the morning before General Zhlyoni in the prefecture. Of course I did not sleep that night as this was my first encounter with the Russian police. How lonely, how terrible was that night! Not once did I ask prophet Isaiah's question: 'Watchman, what of the night?'

Early in the morning I informed Lilienblum that his prediction had become fact. Among those who called on me that morning was the preacher J.L. Yevzerov and Abraham Eliahu Lubarsky.

I was very punctual and precisely at 9 A.M. I was in the prefecture. There I found the heads of the Synagogues in which I had preached and the assistant of the government-appointed Rabbi, Dr. Pomerantz. All of us, about fifty in all, had come in response to the perfect command. The police had us stand in line to await the arrival of the 'Lord.'

The door opened, the General appeared with the copy of the paper in which the article about me had appeared.

"Jews!" cried the General to the assemblage, "which one of you is the Professional Mourner whom you have brought here from Yekaterinoslav?"

"I," I said, stepping out of line.

He measured me with his terrible glance from head to toe and rebuked me:

"Was it to weep that you came here, to weep? I will expel you from the city today and you will weep no more!"

At once two policemen stood at either side of me.

The General continued to speak harshly to the heads of the synagogues.

"You want to weep, Jews? **It is forbidden to weep!** You have to be happy, because as long as I am with you here, there

will be no pogroms. Do you understand? I have ordered your professional mourner to be expelled from the city today; and if you continue to weep, I shall expel all of you from the city. Do you hear me? Now, go home!"

All of them left in silence and the two Russian policemen escorted me with my papers in their hands. They escorted me to my hotel and after I had settled my bill, they took my bags, put me in a carriage and brought me to the station.

There I found many *Hovevei Zion* waiting to take their leave from me. The bell rang for the third time. The policeman seated me in the train, gave me my papers, and ordered me to sign a receipt. One of them leaned over and whispered to me: "Tomorrow you can return to Odessa. We know that you are not a criminal, but we must carry out the orders of our mad prefect. Please forgive us!"

The train started to move and my comrades called out: "God Speed."

Chapter 3

After Odessa I visited a few cities in Bessarabia. To tell the truth, I must confess that I traveled to these cities with no great desire.

Bessarabia was never particularly beloved in Lithuania. The Lithuanian Jews, who prided themselves on their learning and evaluated every one by that standard, looked down on the Bessarabian Jews. They considered the Bessarabians to be physically strong with broad shoulders and red faces, crude persons, whose world began and ended with eating mamaliga and drinking wine. Should I travel to such Jews and speak of Zion and Jerusalem, of the exile of Israel and its future? The heart was full of fear and trembling and the question 'what if they do not listen to me?' naturally arose. Perhaps my words would not penetrate the hearts of the listeners? Perhaps they would not pay attention to such "abstract and spiritual" themes.

But when I came to the cities and began to know these people and became acquainted with their customs, my fears were completely dissipated. I found many cultured people among them, many learned men who were profoundly interested in the *Hibbat Zion* movement and completely devoted to it. Their strong physique and upright posture conferred a special grace on them and further endeared them to me. Even the common people, who were far removed from culture and learning, took pride in their Lithuanian origins, and those who could

claim a Rabbi in some town or a *Schochet* [ritual slaughterer] in some village as a relative, were considered members of the aristocracy and came into their own when a son or daughter reached the age of marriage.

I visited a few cities. In every place I addressed large audiences and my words made a deep impression. It was at this time that Rabbi Mordecai Gimpel of Rozhinoi one of the founders of *Hibbat Zion* had died. When I would memorialize Dr. Pinsker, I would include him too. The two great dead leaders were beloved by all classes of Jews. Many branches of *Hibbat Zion* were organized and many members were added to the rolls.

Then I came to Kishinev.

It was in Kishinev that I found the new movement of those days in full bloom. This new movement, in its time, was a strong competitor of *Hibbat Zion* and led to strife and dissension. This was the "Argentina" movement.

This movement was founded in the capital city by Baron de Hirsch's agents, Sonenthal and Feinberg, and spread like wildfire throughout the Jewish Pale of Settlement. Baron de Hirsch suddenly became a new redeemer, his picture adorned the walls of Jewish homes, and his name was blessed by all. Argentina, that distant country, whose name had never been heard of by the Jews of the Pale, suddenly became 'a land flowing with milk and honey.' Rumors spread that Baron de Hirsch wished to remove all the Jews from Russia and to give each and every one fields and vineyards in the fertile and blessed land of Argentina – all this to be a gift from the Baron. Later thousands of pamphlets were circulated among the people, telling of the merits and fruitfulness of that country and the great happiness to be found in it. These pamphlets were read at home and in public, in synagogue and house of study, and Argentina became the dominant topic for Jews

of the Pale. There were Jews who neglected their trade and business and circulated all day in the market places and streets and knocked on the doors of the Baron's men to find out when the first caravan was leaving, so that they might join it. The agents did all in their power to inflame the people, heaped praise on the Baron, and painted the most glowing pictures of the treasures of this new Land of Israel, in which the order of creation was reversed – day becoming night and winter summer, a land blessed by the Lord, where there was no sickness or disease. There were those who demonstrated by specific proofs from the Bible and the *Midrash* [homiletic commentary] that this was the end of the Diaspora and the true redemption. The Biblical text: 'Behold, I am creating a new heaven and a new earth' and the statement that "The Land of Israel will in time spread into all countries" did not 'cease from their lips.' This was a time of a new false Messianic movement like that of Sabbtai Zevi. Kabbalists and students of *gematria* [numerology] did not sit idly by, and daily brought proofs of the end of the dispersion.

Deeds soon followed the initial fervor. In many cities offices were opened, committees were formed and potential emigrants were enrolled. A strong desire to emigrate seized all the Jews. All those who were impoverished and disadvantaged rushed to enroll to be among the first to leave for the land of happiness. Special emissaries were sent by the committees to enroll all who wished to emigrate. Those enrolled would pay thirty Copecks a week, which were regularly collected. The desire to emigrate grew daily. Even well to do merchants neglected their affairs and added their names to the lists.

The only ones who opposed this movement were the *Hovevei Zion*. They saw in it not only the negation of their ideal but also the complete denial of the hopes of the people of Israel and the Land of Israel. If Jews were going to leave Russia in

order to settle on the land and to become farmers, it was clear that the country should be the Land of Israel and not some other country. There were those who predicted that the Jewish settlement in Argentina would not succeed – which actually turned out to be the case. The *Hovevei Zion* tried with all their strength, by word of mouth and in writing, to open the eyes of the people to the danger involved in a mass exodus to a distant and uncultivated country. This opposition was frowned upon by those who favored Argentina and saw it as the redemption of Israel. Thus, the Jews were split into two camps, "Palestinians" and "Argentineans". The dissention between the two groups was so great that it led to continual quarrels and even to blows. Eventually it became known to the Government, which favored the "Argentineans" because of the wealth of Baron de Hirsch. Alexander III authorized the Argentinean Movement and this authorization was signed on *Tisha B'Av* [memorial day for the destruction of the temple]. This fact too served as propaganda material for the two groups. The proponents of *Hibbat Zion* termed it "The Third Destruction", relating it to *Tisha B'Av* just as historians did with the Expulsion from Spain four hundred years ago. The false prophets of the 'Argentines' demonstrated by statements from the *Midrash* [homiletic commentary] that 'the beginning of redemption' would date from *Tisha B'Av*. The two groups battled each other with hatred and rancor and the poor suffering Jewish community stood between two fires.

It was at this tempestuous time that I came to Kishinev. I found many devoted workers for *Hibbat Zion* there. The organization was led by Dr. Cohen Bernstein and his two assistants, the Hebrew writers Solomon Dubinsky and Solomon Berliand. They founded a society *Dorshei Tushiah* [Seekers of Wisdom] to further the idea of *Hibbat Zion*.

My first sermon was delivered on Shabbat *Shuva* [the Sabbath preceding the Day of Atonement] in the great

synagogue. In connection with this I should like to relate this interesting incident.

The trustees of this synagogue would never permit any orator or preacher to speak from the pulpit. The reason for this was that the great Rabbi Chaim, the author of *Beer Mayim Chaim*, used to pray and preach in this synagogue and the place where he would stand was holy. However, an exception was made in my case and I was allowed to preach in the synagogue. In the middle of my speech commotion broke out in the women's section because of overcrowding. The tumult spread to the main synagogue itself, the noise grew in volume and all my efforts to restore quiet were in vain. I was compelled to stop speaking and to step down from the pulpit. Many of the Hasidim considered this to be another miracle of the great Rabbi.

In the course of my sermons I dealt with the Argentine issue and condemned it strongly. With all the fire at my command I explained to my large audience the dangers inherent in this movement and the great difference between the Land of Israel, our historic homeland, saturated with the blood of our forefathers, and a strange and uncultivated country which our fathers and their ancestors had never heard of.

These words of mine aroused the anger of the "Argentineans", and they began to seek ways to remove me from their path.

They sought and they found.

One day certain individuals appeared before the Governor of the Province and informed him that I was inciting the Jews to oppose Argentina and to refuse to emigrate from Russia. And since the Argentine movement was government sponsored as a result of the contract between Baron de Hirsch and the Czar I was a traitor, a political criminal, no more and no less.

The Governor did his duty and ordered me to be arrested.

I sat in jail three whole days. During that period Kishinev

was boiling over. Influential persons and the leaders of *Hovevei Zion* attempted to have me released, but to no avail. Obviously my crime was too great and it would not be easy to get me out.

An angel of deliverance then appeared – General Blumenfeld, a nationally minded Jew, who was the chief physician of the Province. He visited the Governor several times until he was able to influence him to release me. The governor finally agreed on the condition that I would translate for him the contents of my speeches.

I did this and explained in detail my reasons for opposing the Argentine movement. I saw in it a great danger to all the Jews of Russia and it was my duty as a preacher to warn the people.

The Governor ordered me to leave Kishinev and all Bessarabia and said to me: "Forget oratory! You would be better off selling onions rather than being a preacher. Know that Russia is the land of silence and not of speech!"

Chapter 4

I spent a few months in Bessarabia. I visited the large cities and the small towns. By night I would preach the message of *Hibbat Zion* and by day I would study the material and spiritual life of the Jews. The deeper I penetrated into the province the worse became the cultural condition of the Jews. In practically every place that I visited I found horrible ignorance, pseudo-Hasidic conduct of boorish common folk, complete indifference to Jewish values – total spiritual impoverishment. The younger generation for the most part had grown up with no knowledge of Torah or Hebrew culture, and the world of the older generation was based on three things – on wine, on card playing and on pseudo-Hasidic conduct.

The government-appointed Rabbis in these cities were woefully ignorant. Practically all of them could hardly read Hebrew and were as far removed from Judaism and its spirit as an observing Jew from Greek culture.

The two following episodes are well known in the cities of Bessarabia and clearly demonstrate the Jewish 'knowledge' of these Rabbis.

Dr. A. P. was the government-appointed Rabbi of Ismail. On the first holiday after his appointment he came to the synagogue to pray. He took his seat along the east wall, wrapped himself in his *tallith* [prayer shawl] and took out his *tephillin* [phylacteries]. When the sexton went up to him and told him with a smile that it was a holiday [when *tephillin* are not put on], the 'Rabbi' answered:

"Do you think that we doctors are not Jews and do not know how to put on *tephillin*?"

The second episode deals with another government-appointed Rabbi. A young woman came to him and requested a permit to bury her deceased father. After receiving his fee, the Rabbi gave her a permit written in Hebrew authorizing "the burial of the bearer of this document..."

My sermons in the cities brought life and awakening. With all the strength and enthusiasm at my command, I advocated the return to Jewish culture, to Torah and language, to people and country – my words made a great impression on the hearts of my audience. In practically every city organizations of *Hovevei Zion* were founded and lessons in Bible and Jewish history were established. I was frequently approached after my lecturers, by young men of modern education who would shake my hand and with tears in their eyes would promise me that they would study Hebrew and Jewish literature and would get to know their people and its treasures.

While I was in Ismail, I witnessed something very peculiar. That year there was a drought in the inner sections of Russia and the farmers were actually starving and subject to various illnesses. In the south of Russia, however, it was a year of abundance and ships loaded with grain would sail to foreign ports. In order to put an end to this abnormal situation, the Government banned the export of grain from Russia. An extension of twenty-four hours was granted to grain merchants in Southern Russia to put their loaded freighters to sea. This decree brought confusion and consternation to Ismail. The whole city was running around as if insane. In one moment all the fine carriages, litters and cabs were turned into plain carts and were all loaded with wheat and corn. The coachmen and porters did not enjoy a moment of relaxation. The horses too, did not rest, and for a full day and night the noise and tumult

did not cease in the streets of the city.

To this day, I cannot forget this scene.

From Ismail I went to Kiliya.

I traveled the whole night along the bank of the Danube, the river that flows between Russia and Romania. With aching heart I gazed across the river at the tyrannous kingdom that oppressed our unfortunate bretheren, at Romania, the land of deep darkness, of whose arrogance and harshness to the Jews I had read and heard so much. This Romania was not a nation with a normal history, but descendants of Roman criminals who were exiled to a desolate country and there intermarried with gypsies from the East, and these people would trample over the ancient Jewish nation!

Such thoughts filled my brain all night. From the distance, across the Danube, the lights flickered from the small Romanian houses. The barking of the Romanian dogs, baying at the moon, also reached my ears – they sounded just like the Russian dogs...

At dawn I came to Kiliya.

In this Bessarabian town I made the acquaintances of a righteous gentile, a Pole, Dr. Lubozhinsky. He was a true friend of Israel. He sympathized with them in their sorrows, and engaged in arguments with their enemies through the press in various languages. He would point out to them the folly of hating the people of Israel, which had created many spiritual treasures for the whole world. It was a great pleasure for me to converse with him. I was especially amazed by his great knowledge of Jewish history. I gave him a gift of Poems of Frug in Russian and he literally swallowed them up. As he read some of the poems, his eyes filled with tears.

I called Kiliya "Little Babel" because of the confusion of languages there. Its inhabitants spoke seven languages: Romanian, Bulgarian, Yiddish, Russian, Turkish, German

and French. It is characteristic of our brothers, the children of Israel, that they spoke all of these languages, and the Hebrew language was foreign to them.

From Kiliya I traveled to Reni. The latter is a unique town. There the prayer of Agur the son of Jakeh was fulfilled: 'Give me neither poverty nor riches.' There are neither rich nor poor there. The charitable custom of *Maoth Chitten* for Passover is unknown as there are none who require assistance.

The air was fresh and the sun lit up the fertile land of Bessarabia and the vineyards that extended to Galatz [Galati]. I was seized by strong yearning as I saw myself sitting in the train among people of different nationalities; Russians, Poles, Romanians, Bulgarians and Serbs, and I was the only Jew among them. They all had the right to live in this country and I alone was denied this right. Suddenly I heard the sneering term "*Zhid*" [Jew] come from a stout Romanian sitting opposite me. I restrained myself and did not answer. But from the midst of the other passengers an Austrian officer in uniform tall, broad shouldered with burning eyes, got up and reproved the Romanian in fluent Romanian for his coarseness and vulgarity.

The conversation attracted the attention of the other travelers. Two Russian priests, with big beards in front and long braids behind, the principal of a Russian gymnasium and several Bulgarians joined the group and began to argue about the Jews. Some of them poured fire and brimstone on the Jews, while others defended them. The Austrian officer answered all of them with convincing arguments.

The journey terminated at the Leipzig Station, the passengers got out, and the Austrian officer came up to me, extended his hand and said to me in Hebrew: "I am a Jew like you, a son of my people and my name is F. Loenberg a native of Tchernowitz and an officer in the Austrian army."

We looked at each other like two brothers who have found each other after war and great slaughter.

Tarutino is a German settlement. Only three hundred Jews live among thousands of Germans and, marvelous to relate, there is peace and harmony between the Gentiles and the Jews. There is no sign of Anti-Semitism. The children of the Gentiles and the Jews study in the same schools and all speak Jewish-German. There are some Gentile children who know our prayers. When I lectured in Tarutino many Gentiles came to hear me and understood what I said. During the pogroms the Gentiles and Jews organized a defense force to guard the settlement at night. In general this blessed settlement made a favorable impression on me. Would that were an example to the neighboring settlements!

To our sorrow the lot of the Jews in the nearby villages that are mostly Romanian, is not similar.

When I passed through the village of Komandor I witnessed a terrifying sight:

Russian policemen surrounded a Jewish house and forcibly evacuated everyone. They removed the children from the top of the stove where they were sleeping and threw them into the wagon waiting to take the Jewish family out of the village. It was a cold autumn night and the members of the household were shivering. The mother threw herself down at the policeman's feet and begged him to take pity on her children and let her live there until the following spring. The heads of the Bulgarians, who lived there, interceded for the woman and her children. But the policeman showed no pity and the poor family was expelled from the village. The pillows and cushions were put in the wagon and the children were placed on them. The parents walked behind the wagon with bowed heads as if they were following in a funeral procession. From time to time they would turn their heads and cast a sad

glance at their empty and deserted home.

My heart despaired within me: "'Why Lord do you stand aloof, heedless in times of trouble!?'"

In the city of Leova I became acquainted with the following tragic-comic facts:

One evening I was sitting in my inn and talking with the innkeeper and his wife. Among other things I heard the husband ask his wife: "Where are our bastards?"

This question amazed me, and both of them, the husband and his wife recognized my astonishment, and she told me the following story:

She was a native of this place and had the right of residence here. When she was married to her husband a native of another city, she lost her right and the government decreed that the parents and children be expelled from the city. The only way that they could get around this decree was for the husband to officially divorce his wife. In this way she would recover her former right. On the very day of the 'divorce,' the husband was expelled from the city together with his two small daughters, as by law they were his children and they too had no right to live there. From that time on they lived separate lives like divorced people and only twice a week on market days was he allowed to 'lodge' in his home. It is interesting to note that the children who were born after the 'divorce' have the right to dwell there as they are 'bastards' by law and the privileges of their 'immoral' mother stood them in good stead...

Akkerman is one of the important cities of Bessarabia. How different are the Jews of this city from the other Jews of Bessarabia. It is difficult to believe that they live in the same province. Hasidism prevalent in all cities of Bessarabia has not put its stamp on the Jews of Akkerman. Their life style, their customs and their clothes are copied from Odessa, their great and beautiful neighbor, crown of South Russia. Odessa cast

her wings over her small sister, Akkerman, put on her stamp of Europe and wiped away the Bessarabian spirit. But all this is just heat lightening, just surface appearance. When you look closely you will see that Akkerman learned from Odessa only the lawlessness, the shaking off of the yoke of religion, of the costume and ethics of Israel, of the sanctity of the Sabbath and Festival, modesty and family purity – it learned all the negative freedoms. But the good and the positive, her institutions, synagogues, enlightenment, the longing for Torah and knowledge – this she did not receive from Odessa. Ignorance reigns in Akkerman as in all the cities of Bessarabia.

When I was still a pupil in *Heder* [elementary school] the term "bath attendant" was one of disgrace. It was not considered an occupation that conferred honor on its practitioners. How amazed was I therefore, to see that the bath attendant in Akkerman was the well-known Hebrew writer, that distinguished stylist, Jacob Samuel Halevi Trachtman, author of well-known books. When I visited him, he received me cordially and said: "Do not make the mistake of judging the townspeople by the bath attendant!" He was right. The people of Akkerman put all their wisdom and knowledge in the bath house and gave them to the only learned man in the city, Jacob Samuel Halevi Tractman.

Chapter 5

When I returned from the towns of Bessarabia, I came to Yelisavetgrad. I immediately sensed a different atmosphere – a different life and different desires. Instead of the Hasidic terminology prevalent in Bessarabia, names of saints and dynasties, descriptions of the various types of wines – in Yelisavetgrad I heard the names of dances, theatres and circuses, dramas, comedies and tragedies, leading actors, prima-donnas and prominent gamblers. There were many admirers in the city of the Malorussian Theatre of Karpovintski. The Jews of Yelisavetrad, the first to suffer the pogroms of Alexander III were immersed in this type of life!

Gloomy and devastated I sat in my hotel room contemplating the indifference of our brothers toward the distress of Israel.

Suddenly the door opened and two veterans of *Hibbath Zion* came into my room – Solomon Dubinsky, an admirer of mine who came from Kishinev to see me, and H. Russotto one of the best idealists of Yelisavetgrad. With them I visited Mr. Smilansky, a remarkable man. When we arrived at his house, I saw lying on the table, scissors, pressing irons and other tools of a tailor. From the next room we heard the humming of sewing machines. In a few minutes a middle-aged man with an intelligent face and a tailor's tape measure came to meet us. In the person of this tailor we found a cultivated man, an original thinker, well versed in Hebrew and Russian literature. We stayed with him until midnight, discussed various literary

topics and learned a great deal from him.

The next day we visited the Hebrew writer, Mr. Rosenfeld, author of *Gan Sha'ashuim* [*Garden of Delight.*] From our conversation we discovered that he was the author of many articles in *Ha-Melitz* under the pseudonyms of Balak, Paran and Zarzir. An interesting personality – as great as was his power with the pen, so meager was his power with the spoken word – with great difficulty we salvaged a few words from him: "It is much easier for me to write than to talk," he repeated again and again.

I found a new movement in Yelisavetgrad, whose like I had not seen in other cities – The Biblical Brotherhood. The Biblical Brotherhood was a new Christological sect in Judaism. Its founder was Jacob Gordin who later became a Yiddish dramatist. The new sect at its inception found many followers in the south of Russia. When Gordin left for America his place was taken by the Yelisavetgrad lawyer Bernstein ,and from this city the new law went forth – a kind of amalgam of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Of course I felt an obligation to myself to oppose this new sect with all my strength. And when I spoke of the various sects in Israel, I designated this new one as a "New scab on the old Body of Israel." When these words came out of my mouth, there was tumult in the hall. A young woman, Mrs. P. challenged me to a public debate. I accepted the challenge and the time and the place were set, the next Tuesday in the P. house.

That night is inscribed in my memory as a night of vigil and I will not forget it until my final breath. The large and beautiful drawing room was full. All the intellectuals of the city were present as was the membership of the Brotherhood – among them doctors, lawyers and engineers. In the middle of the room stood a small table and on it were a Hebrew Bible

and a copy of the New Testament.

Mr. Bernstein, the head of the movement, opened the discussion. With awe he lifted the two books and he called out to the audience:

"These two books are our holy ideal. They are the basis of our holy religion."

Then he began to pour fire and brimstone upon the Talmud and its adherents from the *Tannaim* [sages of the *Mishnah*] to the most recent Rabbi. Then Sister P. added words of derision and contempt about Jews and Judaism, she reviled all that is holy in Israel from Shemaya and Avtalion [1st century BCE] down to [the contemporary] Rabbi Isaac Elchanan [of Kovna].

My heart was agitated to hear boors and ignoramuses who had never seen the light of the Talmud get up and revile all that has been sacred to our people for the last two thousand years. I controlled my anger and calmly and logically I explained to them in a few words the connection between the Written Law in which they believed and the Oral Law, which was completely strange to them. I proved to them that all the ethics and noble ideals, which they found in the New Testament, which was holy to them, were taken from the Talmud and *Midrash* [homiletic literature].

"It is true," I cried enthusiastically, "That Christianity exerted a great influence upon idolaters and Greek mythology. As Maimonides said the Nazarene and Mohammed shed light among the idolaters. They did not do so among the descendants of our father Abraham who had recognized his Creator and founded Monotheism two thousand years before the birth of the young Essene in Galilee. Descendants of the prophets do not need the message of the carpenter's son and his disciples. Would Brodsky, the proprietor of the great sugar factories, buy sugar in a small grocery that has a few pounds

of sugar lying between the herrings, spices and tobacco? Open your eyes and read critically and you will see that the New Testament is like a retail store compared to the great warehouse whose name is Talmud. 90% of the New Testament comprises of foolish tales about demons and spirits, nonsensical legends full of petty miracles that impress gullible old maids and small minded believers in superstitions."

I continued to speak and drew different pictures of the delight in the Sabbath in Jewish homes and of beautiful family life in accordance with the laws of the Talmud. I refuted all their arguments, their hallucinations and false hopes. I described to them the destruction and ruin implicit in their doctrine and I begged them in the name of our unfortunate people to terminate their new movement that could only bring disaster. I spoke without pausing until 4:00 A.M. Their collapse was complete – they could give me no answer.

The lawyer Bernstein and Mrs. P. who had not entered a synagogue in twelve years both came to hear the speeches on Zionism I delivered in Yelisavetgrad.

I visited Vladimir Tyomkin, the spokesman of *Hibbath Zion*. To my sorrow, I found him broken and dejected from overwork and from the slander that was heaped upon him by the [ultra-Orthodox] members of Black Office when he came to Kovna – and all his plans were interrupted.

Tyomkin's work among the youth on behalf of *Hibbath Zion* was magnificent.

Between Yelisvetgrad and Yekaterinoslav is the city of Kremenchuk which trades actively with both towns. Nevertheless, it has its own peculiar character. When you enter the city and look at the faces of the local Jews, you do not feel that you are in one of the cities of South Russia, but rather you imagine that you are in a Lithuanian city. In Kremenchuk there are many *Habbad* Hasidim who study their sacred works – the

Tanya and *Likutai Torah* as well as their Orthodox opponents, the *Mitnaggedim,* who daily study Talmud and *Chayei Adam* as in all Lituanian cities.

When I was in that city, I visited the public soup kitchens. By long tables where Jewish soldiers and poor people of the area were sitting, I found the pupils of the *Talmud Torah.* It is apparent that it never occurred to the communal workers of Kremenchuk that it is not proper to seat children next to military men and charity cases – that such contact cannot but harm the young minds of the pupils and implant in them the poison of *'Schnorerism'* [begging]. After all the *Talmud Torah* was a charitable institution and the soup kitchen was a charitable institution, and the administrators of the one were administrators of the other – so, how could one distinguish between the two?

On my way from Kremenchuk to Kharkov I passed through the village of Preshchepina. It was wonderful to see that in that village, where only forty Jewish families lived, there was an exemplary Hebrew School. The majority of the Jewish settlers were *Maskilim* [adherents of Jewish Enlightenment], and an excellent teacher, Yisrael Isser Katzowicz, taught their children with intelligence and imagination. In this school the boys and girls studied the Hebrew language and literature and in their choir would sing Hebrew songs as well. In those days a school of this nature was a rarity in the big cities, not to mention in remote villages.

Chapter 6

If in the cities of the Pale I did not feel that I was Jewish, just as I did not feel that I was alive, the moment that I came to Kharkov my Jewish consciousness was aroused and at every step I realized that I was a Jew. Kharkov was outside the Pale of Settlement and only Jews who were merchants of the "First Guild" (highest class) or members of the free professions were permitted to reside in that city. And since I belonged to neither of these two categories, it was absolutely forbidden for me to stay there. The moment I stepped down from my carriage at a hotel, the quarter official appeared before me, springing up out of the earth as it were and asked to see my passport. Like a Jew, well versed in these matters, I gave him my passport with a ten-ruble bill folded in it. The officer took my passport from me and smiling, with eyes full of cunning, said the following words to me:

"As I see it, you have two passports, one is Jewish, but the second is universal. The second passport permits you to stay ten days in Kharkov, one day per ruble. You are aware that there is a cure for every disease. An Israelite comes to Kharkov Friday evening at twilight. He is placed between two fires. According to the laws of your Torah he cannot travel further because of the sanctity of your Sabbath. According to the laws of the Czar he is forbidden to stay in the city. What is he to do? At this point the second passport you gave me takes effect and all difficulties disappear."

In the ten days that I spent in Kharkov I accomplished a

great deal. I delivered a talk practically every evening and spent the daytime in the company of Isaac Eisenstadt, a great scholar and cultivated man, David Smolyanov, a young man with a warm Jewish heart and an open hand, and the teacher Moses Schachevitz, who was a living library. Together we visited the men we hoped to mobilize for the Zionist Idea. It was very affecting that the Hasidic Rabbi Arlosoroff, Dr. Schlaposchnikov, the editor of *Vestnik Siona* [*Herald of Zion*], and with them scholars, ardent Hasidim and students at the University came to the synagogue to hear my speech on "The Tragedy of Assimilation for Judaism". I spoke for four consecutive hours. I drew vivid pictures of the great days of the ancient people of Israel when they lived in their own land with the splendor of their kings and the glory of their prophets, and contrasted those days with the great calamity of the dispersion, when they filled all countries but had no country of their own, they were familiar with all literatures, but had no knowledge of their own. All animals - those with cloven hoofs, cats, dogs - all are permitted to breathe God's air and to walk on God's earth, but Jews do not have this right. "The man who stands before you", I cried out in a martyr's voice, "is not permitted to stay with you. It is by bribery that I have purchased every breath that I draw in Kharkov."

Quiet weeping filled the hall. After a few moments of silence, I pulled myself together and spoke words of comfort to my audience. I assured them that our hope was not all lost if we would only strengthen the national feeling among our young people.

My sermon had strong effect on listeners of every group and it was heartwarming to see Hasidim and University students come over to me and shake my hand in gratitude. The national movement was advanced and many people were converted to it.

It is miraculous that in that city where I had no legal right to be and where my stay was dependent on the 'kindness' of the quarter official - in that very city I had a great experience, an experience that had a tremendous influence upon my spiritual and intellectual life.

In Kharkov I became a member of *Bnei Moshe* [Sons of Moses], that secret organization that was founded by Ahad Ha-am, all of whose members were of the elite of the Jewish people.

I had heard much of this society, of its mysteries and its noble goal, but I did not know everything about it and of course had not achieved membership. It was a festive day for me when the members of the *Bnei Moshe* added me to their ranks. The evening of the seventh day of Adar 5652, the day of the birth and death of Moses, our Teacher [March sixth, 1892], was fixed as the date of my initiation into the fellowship of the Sons of Moses.

That evening is engraved on the tablet of my mind and heart and I shall never forget it.

All the members of the *Bnei Moshe* in Kharkov were gathered in a room in the home of Mr. Eisenstadt. A profound silence reigned. My heart beat in a strange way I had never known before. I felt as if I were about to enter a mysterious palace, invisible to all, and to see and hear things that the eye cannot see and the ear cannot hear.

The presiding officer of the society, Mr. Schachevitz, broke the silence and began the initiation ceremony with the following words.*

"Zvi son of Haim Hayitzhari [Masliansky], you have indicated your desire to enter our society and to take upon

* The text of the initiation ceremony was published in *Derech Haim* [*Way of Life*] but due to the rarity of that book we thought it worthwhile to present it here, for the benefit of our readers.

yourself all its obligations. Shortly, you will be admitted to membership, shortly you will become one of the standard bearers, but before you take this step, I want to tell you a few things about the name of our organization, its origins and principles, and the duties of its members.

"We have called our organization, *Bnei Moshe,* 'Sons of Moses', because we have taken as our standard the name of our shepherd, Moses, the Son of Amram, so that we always may strive to emulate him. Our sages of blessed memory have said that every man can be like Moses. And we say that the conduct of each and every one of us shall be aimed toward the benefit of our people. As he was the most humble of men, we too shall strive to be humble and to be free of ugly pride; as he 'went out to his kinsfolk,' leaving his house of greatness to take part in their struggles and to protect them, so we, even the most illustrious of us, must forget our private affairs and standing, and watch and protect the common people; he did not turn back from leading our ancestors to the good land, even though he knew that he himself would not reach it, and that he would be buried in the land of Moab and no man would know his sepulcher, that his sons would not carry on his work, but his place would be filled by another, just so we may not cease to work for the good of our people and to strive to lead them to their land and inheritance although we know in advance that we ourselves shall not see the land, that this reward for our labors will not be given to us or to our sons after us, but rather to generations to come.

"The principles of our society state that its essence is ethical. Therefore, we must be sure that all our members are purified sevenfold. This is one of the reasons that we have seen fit to hide the name of our society and our activities from all, so that we are not approached by men who do not qualify, who are afflicted by the corrupt qualities which unfortunately most

people are heir to, such as envy, hate, divisiveness, self-seeking, love of glory, desire to rule, or God forbid, the acceptance of the false doctrine that Israel will be redeemed even on foreign soil by freedom and enlightenment.

"We must test and check the character and actions of each member before he is admitted to our society; we must determine if he has an understanding heart, and if his heart is devoted to his people; we must make sure that he, God forbid, has no destructive bent, for we may not 'be included in such council'; finally, we must separate the wheat from the chaff, so that the chosen will be worthy to bear the exalted name of Bnei Moshe and that name will be theirs alone.

"The first duty of each member is to improve his spiritual life and to eliminate all deficiencies in his life and that of his family. Each one must examine his manners and actions, judge them intelligently, and remember in whatever he does that he is as a Son of Moses, a son of that faithful shepherd, who redeemed our people from the slavery of magic and idolatry to the freedom of a true faith, purified sevenfold; a Son of Moses, the man of God, who carried our people 'as a nurse carries the infant,' who devoted his strength and his life to lead our people to eternal light, whose 'eyes were undimmed and his vigor unabated;' and who did not cease to the last moment of his life to work for his beloved people, so that he might improve its latter end.

"Each of the members of our society must strive to be bound with all his heart and might to the ideal of 'The Rebirth of Israel in the Land of Israel' and not to slacken in his work for the revival of the house of Israel in the present generation, even though it is highly doubtful that the coming generation or even the third generation will enjoy the fruits of his labors".

The chairman continued to read:

"Each of us must know that as long as we do not build for

ourselves a firm home in the land of our fathers, we will not find rest in alien lands. We will be despised and trodden upon, even as we are today in all the lands of our dispersion.

"Let us not forget even for one moment that the life that we hand down to our children and which they will hand down to their descendants to the end of time will be a life of poverty, slavery, and degradation, and each one when born will curse his day, and each generation will say: 'It were better for man not to have been created than to have been created', seeing that he is denied justice and that he is exploited and degraded all day long, prey to wild beasts without a savior.

"Even if the sun of success will shine over him, and the fortunes of his house wax great, at the same time his heartache will grow as he sees the honor of his people and his own honor desecrated among the nations. He will know that his wealth cannot protect him in the day of wrath, but rather will draw our detractors and enemies to him, and will bring upon him sudden catastrophe; therefore, such success is vain and such wealth deceitful.

"As long as Israel will not dwell securely in its own land, the Holy Land, and as long as its sons will be dispersed among the nations and scattered to all the winds as we are today, the enemies of Judah and the adversaries of Israel will strive to make us a crawling worm, a creeping thing to be despised, a shame and disgrace among all the inhabitants of the earth, as they have done until now. The knowledge that as long as we are not for ourselves, we are at mercy of our enemies, will breathe into us a new breath of life, will give us strength to mend breaches, to erect fences, to build and to plant, even though we know in advance that our fences will protect the fourth and fifth generation, and the fruit of our planting will be eaten by the tenth generation.

"Let us raise our eyes to the East. The dew of Mount Hermon,

which descends on the hills of Zion, will be a dew of rebirth for us to revive our dry bones. From the holy hills shall our 'light burst through like the dawn,' a perpetual strong light, like the light which lit our ancestors' eyes on Mount Horeb through Moses, the Man of God."

As he said these words with passion and feeling, tears fell from my eyes and the others wiped their eyes.

Then I gave my pledge :

"With perfect faith and in the name of all that is dear and holy to me, I promise to keep all the laws of the organization, which I now enter, to fulfill them wherever I may be, to the best of my ability, and to keep the secrets of the organization even should I leave it. All this I accept wholeheartedly, without deceit or conditions. You are all witnesses, my brothers, standing here with me. 'I grant you my pact of friendship,' Amen!"

All the members cried out, "Welcome, brother!" *

After I had given my pledge, the chairman turned to me, saying:

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* Family note: In a 1975 letter to her family in Jerusalem Fanny Maslian-sky Schwartz wrote:
"In Zviah's letter she mentions about my father being a member of the Bnei Moshe, that reminded me when I was about 7 years old when we came back from Ikatrinoslav to Pinsk so that the children will not be without family as Papa began to travel around in different cities in Russia and Mama was alone with the young children, Herman was in the U.S. already, Philip was with the Grandma, Papa's mother, and he came back to join us all in Pinsk. And Pa's good friends, members of the society of, I think it was Bnei Moshe, some lived in Pinsk and around the neighbor-hood so they will help take care of mother and the children. When the steamboat landed in Pinsk Harbor a nice gentleman came over to Papa and hugged him and kissed him so I asked if he was an uncle or some other relative. Pa answered that he is member of the new society and he and other members will come often to see his family when he will be traveling"

"Welcome, brother! May you be blessed of the Lord and His people, Israel. May you be a blessing to all of us in giving us your hand and performing with us the holy work, the work of Israel; may you be blessed and may the new road upon which you stand be blessed; this road is long and difficult and at every step the way is full of horrors and pitfalls which can be removed only with the greatest exertion. But there is nothing in the world more precious than your road, this holy road with its goal and its purity. You know where it leads: Eastward! To Zion! To the revival of Israel in the Land of Israel!

"'By the rivers of Babylon' our ancestors sat and wept as they thought of Zion; they remembered the former glory of their nation and saw its present degradation and poverty, and they wept bitterly. Then they swore their oath of oaths, that they would never forget Zion, their burning ideal, and would ever remain faithful to their land and birthplace.

"Will the echo of this awful cry penetrate your ear, O distant descendant of these men? Will you hear it through the thousands of intervening years, through the far off lands that separate you and them? Will you still hear the awful sounds that come forth from their burning lips and reach to the very heavens? Will you be able to cry out with them, 'If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither; let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you.'

"You are a man of Israel, a son of this great and wandering nation which for thousands of years has been subjected to desolation and which today stands on the brink and whose life is a very Hell. Raise your eyes to the four corners of Heaven, to all sides of the earth. From one end of the world to the other, and you will see the devastated members of your people scattered to all the winds with no one to gather them in.

"On one side you will see the streams of blood and tears flowing from year to year, from century to century, with no

end and no limit; you will see your Jewish brother wandering with his pack and bag, afflicted, downcast and bowed down. What is he? What is his life? And what is his worth? And on the other side, you will see his 'sons and daughters... delivered to another people,' despising the teaching of their mother, guarding another's vineyard, while their own vineyard, the vineyard of their people, is overgrown with thorns and thistles so 'that it may be ravaged...'

"'Turn your ear' to your nation's history and hear the awful sound of lamentations that agitates the heavens, that splits the abysses, this long wail that for thousands of years passes from one end of the world to the other, the sound of Israel's lamentations over its bitter exile, its degradation and homelessness, over its glory trampled by a haughty foot, over the loss of its ancient delights, over its descendants forced into captivity by the oppressor... And there in the distance, lonely and forgotten, desolate, wallowing in the dust of the destruction is the proud and comely daughter of Zion, there in the midst of her eternal calamity she bewails with all who see her misfortunes great as the sea, her ruin and downfall unparalleled on earth, there she is, the 'unhappy, storm-tossed one, uncomforted!' Alas, she is handed over to strangers and a haughty foot, the foot of the oppressor, treads on the Holy Land.

"If you understand this, it is not little; if you feel this with your heart, with all your soul, and all your might to the last drop of blood, then you are one of us! Then give us your hand and be blessed! 'Know therefore this day' as you stand here before us that these moments in your life are great and holy! Here you are giving your hand to a society of your brothers, whose standard bears the name of Moses, the man of God, whose first aim in life is the revival of Israel on the Land of Israel, and from this day forth you are a priest of a holy, lofty,

and mighty ideal, upon whose altar your physical and spiritual strength will be laid, 'when you stay at home and when you are away, and when you lie down and when you get up,' wherever you turn, this holy ideal will accompany you; it will always be a protection on your right hand; it will always be the joy of your heart and in it you will thrive and will always stand upright to do everything you can.

"O, Brother, the great step that you have just taken in joining our society of Bnei Moshe, the Sons of Moses, will have great value for you and your descendants after you, and will surely affect all aspects of your private and public life. Our holy books, our seers, our prophets and poets, the words of our sages, our teachers and our enlighteners will always be open before you and you will recite them attentively, and may you draw from this pure fountain a faith as strong as the eternal hills; a faith that our Redeemer is yet alive, that 'in two days He will make us whole again; on the third day He will raise us up and we shall be whole by his favor,' that the star of Israel will shine once more, that Zion will stand forth in all its glory and God will shine upon it. May you be as strong as you can to succeed in implanting your ideals in your children and descendants so that you may be confident that they too will be faithful sons to their people, their land, their Torah, and their language. May they be God's blessed children of Israel, sons of Zion, in heart, soul, and spirit, and may 'your springs... gush forth' beyond the confines of your home, so wherever you find a broad pasture fit to plant, to plough and to revive – you shall not spare any work or toil, you shall act and succeed, your seedlings will grow high and be a blessing in Israel.

"Remember, keep in mind that one of your most sacred and elevated goals and hopes in life is 'Zion!'

"Remember, keep in mind that you are a Son of Moses; strive to be worthy to bear this lofty name, and to be an example to

the multitude, so that they may follow you and the builders of Zion be multiplied. May your ways in life be 'pleasant ways and all' your 'paths peaceful!' Strive to find favor understanding in the sight of God and man!

"Truth, righteousness, justice, humility, courage, purity of soul - may these and all other good qualities illuminate your path and make you a glory to mankind, a glory to Israel, so that the people may know that the men of Israel who are devoted to Zion are the elite of Israel, worthy to instruct them and to tell them what is good and what their duties are.

"The future of the people of Israel shall be the cornerstone of your life's endeavors! Therefore, you should always comport yourself as a good son of Israel, walk with your people, teach them to love and to know their traditions, to treasure their historic memories, their good customs and special ways, to cherish and to sanctify all that is dear and holy to them in truth, all that stems from the tradition of their ancestors, from the days of their happiness and glory.

"Our brother, such are your duties in general to your people and to Zion, and your heart, a true heart of Israel, will teach you to know everything in good time and enable you to strive always to the focal point, the necessary point, that we all long for; yet even clearer and more explicit to you should be your duties to us, this society of your brethren, the Sons of Moses to which you have pledged yourself today.

"First of all, you must observe and act. You must know that our organization has no purpose other than 'Zion'. If it finds it necessary to make use of your talents, if it requires you to accommodate yourself to its disciplines, strive to fulfill its demands to the best of your ability, and be confident that the furtherance of our great ideal demands this, even though at the time you may not, for any reason whatever, comprehend the importance of it.

"Remember and never forget that compared to this elevated and historic idea the private individual has no significance and all of us, great and small, must bow our heads and be bondsmen to the sacred idea, by whose light we too will be 'magnified and sanctified,' on whose altar we must all be prepared to sacrifice ourselves completely, regardless of any distracting or external concerns.

"O, brother! We were ever stiff-necked and even at the beginning of our national existence our great leader complained about us that from the time he first knew us, we were rebellious, and from that day to this we did not accept instructions, and at the time when in the outside world we were trodden upon and licked the dust of our oppressors' feet, in our private world, each of us desired to be chief, and unreasoning hate, self-seeking, and false glory destroyed all good qualities and made us abhorrent... Against this deterioration the Sons of Moses must struggle with all their strength. This will be the beginning of your spiritual redemption and from this a new life will ensue. Therefore, every Son of Moses must learn to live a life of harmony, removed from contention, envy and hate, to live a life of submergence of all to the general good and only then will there be hope for our future.

"When you understand and feel all this and when you accept it as a sacred duty to fulfill all our conditions faithfully, then will you be our brother! In the name of all the members of our society, near and far, we extend our hand to you and bless you before the Lord, Who dwells in Zion, and hope that you will be merited to see the consolation of your people, and that in your time and before your eyes they will be transplanted to the Holy Land and the Star of Israel will shine again. Amen! Amen!"

It is impossible to describe the impression these words made upon me at the time. I seemed to be in another world,

a world of nobility and spirituality, a world of brightness and beauty. It was as if I was chained to the floor and I could not move. My eyes were fixed on the speaker and his voice, as it were, was heard through a distant darkness... my awakened soul absorbed word after word and my heart became fuller and fuller... greater and greater.

At the same time they taught me the password by which the Sons of Moses revealed themselves to each other. One would say to the other, "Not – nor." The second would reply, 'His eye was not dimmed, nor his vigor abated.'

From that time on I became a changed man. At practically every step I was accompanied by the knowledge that I was not a plain Jew, but a Son of Moses - that is to say, a Jew whose responsibilities to his people and land were great

And I had become a Son of Moses in Russian Kharkov...

Chapter 7

Yekaterinoslav made a special impression on me. This city had all the signs of a Russian city and in the appearance and customs of its inhabitants resembled a completely Russian city outside the Pale of Settlement. Russian was the ruling language both at home and in public. The Jews spoke Russian among themselves. Nevertheless, I found among them many nationally minded Jews devoted with all their hearts to the holy values of Israel in general, and to the idea of *Hibbat Zion* in particular.

Yekaterinoslav is one of the large cities of the south. It was built in the eighteenth century by the Empress Catherine and named after her. A bronze statue of the Empress stands next to the palace of Potyomkin, the favorite of the Empress. The beautiful Dniepr sheds a special grace on the city and it is this same river that has made Yekaterinoslav a trading center. Many commodities move in and out of the city. There is much activity and a good standard of living. Not for nothing is it known among the inhabitants of Southern Russia as "The Second Odessa". With great delight I walked around the city, its markets and streets, observing its hustle and bustle and noting the physical and spiritual condition of our people. I had no need to hide from a policeman or to bribe him with a 'General Passport'. I was a free man and with every step I felt that I was living at home. However, not everyone can have this feeling. You must first have had to be deprived of the right of residence in a city outside the Pale where you are in constant

fear of a policeman's wrath. Only then can you appreciate a place where there is no fear and no need to purchase the right to draw breath...

I came to Yekaterinoslav at the end of the winter. The sermons that I preached there on Zion and its revival made a great impression and drew full houses. I spent a good part of my talks on Hebrew education, which was very inferior in Yekaterinoslav. Most of the young people could not read Hebrew nor pray even in an abbreviated version. On Passover when the trustees of the Synagogue asked me to speak before *Yizkor* [the Memorial Service], I spoke in my bitterness of the wretched education, which destroys the souls of our children and estranges them from their people and heritage to the point where they may fall away completely. "We do not need to commemorate the souls of our departed parents" I said "but the souls of our living children who leave us never to return. We should say another *Yizkor* in a new version 'May God remember the souls of our children...'" The whole congregation wept bitterly at my words, which went straight to their hearts.

In the synagogue *Ohel Moshe*, I witnessed a rare phenomenon 'A delay in reading the Purim Scroll.' A delay in reading the Torah was not too rare in the cities and towns of Russia. The Torah reading would be held up because of personal problems and quarrels between members of the community. But I never heard of the Purim Scroll being held up until I came to Yekzterinoslav. On Purim Eve I went to the synagogue to hear the reading of the Scroll. The Synagogue was crowded with festive worshipers. The children were equipped with their noisemakers; everything was in readiness for the reading of the Scroll. Suddenly, the landlord of the Synagogue, a vulgar boor who cared for nothing but money, created a disturbance and shouted that he would not permit the reading of the Scroll

until his rent was paid in full. With the greatest difficulty the trustees finally succeeded in quieting the landlord so that the Scroll could finally be read. But because of the strained situation you could think that the Scroll of Lamentations was being read rather than the Scroll of Esther.

It is interesting to know that this Synagogue that couldn't pay its rent was named after the great Sir Moses Montefiore.

Among the public figures of the city and the leaders of *Hovevei Zion* I found four first rate individuals, their hearts alert of all Jewish causes, who belonged to the [intellectual] elite, to the Jewish *intelligentsia*. These men were the molders of Jewish spiritual life in the city and inspired it with their noble personality.

First among them was the oldest, Michael Maidansky. This sage was a fine type of the old generation that will soon be gone. When he would walk down the street, all eyes, both of Jews and Gentiles were attracted to him, his erect stature, his shining face, his eyes burning with youthful ardor and his long and flowing beard. He was as wise as he was handsome. He was on good terms with all and would enchant his hearers with his sharp wit and humor and rich store of anecdotes from Jewish life. He was a skilled writer in several languages and his broad knowledge and keen logic were amazing. In addition to his secular prowess, he was a fine Hebraist and Talmudist. He was financially well off and his home was always open to the unfortunate. The governor of the province and government employees had the greatest respect for him and would not refuse him any favors he would ask for friends and acquaintances. He was the finest type of Jewish *shetadlan* [interceder]. When Alexander III convened a committee of Jews from all parts of the country to discuss Jewish problems, Maidansky was chosen by the provincial governor to be one of the members. When he stood with the other members of the

committee before Alexander, the Czar immediately singled him out from his compeers and paid him more attention than all the others. Alexander even held a private conversation with him on the condition of the Jews in Yekaterinoslav.

Second was the lawyer Chaim (Vital) Lavenda, the brother of the Russian Jewish writer. He was a graduate of the Rabbinical Seminary in Vilna and like most of these graduates he was originally an assimilationist. But after the pogroms he turned to the ideal of *Hibbat Zion* to which he became completely devoted. He wrote many impassioned articles in praise of this movement in the Russo-Jewish press and defended it against the arguments of its opponents. He earned a great reputation by his Russian book about the special laws that applied to Russian Jewry. He performed many favors for the people of his city, especially those in difficulty with the law. All the judges and officials accorded him the greatest respect because of his honesty and thorough knowledge of Russian law.

The third of this foursome was the writer, Rashi Stanislavsky. He devoted himself to Hebrew literature and was the author of many articles in Hebrew, Russian and German. He was one of the prime movers in *Hibbat Zion* and was universally respected by his fellow townspeople. He befriended many impecunious intellectuals and gave them much-needed personal and financial aid.

The leading figure in this group was unquestionably Menachem Mendel Ussishkin. He was a young man at that time, having just been graduated from the University of Moscow. When he came to Yekaterinoslav he at once showed unusual ability as a public worker. His strong will and powerful personality were evident at once. With all the fire of his youth he devoted himself to the ideal of *Hibbat Zion* and everyone sensed that this young man was destined to lead the movement in Russia.

The following incident from Ussishkin's personal life, which is not widely known, demonstrates what effect *Hibbat Zion* had in bringing back alienated Jews not only to Jewish nationalism but also to Jewish tradition.

Ussishkin was a religious Jew, he observed the Sabbath and dietary laws and would say his prayers three times each day. He was an intimate friend of Rabbi Samuel Mohilever and the other rabbis who were close to *Hibbat Zion*. The *Hovevei Zion* at Yekaterinoslav were very proud of him. Suddenly a report came out that Ussishkin was going to marry the daughter of the engineer Sergei Pavlovitch Paley. This news was like a thunderclap on a clear day. The engineer P. was known as a free thinker, completely estranged from Judaism despite his Jewish education, a classic example of the spiteful apostate. His father Rabbi Feitel was a *Habbad* Hasid, a most observant man. The latter brought up his son in his own path, the path of Torah and Hasidism. But the son had different ideas. He took 2000 rubles from his father's strongbox and went to Moscow to further his education. At the end of six years he returned as an engineer in official uniform. Shmarya, the son of Rabbi Feitel, became Sergy Pavlovitch Paley, settled in the city and became a citizen. The relationship between him and his father was one of great hatred. They did not speak to one another and of course did not exchange visits. The son would not permit an observant Jew to enter his home, while the father in his extreme orthodoxy would have nothing to do with *Maskilim* [adherents of Jewish Enlightenment] and *Hovevei Zion*. When the news broke that the national, religious Ussishkin was engaged to the daughter of P. who was known for his lawlessness and assimilation, the *Hovevei Zion* were aghast as their opponents would chide them, "see, even the best of you has sold his soul and faith for money!" But in a short time it was reported that the Engineer P. had purified

his home, replaced his dishes, put up *Mezuzahs* on every door post, bought Hebrew books and had become a complete Jew. Later at the wedding, the Rabbis and the observant of the city ate and drank in the home of P., the new Jew who embraced and kissed them in brotherly fashion. The old father became reconciled to his son after many years of strife and contention and during the wedding feast he wept from great joy and pronounced the blessing of *She'hecheyanu*, praising God for having sustained him and kept him alive so that he may see his son return to the Jewish faith and tradition. With great emotion he fell on the neck of Ussishkin and with tears in his eyes said to him: "You have in you the soul of Elijah the Prophet [who 'shall reconcile fathers with sons and sons with their fathers']; you too have reconciled a heart of a father with his son and the heart of a son with his father. "

From that day on the old father himself became an admirer of the idea of *Hibbat Zion* and an active and devoted follower of the movement.

* * *

In the vicinity of Yekaterinoslav were Jewish settlements whose inhabitants were farmers. These settlements had been founded back in the days of Nicholas I, in a year of a great drought in Lithuania and Zhamot. At that time the government transferred hundreds of Jewish families from the provinces of Kovno and Vilna to the provinces of Yekaterinoslav and Kherson and settled them on the land as farmers. These settlements did not produce a new generation of Jewish farmers – the goal of Jews at that time. The tyrannical officials put in charge by the Russian government did not permit these settlements to develop in normal fashion. The Jewish families still there lead an impoverished existence and the young people leave the settlements and are scattered in the big cities

over the country.

But these poor farmers have given us two great lunimaries, two exceptionally gifted poets, Shimon Frug and Saul Tcehrnichovsky. These poets, sons of Jewish colonists, have brought something new to our poetry – the smell of the field ... in their poetry we hear the echo of the natural and simple life of the country, we feel the warmth of the southern sun and hear the sound of waves of the roaring Dnieper...

Chapter 8

From Ykaterinoslav I traveled by boat on the Dnieper to Kiev, to 'Holy' Kiev.

The holiness of Kiev was discernible before I entered the city itself. On the boat were hundreds upon hundreds of pilgrims who journeyed to Kiev to prostrate themselves before the graves of the saints in the caves that go back to the days of Saint Vladimir, the Prince who converted himself and the Russian people to the Greek Orthodox religion. As I approached the city, I saw more and more crosses and domes of the huge churches and I heard the echoes of the heavy bells whose pealing aroused terror in me bringing reminiscences of black-clad priests...burning candles...victims of the inquisition. These signs of holiness reminded me that I was coming to a city in which there were the strongest prohibitions against Jews and who could tell if the 'general passport', which stood me in good stead in Kharkov would help me here, for it is to a 'Holy' City that I am coming....

The following story is told about the Saints buried in Kiev:

When Alexander II visited Kiev, a deputation of administrators of the caves requested him to banish the Jews from Kiev, as their presence in the city was repugnant to the Saints and allowed them no peace in their graves.

"A better place than Kiev" answered the Czar with a smile, "The saints won't find in all of Russia."

When I reached the city, I immediately witnessed a 'hunt', the well-known manhunt. A company of policemen, with

drawn swords had rounded up a group of Jews, men and women, young and old, who were seized during the night without permits to be in Kiev. This sight depressed me greatly and unconsciously I called out in my bitterness, "Look down from Heaven and see how we have become a mockery and derision among the nations and are considered as cattle led to the slaughter..."

After much intercession I finally received a permit to reside in Kiev for two weeks and it was explicitly noted in my documents that I had to leave the city in exactly two weeks.

During this period I preached in various synagogues and visited the leading intellectuals, rabbis and sages, among them the poet Yehuda Leib Levin [YaHaLaL]; the writer I. I. Weisberg; Aaron Zeitlen, the "learned Jew" to the governor of the province; Dr. Bendarsky, a faithful member of *Hibbat Zion* and the censor Karasik; the merchants Polikovsky, Marshak and Privolsky. Together we visited the aged writer Eliezer Schulman. Schulman made a deep impression upon me. He was tall, strong and well to do – qualities that were not common among Hebrew writers. His conversation was very pleasant. He especially liked to talk about Heine and Boerne the two German apostates whom he discussed in his book *Mi-Mekor Yisrael.*

In the meantime the two weeks passed and my permit had expired and the great efforts by the Jewish leaders to gain an extension of a week for me were denied. The holiness of Kiev would disintegrate if I, a Jew, would stay more than two weeks there. So to save Kiev, the government ordered me to leave immediately. And on that very day, I departed from the city.

* * *

From Kiev I traveled to White Field.

This city has three names in three different languages. In

Hebrew it was *Sedeh Lavan* [White Field], in Russian Belayah Tserkov [White Church], and in Yiddish among the Hasidim it was called *Schwatz Tuma'ah* [Black Defilement], a sarcastic translation of White Church. In this version full of bitterness and sarcasm our forefathers protested vigorously against the oppressive Christianity of the period and many gentiles, who understood Yiddish took offense at this name.

For the first time in my life I spoke at a Hasidic congregation. Their movements during prayer, their exaggerated fervor, the commotion and running could hardly make a favorable impression upon me, a *Mitnagged* [opponent of Hasidism] by birth, stemming from Slutzk, a city of *Mitnaggedim* for many generations which had been cursed by the Ba'al Shem Tov [the founder of the Hasidic movement] – to the effect that a Hasid would never live there. Before I ascended the pulpit to preach, I noticed that metal bowls were fixed on the walls. Before the prayers the Hasidim would dip their fingers in these bowls. I glanced into these bowls and saw that the water in them had turned green. The *Mitnagged* in me burst forth and in my speech I chided the Hasidim on the lack of cleanliness in these bowls, which contained water that had turned green and was poisonous. I cited many opinions from the *Gemarah,* which stressed the need for cleanliness in a place of prayer. I asked them please to remove these bowls.

My plea was heeded. The young men immediately removed the bowls and the older men also thanked me and did not chide the young.

The next day the trustees of the synagogue came to me and said: "You had the old bowls removed but what shall we do without bowls?"

I told them to send the sexton to me and we went together to the market and bought many glasses, wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. Then we went to a tinsmith and ordered

tin rings and attachments. The rings were fastened to the walls and the glasses, which fitted into them, could be removed and from that time on there was clean water in the Synagogue.

In *Sedeh Lavan* [White Field] these bowls were known as "Masliansky's bowls."

I have recounted this episode because it was characteristic of the situation in Jewish communities at that time. It was necessary to let light penetrate into all corners of life, and every improvement was a step forward. And a preacher who was devoted to the people and desirous of elevating their life and improving their standards had to pay attention even to small things like the bowls in the Hasidic Synagogue.

* * *

Uman is a clean and pretty city. The streets are paved and there are two story houses everywhere. It reminded me of the cities in the area of Taurica [the Crimea].

The municipal park, Sofia, known throughout Russia, is very beautiful, distinguished by its natural beauties. Its green clad mountains reach the clouds with their tall straight trees. Around them small pure streams of water issue, that flow the length and breadth of the park. High rocks and geysers throw up columns of water that sparkle like gems. The rays of the sun cast a sea of light on the park. In the small streams goldfish abound. At the foot of the mountains are beds of flowers and roses that fill the quiet and mysterious paths of the park with their pleasant fragrances. Greek statues stand at every corner. Songbirds chirp and sing as they flit from branch to branch. Young couples fill the pathways. In the fenced in playgrounds babies play, their faces shining in the sunlight with the joy and innocence of childhood. Entranced I stood watching the fascinating spectacle about me.

Suddenly I shuddered. I remembered that I was in Uman,

the city of slaughter, in which three hundred years ago the blood of our brothers was spilled like water. Heaps and heaps of corpses, the holy and the pure who were slaughtered for the sanctification of the Name, were piled in the streets. Who knows but their blood fertilized this ground, which now brings forth these beautiful red flowers? Who knows if this thick-leaved tree has not grown from the grave of a saint slaughtered by Bogdan Khmelnytsky?

Learning and greatness I found in one place, in the home of Rabbi Yitchak Meir Shapiro, a Hasidic aristocrat a descendant of the holy martyrs of Slavita [Slavuta] from the days of Nicholas I.

It was a spiritual pleasure to see the order of life and the sanctity of the Jewish spirit present in this fine Jewish house. Refined faith and true enlightenment together, they were Jews at home and in public, not as the *Maskilim* [adherents of Jewish Enlightenment] of the sixties had taught us: 'Be a Jew at home, and a human being outside.' This false doctrine misled us and caused us to live a life of fraud and hypocrisy, a life of fawning, not fit for God or man. The boys and girls of the Shapiro household studied Hebrew, the older ones studied Talmud. They were educated in a completely Jewish Spirit, full of love for the people, its religion and the tradition. Would this be an example for the children of the Orthodox on the one hand and to those of the supposed aristocrats on the other, then we would not know of false beliefs and the throwing off the yoke of tradition, which devastate us and demean our national pride.

Chapter 9

A different wind blew upon me when I came to Berdichev, the Jerusalem of Volhynia. In the air of Berdichev I felt like a fish in water. I felt that I was dwelling among my people. And this feeling is seven fold more pleasant if it comes after protracted wandering among strangers and among Jews who have become estranged. In Berdichev it was possible to walk on street after street without meeting a non-Jew. Even the policemen and postal employees spoke Yiddish and the drivers would speak to their horses in a mixture of Yiddish and Hebrew. *"Ya'amod, Tochshit!"* ("Stop, Jewel!"), and the horse would stop. *"Holech schon pegarah!"* ("Go on, carcass!"), and the horse would go... *"Rihr sich, mein Soos Verochvo!"* ("Move on, my horse and chariot!"), and the animal would run. Had Yehudah Halevi known Berdichev, he would have sung of her too: "There animal and bird had wisdom".

I spent several days to see Berdichev and to get to know it and indeed I saw all its unseemly sides. I saw the ancient city with its dark and narrow synagogues. I saw the river of stench, 'Golopietovsky', which was aptly named. It gives water to all flesh in Berdichev and takes in turn all cadavers and corpses, dead horses, dogs and cats. I saw the great and holy ancient Hasidic Synagogue, the youths and idlers who would spend day and night there, in whose weary eyes there was no spark of life.

I saw the Hasidim come out of the bath chamber defiling the walls of the Synagogue on which was written in large letters:

"it is forbidden to..." I saw the narrow and dingy *Talmud Torah* school full of children of the poor, dirty boys clad in rags, and only their eyes were lit up with the light of Israel. The teachers were half naked, bare-chested and in their hands were rods and straps, instruments of teaching and education. I saw these and similar sights and a thought gnawed at my brain: "O God of Israel! Are these the holy and pure descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Is this the treasured people whom you commanded three thousand years ago 'let your camp be holy?'"

Yes, the inhabitants of Berdichev can be proud of one thing, their ability to live without air and water...

Two worthy guests, two Hebrew writers visited me one evening. Ben David, the founder of the organization *Safah Brurah* and Yehoshua Mazach. These two writers were so different from each other in their nature and character. The former was an idealist, well dressed and conscious of his real worth, while the latter was a depressed and impoverished beggar who would make the rounds with his compositions and sell them for pennies.

The words of Ben David were like knife in my flesh, when in the presence of Mazach, he sharply castigated those writers who make the rounds with their works and cheapen Jewish writers and literature. Mazach listened to him calmly and finally answered:

"And what else can I do?"

Poor writer!

* * *

I was like a man who comes out of darkness when I left defiled Berdichev for beautiful and clean Zhitomir. The cultured young lady, Bertha Flexer and the *Maskil* [adherent of Jewish Enlightenment] Israel Narodetsky volunteered to

help me in my work. We visited the heads of the Lithuanian community. Rabbi Benjamin Epstein, Ben Zion Barchin and the government-appointed Rabbi Bernstein and I was granted permission to speak in all the synagogues of Zhitomir.

When I examined the life of the Jews in Volhynia and the relations between fathers and sons, I found that the cultural level of Volhynia was similar to that in Lithuania before the period of Enlightenment in the sixties and seventies. There was war between the generations, between fathers and sons. The sons would stealthily enter the temple of Enlightenment and with their tender wings they would fly beneath the heaven of flowery phrases and compose poems to the sun and the moon and to the Enlightenment, Daughter of Heaven. They would study the Bible with Mendelsohn's commentary and would read 'forbidden' books. Fathers would spy upon their sons, search their desks in the Synagogue and *Yeshiva* and even search their beds at night. And when they would find a book by Mapu or Schulman or if they were fortunate, Smolenskin's *A Wanderer on the Path of Life* they would condemn them to be burned in the Hasidic way.

There were also exceptional individuals like the wealthy Mr. Gottesman, who had his son taught Bible and grammar by the Hebrew poet, Tolsky. But these were exceptional cases, as these men were wealthy and everything is permitted to the wealthy.

One of the great critics of Russian literature, Chaim Flexer, the editor of the Russian monthly *Russkaia Misel*, known by his pen name Volynski, the brother of the aforementioned Bertha Flexer, visited me in my hotel. Our conversation lasted many hours and I learned much from him. He expressed profound ideas in simple form on Spinoza, Kant, Maimonides, Crescas and Solomon Maimon, whose books he had translated into Russian.

As he spoke his eyes would light up. The hours passed like minutes. But I was grieved to learn that his knowledge of Hebrew literature was meager and that his acquaintance with Judaism was drawn from foreign sources. I did not hesitate to communicate my sorrow to him. He promised me that henceforth he would bend his energies to learn Hebrew literature in the original. If he had carried out his promise, it would have been a great gain for our people.*

As I strolled in the municipal park, I saw a large, beautiful house that was worthy of standing in the finest street of Kiev. When I inquired as to the nature of the house, my companion informed me that it was formerly a Rabbinical Seminary, one of the two in Russia. Some of the great teachers were Ch. Slonimsky, A.B. Gotlover, Ch. Z. Lerner and other prominent scholars of the last generation. The house had been built by Jews and for Jews with Jewish money and effort, and today the building served as a Russian Gymnasium and the Jewish quota was ten percent.

The Jews of Zhitomir and all Volhynia were overjoyed when they learned of the sudden death of the governor of the province who was on his way to consult physicians in Warsaw. This governor was a rabid anti-Semite who had expelled thousands of Jews from the villages of Volhynia and had destroyed their means of livelihood. The non-Jews too exalted at his death. Jews and gentiles congratulated each other on the good tidings. A Jewish boy of eleven, L. Davidson, composed a Hebrew poem on this event, which achieved great popularity.

My unfortunate people! How great is your suffering and how petty is your joy!

Before I left the city a thin, pale young man, dressed in plain neat clothes paid me a visit. Only his shining eyes bore witness

* A photograph of Volynsky with a dedication and autograph is in possession of the family (translator's note.)

to the depth of his soul. He introduced himself to me with great humility: "Chaim Nachman Bialik."

"I am very happy to meet you, Mr. Bialik," I replied "Are you the author of 'To the Bird'?"

"Yes", he answered with innocent modesty, "I am overjoyed that you, Sir, have read my little poem. What do you think of it?"

"Excellent" I said, "And as proof of this I have memorized it." I recited the whole poem to him. But neither I nor he, nor the rest of the party realized at that moment that there was standing before us the greatest of our poets, the author of *The Songs of Wrath* and *The Scroll of Fire.*

* * *

The name 'Greater Dubna' is well known in old Rabbinic literature. "The Sages of Dubna" occupied a prominent place in the life of the Jews of Poland. Jacob Krantz, the Jewish Aesop who was called the 'Dubna *Maggid,*' bestowed a special eminence upon the city. Dubna was as famous throughout Jewry in its time as Vilna in our days. But when I visited it, I found no reminder of its former glory. It is now an ordinary Volhynian city with ordinary Jews and many ignoramuses. Everyone seems asleep. There is no interest in anything. The older people have their "Psalm Society", they read the Psalms but know not what they read. The young men go out walking with the girls. There is no school, no library, no movement – it is as if they have no connection with the world. They do not read a newspaper and take no interest in the condition of their people.

The government-appointed Rabbi Chaim Margaliyoth, son in law of the writer Naphtali Keller, is a solitary figure. Day and night he sits in his library, alone and no one inquires after his health. The one intellectual in the city is the poet Zalman

Ashkenazi, a descendant of the great Ya'avetz.

Rovno, her sister city, resembles Dubna. It too is in a deep sleep. The old men dream under the cover of superstitious beliefs and the young people under cover of lawlessness and ignorance. There is no spiritual life, no striving for anything, no sign of a movement. Bodies without souls walk in the streets of the city.

I hastened to leave the city and traveled to Kremenets.

* * *

Krementes is a wondrous city from a geographical point of view. Beautiful, high mountains surround it. Its narrow streets twist and turn among the hills. Its houses bear the stamp of older times and the hills remind me of the great city of Kiev.

I visited the scholar and public worker, Zvi Prilutzky. There I also found Dr. Pines. In the company of these national Jews my stay in Kremenets was very pleasant.

With deep awe I went to visit the house where Isaac Ber Livinson lived and worked. Feeling as if I were walking on holy ground I approached the small, rickety house. My eyes grew dim as I read on the old sign in Russian: "Liquor Store – Whiskey and Spirits at Low Prices."

I opened the door and the shouting of drunkards hit me in the face. The house of Isaac Ber Livenson [one of the founders of Enlightenment, modern Jewish learning and literature in Russia] had become a saloon!

Chapter 10

After Besserabia, Volhyhnia and South Russia I visited Lithuania, the land famous for its sages and rabbis, its *Yeshivoth* [religious academies] and 'study groups' and also for its poverty and destitution. The land produces scholars and public figures and makes them accustomed to a life of suffering and distress, of "'a dry crust' of bread and a bit of herring" from Sunday to Friday evening. Back at the beginning of my travels I recognized the great difference between Lithuania and Bessarabia. In the latter area I would see everywhere strong, healthy, red-faced Jews whose appearance bore witness that the Torah had not weakened them with fasts and self abrogation. In Lithuania I saw before me bent over Jews with pale faces and wrinkled foreheads. But their special soul, their enlarged soul, was reflected in their good eyes and their spirituality resided in the furrows of their foreheads. I saw before me the sons of my native land, endeared to me by their learning, by their conversation and by their poverty as well.

The first city that I visited in Lithuania was my birthplace, Slutzk.

At that time (1893) the railroad had not yet been extended into that area and I journeyed by the typical coach, which has become familiar in our literature through the alert coachman and the horses that fly like eagles.

Borne on the 'eagles wings' I reached Slutzk in the morning. An avalanche of memories engulfed me upon my arrival. Every narrow street, every dim alley, every rickety house was

the source of memories. I recognized the places where I had walked as a child, the great marketplace where I had played with my friends, the *Beth Midrash* [study house] where I used to pray daily from my small prayer book – my heart was filled with a kind of internal happiness and if I were not ashamed of my traveling companions, I would have climbed down from the coach and prostrated myself at those places and kissed each stone, each grain of sand!....

The memories of childhood, the memories of the golden age!

My clever old mother, my uncle, aunt, members of my immediate family, relatives and acquaintances came to visit me. Among the visitors I recognized my old teacher, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Pollack, who taught me the Bible in my youth. This teacher knew how to teach the Bible with simple interpretation and fascinating and elevating sentiment. He caused all his pupils to love the subject. From this teacher I acquired most of my knowledge of the Bible and some of my great love for our Book of the Books. May his memory be blessed!

After I had rested a bit from the weariness of the trip, I went out by myself to walk in the streets of the city. Hours on end I went from street to street, from alley to alley and was overcome by emotion. Different memories flooded my mind and brought me into another world, the world of my childhood. I saw myself as a child of six, running through the streets of the city with my childhood companions, playing different games or returning home in the winter nights from the *Heder* [elementary school] with a group of friends singing different songs whose echo spilled over into the cold of the night... – immersed in my thoughts I walked out of the city.

The sun stood in the middle of the sky and poured its precious light on the whole horizon, the hills, the valleys, the streams, the pretty gardens with their trees laden with apples,

plums, cherries and all kinds of pears, especially winter pears, whose like you will not find even in California. All this intoxicated me and the childish joy filled all the chambers of my soul. Jumping like a child I climbed the high embankment. There I recognized all the places where we would fight the battles of the Lord when I was "Joshua the Son of Nun", and we laid siege to "Jerico", we came through the "caves" to elude the "ambushers" and conquered the city. There I recognized the hillock we named "Mount Gilboa". There we fought with the "Philistines" from Kapoly Street, and they slew our beloved "Saul" and we composed a funeral oration on him and "Jonathan", his son. The words 'Saul and Jonathan, beloved and cherished' rang in my ears from twenty-five years ago. All these memories became alive before my eyes and hidden longings pinched my heart...

I came down from the embankment and I was immediately immersed in the grain fields of the "Shulka" farm. In the farm I even recognized the old apple tree whose red-cheeked juicy fruit I used to pick when I was a child. The apple tree still flourished with its many branches and its green leaves. It seemed to me that it was happy to see me again and greeted me with the smile of an old man. I lay down under the tree and remembered the owner of the farm, my uncle "Israel the Man of Shulka", a good and charitable man. Every morning he would go out in his cart, laden with bread, flour, grouts and various kinds of beans and distribute them among the impoverished people of good families, who were ashamed to beg. This type of person is gone from our midst, perhaps never to return.

With great regret I finally left the "Shulka" farm, its fields and trees, its hills and valleys and returned to the city. I went to visit the Isserlin *Beth Midrash* [house of study]. I had prayed in this place with my father for about ten successive years.

There I studied the Talmud and *Poskim* [Codifiers of the Law]. It was there that I was privileged to see the great scholar Rabbi Menachem, popularly known as 'Reb Mendele Slutzker'. This sage would have none of the rabbinate and refused to use it for his personal gain, he would rather study at the *Yeshivah* with twelve disciples, who were all advanced in age, great scholars and strictly observant men. They were supported by a fund Rabbi Schochna Isserlin established and spent the entire day studying Torah. Reb Mendele was well advanced in age, but he continued to give his lesson every day. In my mind's eye I can still see his beautiful shining face, his snow-white beard and his eyes that glistened like a youth's. When he would begin his lesson, a holy silence reigned in the whole *Beth Midrash*; and all the young scholars who studied there would drop their own studies and listen to his words with awe. I was about ten at the time and did not understand a word of his lesson, but I would sit attentively behind the adults and listen to all that he had to say.

The Isserlin *Beth Misrash* was the center of Torah in Slutzk. Naturally this center was also the fortress of opposition to Hasidism. Slutzk was known as a city of *Mitnaggedim* to such an extent that it was a tradition among the Hasidim that [their founder], the Ba'al Shem Tov had pronounced a curse on Slutzk saying that there would never be even one Hasid in that city. The Hasidim used an acronym to designate the cities of the *Mitnaggedim* – KaRPaS [celery] – namely Kossov, Rozhinoi, Pruzhany and Slutzk. I recall that in my youth I had never seen even one prayer book according to the Sephardic rite in Slutzk, and lo and behold! It suddenly became common knowledge that one of Reb Mendele's students, Solomon Nathan, was sympathetic to Hasidism and in the dead of night would study the [mystical book of the] *Zohar*. This piece of information rocked the city and people spoke of Solomon

Nathan as if he had suddenly gone astray. I still recall how after midnight one Friday I silently stole up behind Solomon Nathan and saw him sitting and reading the *Zohar*. His face shone with a special light. From that time on I always looked upon Solomon Nathan as a holy man.

It was the custom of Reb Mendele and his students to come to Isserlin's house every evening between *Mincha* and *Ma'ariv* [the afternoon and evening prayers] to drink tea. Reb Mendele himself would stand and serve his students and would not drink his glass until they had finished theirs.

Once an emissary from the Mir *Yeshiva,* a certain Reb Peretz, came to Slutzk. He chanced to come into the Isserlin house when Reb Mendele's students were drinking tea. Peretz, a big strong man, who liked his tea, asked no questions and sat down with the others. Reb Mendele, as usual served the tea and offered a glass to Reb Peretz. The latter did not know Reb Mendele and thought that he was a servant in the house. When he finished his glass, he said to Reb Mendele in an imperious tone: "Let me have another glass!"

The students wondered and whispered among themselves about the guest who was treating their teacher as a menial.

The following Sabbath the congregation went to Isserlin's house for *Kiddush* as was the custom in Slutzk for many years. Among them was the emissary. To his great astonishment he saw the man who had served the tea come into the house with Isserlin and all present rose and called out to him: "Good Sabbath Rabbi!" Peretz immediately became aware of the mistake he had made and rushed over to Reb Mendele and in a panic begged to be forgiven. Reb Mendele looked at him and said: "and what sin did you commit against me that I should forgive you? You were thirsty and you conferred the merit of a *Mitzvah* upon me by having me serve you the tea upon which you pronounced a blessing. So why do you have to ask for

forgiveness?"

To understand the greatness of Reb Mendele the following fact is worth noting:

For many years after the death of the great Rabbi, Reb Yessele, there had been no rabbi in Slutzk. All the inhabitants of the city still remembered their great Rabbi who was distinguished by his wisdom and handsome appearance. The deep impression that his death and great funeral procession had made was still felt in their hearts. The whole city, including the gentiles, followed his bier in the great snow that fell that day even though it was [already spring] the first day of the month of *Iyyar*. Therefore, it was very difficult for them to find a Rabbi to replace their beloved Reb Yessele. After quite a few years they decided upon the Sage, Rabbi Yosi Ber, the head of the Volozhin *Yeshiva*. The leading figures of the community decided to invite him and with the agreement of all the inhabitants of the city the invitation was sent; yet Rabbi Yosi Ber answered in a brief letter as follows:

"A lion lies in the *Beth Midrash* of Isserlin and you ask a fox to rule over you! Strange..."

The leaders of the city at once understood the import of his words and they hastened to Reb Mendele to obtain his consent. The latter sent his own letter to Reb Yosi Ber. Reb Yosi Ber thereupon came to Slutzk and Reb Mendele and his students were among the first to greet him.

I entered the Great Synagogue or Gold Synagogue as it was sometimes called. At once I saw the 'Purification Board', which stood in the vestibule, the board that awed us children when we were led in by our director on Sabbath to give the responses in chorus to various prayers. I saw the great and beautiful "Chair of Elijah", which was used in a *Brith* [circumcision ceremony], which would fall on the Sabbath or a Holiday. These memories of childhood restored my youthful agility

and I rushed to climb the spiral staircase that led to the attic. There was the *Genizah*, the storehouse of old books, scrolls of the Torah and Prophets, *shofars* [ram horns], old curtains and other sacred objects. Then I climbed on to the roof from which you could see the whole city. The Synagogue of Slutzk was very high, higher than all the towers and its top could be seen from outside the city.

The following story used to be told by the inhabitants of Slutzk about the height of this Synagogue:

When Czar Alexander II passed through Slutzk, the priests greeted him. Among other things they complained to him that the Jewish Synagogue was higher than the Russian church.

"My holy fathers," answered Czar Alexander "I rule over the length and breadth of the land, but over the height the good Lord rules. Address your complaint to Him..."

I spent two weeks in Slutzk and it seemed to me 'but a few days.' I could not get my fill of the houses, yards and streets, which were familiar to me from my childhood. At every beam, at every stone I would see a companion of my youth rushing toward me and extending his hand in greeting. On the last day of my stay I went with my son, Pinchas, to take my leave of my father's grave. By the plain stone, on which were carved the words: "Here lies Reb Chaim, the son of Reb Tzvi" I stood wrapped in lofty thoughts and holy feelings. The sexton had given me a copy of the *Ma'avar Yabok*, to read the special prayers for the occasion, but I returned the book to him with thanks. What need did I have for the book and its conventional prayers when my heart was overflowing and all my bones were praying involuntarily?

I stood by my father's grave for about half an hour, warm tears flowed from my eyes and my mouth murmured strange new words that came from the bottom of my heart.

With awe I left the grave and prepared to return home when

I saw my ten-year old son standing at a distance trembling and pale. When I called to him that we were going home, he began to cry bitterly.

"Why are you crying?" I asked.

He continued to cry and did not answer. It was only after I rebuked him several times and ordered him to reply, that he answered in a choked voice: "As you were standing by your father's grave, it came to my mind that one day I would be standing by your grave..."

Despondent and heartbroken I started to leave the cemetery.*

As I stood by the gate, I remembered that I had not fulfilled my duty to 'the holy and mighty ones that are in the land', that I had not visited the graves of the Rabbis and 'men of good deeds' who had lived and worked in Slutzk in past generations. I returned to the gravestones and once more went from grave to grave, from row to row. I deciphered the blurred, half legible letters on the old stones partly covered by moss, and a whole world came to life before my eyes. Here were people, important in their time, Rabbis, certified judges, communal leaders, who studied Torah, wrote books, were engaged in affairs of the community and conducted large business and now they were all laid to rest. They were together in their life and now they were together in their death. It seemed as if the whole older generation had moved from the city to the cemetery. There, a mile away was the young Slutzk, the live Slutzk, and here was old Slutzk, dead, or rather slumbering

* Family note: This was not to be. Pinchas (Philip) Masliansky, who was to become a prominent businessman in America, died on Dec. 18, 1942, a few weeks before his father's death on January 11, 1943. The family kept this information from their ailing father; it has also been said that a letter, supposedly from the deceased to his father, was written by Masliansky's granddaughter Shulamith Schwartz Nardi.

Slutzk. Here are the Rabbi, the cantor, the sexton, the trustees, leaders, homeowners, great and small. The whole city – all of them slumbering peacefully and waiting for the great day when their graves will be opened and they will get up and return to the city...

Immersed in these thoughts I found myself standing before a plain stone on which stood the words: "Here lies Rabbi Joseph Peymer who served as Rabbi in Slutzk for about fifty years."

The grave of Reb Yessele! - fear and trembling seized me, - the grave of this sage and saint, who was known and famous throughout the world! I felt as if I were standing on holy ground. Once more I read the inscription: "Here lies Rabbi" - not sage, not saint, but a plain Rabbi "who served as Rabbi for about fifty years". What simplicity, what humility!

In my mind's eye I saw Reb Yessele standing before me, his fine build, his white handsome face, his large shining eyes, his long flowing snow-white beard. When he walked through the market place, people would stop and stare at his beauty. Once one of the great artists came from Saint Petersburg to paint his portrait as one of the original Jewish types. Unwittingly, my lips whispered: "Alas for 'this beauty going to rot in the earth!'"

Not far from the grave of Reb Yessele I caught sight of a plain wooden marker, inscribed: "Here lies Rabbi Raphael Joseph."

These few words let loose a flood of memories and brought back to me a special Jewish type of man, who left none like him behind. Rabbi Raphael was an ordinary tailor. At the age of twenty he consecrated himself to Torah and good deeds. He was a great scholar, expert in every field of religious scholarship, and was exceptional in his constant performance of good and pious deeds. He would visit the sick, comfort the

mourners, beg on behalf of the poor and destitute people, who were embarrassed to ask for help. He was known to all and universally beloved. He was called the "Holy Tailor." It was said that when Rabbi Raphael would enter the home of Rabbi Yosi Ber Soloveitchik the latter would stand up to honor him. I recall that when I was five years old, my mother would take me every Friday to the "Holy Tailor" and with my small hands I would give him the candles my mother used to contribute to the Synagogue. He would put his hands on my head and give me a blessing.

* * *

I spent a few more days in Slutzk. My visit to Slutzk, my birthplace, brought back home so many memories, both sweet and sad, of my childhood. After I parted from my relatives and friends I took leave of my mother, who was then close to her eighties, and her mother's heart told her that she would never see me again. She did not weep, but looked at me with her tear-filled eyes, the look of a mother, which I shall not forget as long as I shall live.

Chapter 11

Minsk is a large and clean city. Its streets are wide, its houses tall especially in the Upper Market where the house of the District Governor and the municipal park are located. But in the Jewish sections I felt at once that I was in one of the Lithuanian cities. The Jews are pale, bent-over, poorly dressed and poverty trails after them. On the other hand Minsk is full of Synagogues, *Batei Midrash* [houses of study], *Yeshivot* and students of religion and Torah – typical Lithuania, materially poor, but spiritually rich.

At that time Rabbi Israel of Horodna [Grodno], a well-known preacher of the previous generation, was living out his years in Minsk. I considered it my duty and privilege to visit this old preacher, whose name was a household word wherever Jews lived. With my friend, Mr. Nofech, the principal of the Jewish trade school, I went to visit him in one of the small houses of study near the old cemetery. I found him there lying on his sick bed on a hard bench behind the stove. He was dressed in rags and merciful women would bring him his meager rations each day. My heart sank at this horrifying spectacle and involuntarily the old perplexing question rose to my mind: 'This is then the Law [Torah] and this the wage thereof?'...

I spoke with Rabbi Israel for a while about preaching in Israel and I marveled at his common sense and profound logic. Our conversation revived his spirits and he only regretted that he could not see me as he had lost the sight of his eyes.

Before leaving him I hinted that it was not fitting that a man of his renown and age spend his days in a house of study behind the stove. He answered me with a bitter smile:

"Here I am close to the cemetery and I am doing the Burial Society a favor – they won't have to carry me very far."

I had many important visitors in my hotel – my boyhood friend, the renowned lawyer Shimshon Rosenbaum; Joshua Sirkin; Joshua Benenson; the writers Goldberg [alias YeCNHaz] and Joseph Brill [alias Iyov]; The government-appointed Rabbi Abraham Hanneles; Rabbi Naphtali Maskileison [Maskil le-Eitan], and the 'learned Jew' Joseph Horowitz. We enjoyed an interesting literary session. Every one of the visitors was a prominent man in his field. Rosenbaum the Lawyer, spoke about Roman and Talmudic law, and showed that Talmudic law was of greater antiquity than Roman law. The Romans learned from us and not vice versa as European scholars mistakenly believed. Joshua Sirkin described to us his last visit to the philanthropist Baron Edmund de Rothschild in Paris. Rabbi Hanneles complained bitterly about the spiritual sickness that afflicted the Jews of Minsk, that poisoned their minds, killed all intellectual endeavor and robbed them of their time, money and energy – dice playing. The Rabbi spoke with great heat about the demoralization that this game brought to all strata of the city.

At this time the well-known movement of the 'Enlightened' had its inception. It was a copy of the German reform movement. Its main points were the building of beautiful synagogues in the "German" style, the Ark and the Platform combined and both the cantor and the choir wearing and donned in black clothes [as the Talmud says of a scholar overcome by his urge 'let him put on sordid [black] clothes and don a sordid [black] wrap']. This movement reached Minsk and the 'enlightened' there began to build their own

special synagogue. In my sermons I bitterly opposed them and pointed out their great sin against their fellow Jews. Many of the latter were destitute, had no source of food and no decent housing, while the 'enlightened' wasted large sums of money on external items that had no value. It was then that I drew the parallel that has since been adopted by all preachers and speakers in Israel. "It was similar", I said "to the case of a student at a musical conservatory whose father had died. When his mother and sisters began to cry, he reproached them sharply, 'that is not the way to cry! You are disregarding the laws of harmony!'..."

In Minsk too the wrath of the Russian police 'suddenly came upon me'. I had almost forgotten the police and their spying and penetrating eyes...

This happened to me when I was standing on the platform of one of the largest houses of study in the city – the *Beth Midrash* of Rabbi Zissel Rappaport.

It was a law in this House of Study that no speaker or preacher was allowed to stand upon the platform to speak except for the local Rabbi, "The Sage of Minsk." He would speak only on the two set Sabbaths – *Shabbat Shuvah* [the Sabbath of Repentance] between the *Rosh Ha-Shannah* [New Year] and *Yom Kippur* [the Day of Atonement] and on the Great Sabbath before Passover. As an exception I was permitted to speak in this Synagogue one weekday evening. The auditorium was packed and the crowding so great that I was hardly able to reach the platform.

I spoke with great enthusiasm for over two hours. My theme was "The Dry Bones." The audience listened attentively and was transported to another world, when suddenly some policemen, who were preceded by officials, burst into the hall. The commanding officer ordered me to stop in the name of the law and to step down from the platform. Upon descending

I was immediately surrounded by policemen who escorted me out of the building.

The House of Study was plunged into complete confusion. Thieves exploited this confusion to make off with the jewels of the women and girls in the Women's Gallery and to increase the confusion someone shouted: "Fire!" Firemen arrived at once with their apparatus and it was only with the greatest difficulty that the police who were escorting me were able to get me through the crowd that filled the street.

I was taken into the police station like a prisoner and put in a special cell. I sat there lonely and grieving all evening. My heart turned to stone and I could not even cry. But a strong, burning protest welled up within me: "Why..."

At midnight several of the important men of the city, the government-appointed Rabbi Mr. Hanneles, Mr. Nofech, Mr. Joshua Sirkin, came into my cell with police officers and informed me that I was free on condition that I report to the Chief of Police the next morning.

For three consecutive days I reported to the Chief, accompanied by the Rabbi. During this time we translated all my speeches and sermons into Russian. After he had studied them, he confiscated all my papers and ordered me to leave Minsk within twenty-four hours...

The members of *Hovevei Zion* were able to arrange an evening for me and as a memento they gave me a copy of *Midrash Tanchumah* bound in silk with a beautiful inscription.* With blessings on all sides I parted from them and left Minsk.

* Family note: The book, though without its silk binding and complete with a long flowery dedication from the *Hibbat Zion* leaders of Minsk, is still in possession of the family.

Chapter 12

The city of Vilna aroused special feelings in me. The nearer I came to this big city, so full of sages and writers, the Jerusalem of Lithuania, the more my heart pounded within me and internal trembling passed over all my limbs. On the one hand my desire grew to see this 'Metropolis in Israel,' its historical places, the House of Study of [Rabbi Eliahu] the Vilna Gaon, the grave of the '*Ger Zedek*' [righteous covert], to steep myself in its ancient customs full of the splendor of tradition and the beauty of the past and to meet its sages and writers of whom I had only heard in person. On the other hand I was assailed by doubts whether I was competent to speak in Vilna, whether with my speeches and sermons I would be merely bringing coals to Newcastle?

But my fears were unfounded. The intellectuals of Vilna gave me a most cordial reception and I found thousands of listeners. Every Synagogue in which I spoke was full from end to end and hundreds of people were unable to get in. I must now reveal a secret and tell of an unsavory practice of some *Hovevei Zion* and heads of some Synagogues. In order to avoid overcrowding at Synagogues in which I preached they would deceive the public with dual announcements. Their system was simple. In one part of the city they would announce that I would speak in such and such a Synagogue, where I really was going to appear, while in another part of the city they would announce that I was going to speak in another Synagogue...

My speeches and sermons made a deep impression in Vilna.

My subject matter was always the Diaspora and the Land of Israel. When I would describe to my audience the condition of our people in exile, the whole congregation would burst into tears and weep. Afterwards when I would speak with great heat and enthusiasm about the dream of our future and our eventual return to our homeland and finish with the sacred oath: 'If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right Hand forget its cunning'. The audience with great applause would repeat after me the words that our ancestors swore by the rivers of Babylon. The impression created at these times was indelible.

I shall never forget the exalted moment when the aged, national writer Kalman Schulman, came up to me after a speech, fell on my neck and pronounced the blessing '*She'hechyanu*' - that he had been kept alive and preserved for the privilege of hearing speeches about our nation and our land from a Jewish preacher.

"Your dreams," he cried out with deep feeling "are the dreams which I dreamt in my books..."

From the Synagogue Schulman led me to his house. His house was small and poor. But I had more spiritual enjoyment there than in the drawing rooms of the wealthy. The old author carried me back to the generation of the Enlightenment. Kalman Schulman, famous in his time, was a good conversationalist and a social being. He excelled in his memories of the past generation, which he would relate in a typically rich Yiddish as spoken by the old people of Vilna. He loved to sit for hours and to tell stories of Berke and Michoke (Adam HaCohen Lebensohn and his son Michah Joseph Lebensohn), of Motke and Idel (Rabbi Mordechai of Flongian and Idel Schershevsky) of Mordecai Aharon (M.A. Ginzberg) and of Avrahamele Kovner (Abraham Mapu). In the course of our conversation he would lament the good old days that had vanished forever and the *Melitzei Sfat Ever* [advocates of the

Hebrew language] who had passed on one by one with no one to take their place. He found comfort in one fact only – in the great movement of *Hibbat Zion* which was making converts on all sides and growing from day to day.

I visited all the institutions in Vilna. Of all the Synagogues in the city I was most deeply impressed by the Synagogue of the Vilna Gaon. As if enchanted, I entered the Synagogue and saw the place where that great Sage in Israel had sat. His equal had not arisen in the last few generations. And there he had occupied himself in Torah and Wisdom, had written his books about the revealed works of God and about Mysticism, about Grammar and Mathematics. This is a holy place, where no stranger has sat. On the wall there is inscribed on the marble the words: "Here Elijah went up 'to Heaven in a whirlwind.'"

The *Talmud Torah* school for Torah and trade is a unique institution. Its director is the Hebrew-Russian writer, Ben David, the founder of the movement *Safah Brurah* [for the promotion of clear, pure Hebrew speech]. The building is tall, beautiful and clean like a Russian Gymnasium. The students enjoy their studies in this institution founded by Mr. Gerstein, where scholarship and proper deportment are combined.

I considered it very strange that the Government-appointed Rabbi in Vilna would give his speeches in Hebrew. I was amazed, as the use of Hebrew had not as yet become normal for public discourse. Societies such as *Safah Brurah* were few and far between and their members were still not proficient enough in spoken Hebrew, being 'slow of speech and slow of tongue.' And yet here was a Government-appointed Rabbi who gave all his public addresses in Hebrew! I later discovered that this Rabbi did this not out of choice, but out of necessity. He was a graduate of Lithuanian *Yeshivot* and received his ordination from distinguished Rabbis. He pursued his secular education in Germany where he received his doctorate. Thus,

it happened that he was not fluent in Russian, the official language; he was therefore forced to give talks in Hebrew.

Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Rabinowitz, the local Rabbi, the son of the great Yitchak Elchanan of Kovna, made a special impression upon me. Besides his great scholarship, he was well versed in worldly matters and beloved by all. He took an active interest in all that was happening everywhere, and his was 'a house of meeting for the sages' and was always open to the needy and unfortunate. This was the time of the horrible expulsion of Jews from the South of Russia and the District of Taurica [the Crimea]. Vilna was then full of these unfortunate Jews, most of whom had been well off in their towns and Rabbi Rabinowitz was the prime mover in getting assistance for them.

One cannot speak of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Rabinowitz and not mention the following incident. I was sitting in his home one day and discussing at length the condition of our people in general and of the expelled Crimean Jews in particular, when several Rabbis and recognized judges came in and posed a difficult question in *Halacha* [religious law] to Rabbi Rabinowitz. Obviously, the question that dealt with the release of an *agunah* [a married woman deserted by her husband] was very difficult. He searched through the authorities and responsa literature, but could not answer the question. He turned to the Rabbis and teachers and said to them naively:

"Next week I shall be in Kovna and will lay the matter before my father, may he be blessed with a long and good life."

This reminded me immediately of a similar incident a day earlier. I was ushered into the office of a Vilna merchant. There I found several gentlemen talking to the merchant, an old and distinguished man. As I came in, they got up to go and he said to them: "I shall lay the matter before my sons and find out what their opinion is."

Involuntarily, I recalled the statement of our sages: 'as for

scholars the older they grow the more wisdom they acquire... but the ignorant, as they wax older become more foolish.'

If during the week Vilna is a noisy, haggling huckster, on the Sabbath she is a veritable princess. He, who has not seen the Sabbath quiet of Vilna in those days, especially the inauguration of the Sabbath at twilight, especially in the narrow dark streets around the Synagogue courtyard: He, who has not seen this, has never seen a glorious holy spectacle in his life. The special, 'enlarged soul' can be felt here. All the stores close down at the same moment and everyone disappears from the market place. In a few moments all the inhabitants of Vilna, young and old, men and women, bathed and dressed in their Sabbath finery stream to the Synagogue courtyard...

One Friday night I went down to one of the narrow cellars to see how the poorest people of Vilna celebrated the Sabbath. In the four corners four tables were set with Sabbath candles lit – an indication that the cellar served as living quarters for four families. Around each table sat the head of the family, his wife the 'fruitful vine' and the children 'like olives saplings'. The floor of the cellar was strewn with white sand, the ceiling was white and the angels of peace, the ministering angels, hovered above. The faces were shining, the eyes bright, and the special Jewish soul, 'the enlarged soul' of the Sabbath, could be recognized on every one of the cellar dwellers, even on the infants.

I shall always remember one oddity I witnessed at the time.

At one table eight people were seated, and they had only seven spoons among them. The two youngest, a boy and girl of about eight, took turns eating with one spoon. They were so expert and they ate so quickly that they kept up with the rest of the family.

This scene made me laugh and at the same time brought

tears to my eyes!

I have never seen the plain folk of any place to be as friendly and goodhearted as the people of Vilna. Their character and qualities are superior to those of the crowds in all the towns I have visited in my travels. As you walk in the streets and ask anyone where such and such a place is, he immediately takes your hand and brings you there, and you can't give them anything for their trouble! In general it is very difficult to find an ignorant Jew in Vilna. Every porter, every hewer of wood has a good knowledge of the *Mishnah*.

Vilna has rightfully owned its name crowning it the 'Jerusalem of Lithuania.'

Chapter 13

If Vilna is a major metropolis in Israel, Bialystok is a minor one. Bialystok is not as large as Vilna and not as ancient. It has not the glory of the past and the splendor of legend does not hover about it. Bialystok is not known for its sages and intellectuals, not for its commercial leaders and cantors; it has no old "*Kloizes*" [houses of study] and no modern educational "*institutes*", no ancient cemeteries, no age-old communal records, Bialystok is a comparatively new city, a city that grew, developed and became a metropolis because of the textile industry which is located here and made it an industrial center that has become world famous. But Bialystok too is full of sages and writers, scholars and 'men of deeds'. Among its famous merchants are many great scholars, distinguished graduates of various *Yeshivoth* [religious academies], including the Volozhin *Yeshiva*, as well as many intellectuals, *Maskilim*, at home in Hebrew literature and responsive to Jewish national causes. Bialsytok was known as the center of *Hibbat Zion* and the eyes of all *Hovevei Zion* were turned to this city and to its Rabbi, the great Shmuel Mohilever, who was unofficially the head of *Hovevei Zion* and the guiding spirit of the movement. In short, if Vilna was the Jerusalem of Lithuania, Bialystok was the Jaffa of Lithuania (using the cities of Land of Israel as the standard).

When I came to this city, I was surprised by the movement and noise in the streets. The wagons and carts make their way swiftly, and as they walk, the people seem to run. "Merchants

Street" is always full of groups of traders, agents and negotiators – a veritable beehive of activity. But should a stranger approach these traders, he should not be surprised to hear, amid plain words dealing with import, export, contracts and interest, the secular conversation of real scholars.

After I rested from my trip I went to visit Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever. I must admit that I was quite nervous. The Rabbi's name was on the lips of all *Hovevei Zion* and would simultaneously arouse feelings of awe and love. His work for the settlement of Land of Israel and his journey there, his influence on the Baron Rothschild, his open fight for the first farmers in the Land of Israel – all this raised him to a special eminence not many could achieve. I waited impatiently for the great moment when I would meet this extraordinary man, unique in his generation.

With a pounding heart I entered his house on Merchants Street, which served as a house of meeting to all the *Hovevei Zion* and *Maskilim* [adherents of Jewish Enlightenment] in the city. When I saw him an involuntary tremor passed over me and I had a mixed feelings of awe and holiness. With this feeling I pressed the thin hand he stretched out to me and I couldn't take my eyes away from him. Before me there stood a tall man; his face was pale; his broad forehead was full of wrinkles, his shiny blue eyes were full of sadness; his white beard was long and flowing. All in all he gave the impression of a man who knew his own mind, a strict man who was impatient with people. However after exchanging a few words with him it was clear that the first impression was completely erroneous and that this "strict" man was an aristocrat, generous and even-tempered full of love for his people and his land.

I spent several hours in his company and these hours brought me great spiritual pleasure. Of course the subject of our conversation was the *Hibbat Zion* movement and the task

of settling the Land of Israel. These subjects were very dear to Rabbi Mohilever, his pale face would become radiant, covered with a slight redness, and an inner spark, a spark of holiness, would then burn in his blue eyes. It was obvious that this task, the task of Settlement, was the main interest of his life to which he devoted his spiritual and intellectual strength.

It frequently happened that Rabbi Mohilever would neglect important people of Bialystok to spend time with emissaries of *Hibbat Zion*, even though they might be young and unknown. The leading men of Bialystok accepted this neglect with love, and it was only among themselves that they would complain at times that Rabbi Mohliver was not the Rabbi of Bialystok, but a Rabbi who happened to live in Bialystok...

Mohilever had great influence over the *Maskilim* [adherents of Jewish Enlightenment] of Bialystok because of his noble character and the breadth of his knowledge and they aided him greatly in his work for *Hibbat Zion*. There were many exceptional men among them who later played a great role in the Zionist movement.

This intimate circle included the writer A.S. Hirschberg, the veteran Zionist Lipmann Rosenthal, Dr. Joseph Chazanowitz and David Sochovolsky. The latter was not much known in the outside world as he was a very retiring person. But he was an interesting and unusual type. He dedicated all his spare time and energy to *Hibbat Zion*. By day he would work as a book keeper in one of the mercantile establishments and by night he would sit and answer all the letters that came to the *Hibbat Zion* office. He would also lecture on Jewish History and the *Hibbat Zion* movement to groups of young men and women.

In Bialystok I visited the writer A.B. Gotlover, who was then practically confined to his house as he had become blind. Despite his advanced age, his bearing was still that of a young man, his face shone and his mind was clear. He loved to sit in

company and to entertain himself and others with his witty rhymes and pointed jokes. When I came into his home he was eating. I greeted him with "Bon Appetit." "Wish that I have plenty to eat," he answered, "My appetite is fine."

He did not spare himself when he felt like jesting. In his old age when he had become blind he used to say: "Do you know what my initials A.B.G. stand for? They form an acrostic for *Alter Blinder Goy*" [an old blind gentile].

I sat and talked with him for a long time about the Enlightenment of which he had been one of the standard bearers. He complained bitterly about anti-Semitism, which was becoming official policy in all countries. He recited to me his poem, *Der Bidner Yisroel* [Wretched Israel] which he had composed on current events at the time. He was very bitter about an anti-Semitic incident that had just taken place in Bialystok. A gentile doctor, Granovsky, had seized a Jewish boy who had gone into his orchard to pick some fruit. With the help of his servants he tied up the boy and with a hot iron branded a cross and the word "thief" in Russian on his forehead. This incident aroused the whole city and many influential communal workers, including the government-appointed Rabbi Marcus and Dr. J. Chazanowitz wrote blistering articles against this inhuman doctor. The Russian government did not punish the doctor, but ordered the Rabbi and Dr. Chazanowitz to be banished from the three provinces of Lithuania: Grodno, Vilna and Minsk...

When I said farewell to the old poet, he said to me:

"You know my friend, in two days I shall see an amazing vision: an *iluy* [prodigy] who is a Hasid. One can see an *iluy* who is a *Mitnagged* [opponent of Hasidism] any day. But an *iluy* who is a Hasid is a rarity. In two days I shall be 82 years old – the numerical value of the letters of 'Hasid'. My eyes are blinded by old age so the verse about those who 'have eyes but

see not' applies to me, and its Hebrew acronym is *iluy*. And so we have it – an *iluy* who is a Hasid."

At the time of my visit to Bialystok, unrest among the workers began in Lithuania. The first strike of textile workers took place in Bialystok, and made a great impression throughout the city. The workers insisted that their demands be met and they refused to yield. The threats of the police, even the personal appearance of the superintendent of police had no effect. The workers struck until the owners met with them and granted their demands. This strike was the first sign of the Bund [Jewish socialist] movement, which later embraced all Lithuania and Poland and of which Bialystok was a major center.

I stayed for a few weeks in Bialystok and preached in all the Synagogues of the city. When I visited Rabbi Mohilever to take my leave of him, I found on his desk a copy of the book *Shivat Zion* [The Return to Zion], which had just been published. The author, A.J. Slutzky, had collected letters from hundreds of Rabbis praising the Land of Israel and proving that its settlement was a specific commandment of the Torah.

I leafed through the book and remarked to Rabbi Mohilever that it would have been better if the book had not been published.

"Why do you say that?" he asked.

"Because," I answered, "This book detractes more than it adds. Until now I knew that we have commandments that are dependent upon the Land [such as jubilee, first fruits, etc.]; but I have never heard that we have a Land which is dependent upon commandments. According to this book, if the settlement of the Land of Israel is a commandment of the Torah then it is our duty to settle there; however, if it is merely a commandment of our Rabbis [of the Talmud], or if it is only optional and not a commandment at all, we do not have to do

anything about it, but we may dwell in exile without lifting a finger and the Land may remain as desolate as it has been for hundreds of years."

Chapter 14

From Bialystok I traveled to Warsaw.

Leaving Bialystok and the separation from the elite of *Hovevei Zion* and its leading activists was difficult for me, the trip to Warsaw, however, was even more difficult. Even before I visited Warsaw, the great metropolis of Polish Jewry, I was aware of the confusion and chaos that prevailed there in the communal life of the Jews. That great sage Rabbi Yosi Ber Soloveichik had described that city very aptly: "Warsaw is not a great city, but rather several towns in the same vicinity called by one name."

The Jews of Warsaw are split into groups and there is no unifying factor.

The first group is comprised of the natives, the Poles of the Mosaic Persuasion. They are assimilationists who have nothing to do with the people of Israel, its literature, its language, its culture and traditions. The fate of millions of their brethren means nothing to them. They are devoted in mind and spirit to the Polish nation and are ready to sing the Polish national anthem until they lose their voices. Anything that bears the Polish imprint is sacred to them.

The second group is that of the Hasidim who consider their Rabbis divine beings. They present themselves at the Rabbi's court every holiday and festival. They thirst for his blessings and live by his grace from the cradle to the grave. They are dressed in the fashion of the middle ages – long kaftans, flat shoes, long stockings and short pants. They have big beards,

long and curled side-locks and wear small velvet hats. They speak Yiddish in a peculiar accent, which is very difficult to understand. They educate their sons in their own way, an old fashion way with no system or order. Their daughters study in Polish schools and *gymnasia* and get a European education while Judaism is foreign to them. Most of them are pretty and it is easy to understand what problems arise in the marriages of the young, rude Hasidim to these pretty and cultivated young women. The young men travel to the Rabbi for retreats, communion and devotion and the young women visit Carlsbad, Marienbad and Franzsbad. Quite a few comedies and tragedies take place between these daughters of Israel and the Russian and German officers whom they meet at these spas. While this phenomenon is to be lamented we should not be surprised by it. The root of the evil lies in the education of the young women. They find more interest and satisfaction in the company of young and cultured officers than they do with their husbands, who are uncultivated and who avert their eyes when they do speak with their wives. In the world of the Hasidim stories are told even about the daughters of leading Rabbis that would furnish much raw material to writers of romances.

The third group is that of the Lithuanian Jews whom fate uprooted from their native places and cast into Poland. The Lithuanian feels himself lonely and isolated between the two other groups. Neither the Polish aristocrats nor the Hasidim have any love for him. To the former he is a wild fanatic while to the latter he is a heretic, who believes in the Creator of the World, but does not share their faith in the Rabbi. Even in death the Lithuanian does not find peace and quiet in the Warsaw cemetery. He is taken across the river to Praga. For these reasons the Lithuanians must be considered a separate group.

Before I reached Warsaw I knew that I would not have access to the Polish Jews and to the Hasidim. In the eyes of the first group my speeches on nationalism and *Hibbat Zion* would be 'treason' against their native land, while to the second group they would be ranked 'heresy'. Only among the few Lithuanian Jews would I find attentive ears.

My first sermon was held in the Synagogue, *Ohel Moshe*, named after the great Sir Moses Montefiore. I saw before me a large and variegated audience, with many famous writers and young intellectuals among them and I was satisfied. I saw that the great idea of *Hibbat Zion* was making converts, reviving the spark of hope among those who had been far removed from the camp of Israel, and was destined with its strength eventually to penetrate the hearts of its opponents both of the Right and the Left.

While I was in Warsaw I felt that it was my pleasant duty to visit the local scholars and writers. As was only proper I paid my first visit to the oldest of the group, Chaim Selig Slonimski. When I came into his house I found him sitting by a table reading a book. His large white beard, his broad wrinkled forehead and his long eyebrows conferred upon him the dignity of old age and patriarchal splendor. At that moment he resembled an old Rabbi, sitting and studying Torah. He received me graciously and immediately began a conversation with me on Hebrew literature, or more exactly on the polemic of "The Flask of Oil", which still raged over since the day he published his famous article. He was extremely bitter at his opponents, who fought him with taunts and abuse, and not in the civilized fashion one might expect from scholars and writers.

"All my life", he complained to me, "I was engaged in study. I attempted to teach knowledge and science to my brothers; and now in my old age I am publicly reviled!"

These words came right from his heart, the aching heart of an old man.

The conversation finally turned to the *Ha-Tsefirah*, the subject that was closest to his heart. *Ha-Tsefirah* at that time was edited by Nahum Sokolov, who had made it over into a lively and interesting newspaper. Slonimski who had founded *Ha-Tsefirah* for the publication of articles on the Telegraph, Magnets and Comets - the popularization of scientific knowledge, couldn't bear to see his brainchild converted into a daily paper. But the vigorous Sokolov, carried out his own policy. Slonimski still hoped that the time would come when the *Ha-Tsefirah* would once more become the scientific journal it once had been.

The old man's words awakened mixed feelings – laughter and sympathy. It was the clandestine tragic-comedy of a helpless old man trying to protect his world with his pale, trembling hands...

Sokolov, the young editor, made an entirely different impression upon me. Before me was a European man of aristocratic traits; his conduct polite, his conversation calm and full of tact, his gestures resembling those of a European writer, 'a son of Jepheth', but upon the mere mention of a Jewish literary or communal question, there suddenly was revealed the authentic Jewish scholar, the sharp and learned man of the old *Beth Midrash* [House of Study]. When you were in Sokolov's company you were struck with amazement, as if you were standing before one of the wonders of the world, before a phenomenon, and you did not t know what to admire more, whether his detailed knowledge of Jewish and world literature, his sharpness of mind - 'uprooting mountains and grinding them against each other' - or his Jewish humor compounded of shrewdness and naiveté at the same time. He would open his mouth and pearls would come forth. He would take a

saying of our sages and combine with it a word of one of the great philosophers; he would join a historical event with a memory of his youth. You would just sit and listen, sit and absorb. Unconsciously you would say very little so as not to waste the precious minutes, you would want to sit for hours on end to catch the jewels which came from the mouth, linked to each other by an artist's hand...

I also visited the sage Shaul Pinchas Rabinovich (ShePHeR) and found him in the midst of his work – translating *The History of the Jewish People* by Graetz. Many books and pamphlets were piled on his desk, and he sat there, writing, erasing and proofreading – all done with uncommon diligence and perseverance, in his rather crowded flat. He was far from affluent...

With ShePHeR I went to visit the well-known scholar Yonah Simchovitch, a great Talmudist and thinker who was the son of Rabbi Shmuel Simchovtich of Slutzk, known for his wisdom and affluence. We spent an enjoyable evening with him.

I joined the writer Moses Mordechai Press to pay a visit to the great scholar of Talmudic studies and jurisprudence, the linguist and musicologist Rabbi Yosef Rosenthal of Sovalk. His luminous face and burning eyes charmed me. He was a great scholar in all branches of science and in Talmud especially. All the learned men of Warsaw, from the great Rabbis to the free thinking *Maskilim*, respected him and awaited his word. With all his great scientific knowledge he was also full of humorous spirit so that spending an evening with this great man was a real pleasure.

The evil decrees of Ignatiev reached Poland too. While I was in Warsaw the government began to expel the Jews from the villages and small towns, which for this purpose were considered villages. The condition of the expelled Jews was frightful. In winter, in the snow and cold, women and infants,

old and sick people were driven out. Not far from Warsaw a man, his wife and newborn baby were expelled from a village. The woman and infant died of the cold and the man went insane. The woes of the expelled Jews were communicated to *Ha-Tsefirah*, but the censors forbade publication, and the public remained unaware of them.

At this time there was a convention of the local *Hovevei Zion*. The Warsaw members and visitors participated. I was also invited. When I entered the hall, I saw the great Naphtali Zvi Berlin of Volozhin (HaNaTSIV) chairing the meeting. I had no idea that Rabbi Berlin was staying in Warsaw and it was a real surprise to me to see him among the assembled. He recognized me immediately even though four years had passed since our first meeting in Odessa. He greeted me with his pleasant smile and beckoned me to sit at his right hand. I was shocked to see the great change that had taken place in his appearance during these four years. When I first met him, he was full of life and strength, and he, the old man, encouraged me, the young man, to continue my work of preaching for the revival of Israel in its own Land; and now he sat by me, broken and despondent, his face pale and thin. I knew the cause of this change. In the course of these four years a great misfortune befell him, that destroyed his sanctuary and blighted his life: The great *Yeshiva* in Volozhin had been closed down, and the golden chain which went back to Rabbi Chaim, the distinguished pupil of the Vilna Gaon, had been snapped. This great heart could not withstand this destruction and was torn asunder...

When the meeting was over, we spoke to each other. When we parted he kissed and embraced me before the delegates and said to me: "I know, my son, that I will not be privileged to go with you to the Land of Israel. May the Lord of Zion aid you to get there! 'When you enter the Land,' 'you shall carry

up my bones from here.'"

Our eyes all filled with tears. This was the last time that I had the privilege of seeing this great sage and hearing him speak.

Before I left Warsaw the leaders of *Hovevei Zion* and *Bnei Moshe* assembled at the home of Ze'ev Gluskin for a farewell party in my honor. They gave me a gift of the book *Dor Dor ve-Dorshav* [a history of the Oral Law by Isaac Hirsch Weiss] splendidly bound and handsomely inscribed on its back.

Chapter 15

Not for nothing is Lodz called "The Manchester of Poland." It is unique among all the cities in Poland in its manufacturing, its commerce, its population and the variety of languages spoken. It is a strange, foreign shoot grafted on the Polish tree. Its manufacturing is not done in homes or small shops as in Warsaw, it is rather large scale modern manufacturing done in gigantic factories that rise above the city with their high chimneys pouring out clouds of smoke. Its commerce is the feverish commerce of the modern world, whose tentacles reach out to all parts of the world. Its cosmopolitan population consists of Poles from every stratum of the nation, Germans from all parts of that country, Russians – Great Russians, Little Russians and White Russians, and in addition Jews of every class and origin. As you pass through the main commercial street, you hear a confusion of tongues, a wide variation of accents. You hear the pleasant accent of Polish, the Russian R., the German CH and the AY of the Polish Yiddish. All this gives the impression of a modern Babel, of a strange and distant city across the ocean.

Before you enter Lodz proper, before you see the lofty chimneys, you feel another atmosphere about you, another world made up of only wool, cotton, summer goods and winter goods. When you sit in the Warsaw-Vienna train, all the conversation of your fellow travelers revolves around weaves and lengths. To your right sits a short-bearded Lithuanian Jew of dark complection, who owns a small store

in an isolated village. He is making his annual trip to Lodz to buy merchandise "on the spot," and wants to know from his neighbor if it is true that the price of summer goods has declined this year. Opposite you sits a stout middle aged woman, a 'woman of valor' who left her store and home in care of her wretched husband, as she travels to Lodz to lay in a supply of merchandise for the approaching holidays. In a corner sit two young men, clean-shaven, dressed in European clothes, traveling salesmen returning from the cities of Interior Russia. They talk about orders of hundreds of "pieces", credit, notes and discount. The different voices merge in the air, combined with the cigarette smoke and are spread like a canopy over the heads of the travelers.

I traveled in a train like this from Warsaw to Lodz. At first, I was astonished and sat stunned in my corner. It seemed to me that I had fallen among strangers, whose language and customs were foreign to me. But slowly my spirits revived and began to make out their words and to take an interest in the conversation. I almost imagined that I was one of them, that I was a clothing merchant or a traveling salesman for some firm or other. And when some of my companions asked me what was the purpose of my trip to Lodz, I did not hesitate and answered them:

"I am a traveling salesman."

In my heart I knew I had spoken the truth, for I actually am a traveling salesman, a traveling salesman of the national idea, of the idea of redemption...

I came to Lodz and immediately began "to sell my merchandise," to preach of national revival. I thought that in a modern city like this I would find many attentive listeners, that my words would reach the hearts of my audiences and influence them to take an active role in the national movement. This thought encouraged me and I preached my

first sermons with enthusiasm and passion. I spoke of the spiritual exile, more cruel to our people than the physical exile. I described the ugliness and disgrace in assimilation on the one hand and in ignorance on the other. I advocated, as is my custom, national education, improved education at home and at school, and the remembrance of Zion and Jerusalem. And then what I never expected happened to me. In modern Lodz there were fanatics who opposed me with that ancient timeworn weapon – slander. Orthodox fanatics, who did not approve of my words or my clothes, wrote to the government that I 'mixed with dissenters' and was advocating revolution. In those days an anonymous note was sufficient to have a man arrested and exiled to Siberia.

One evening, on the 12th of *Shevat*, 5693 [January 29th, 1893], when a large audience had assembled in the Synagogue to hear me, and I was just about to go on the platform, three policemen under the command of the local prefect, burst into the hall and led me away a prisoner to the police station.

My imprisonment aroused the whole city. The leading citizens took counsel, went to the chief of police and attempted to influence him, but he turned them down. The accusation against me was so severe that he thought he had apprehended a leading revolutionary.

I sat all evening in my cell and sad thoughts filled my brain and pressed on my heart. I had already forgotten the taste of slander and imprisonment and had begun to believe that slanderers 'have passed and ceased from the world' – but here I was subjected again to such an insulting experience, and in Lodz, the modern city!

That winter night was interminable, the city clock struck one and two – my boredom was insufferable and bitter thoughts drained my heart's blood like leeches.

Suddenly the door opened and the chief of police entered

with the venerable sage, Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Meisel.

"You are free," the chief said to me, "Now that my friend the Rabbi has vouched for you. Please forgive the unpleasantness I have caused you. But your fellow Jews are responsible for that..."

I went out with Rabbi Meisel and took a deep breath. It was a clear night, the sky was deep blue and studded with stars, a full moon floated above and the ground was covered with a mantle of snow. After a few hours of prison and isolation freedom and space were seven-fold precious to me.

We sat in the sleigh and drove to my hotel. The sleigh traveled smoothly on the snow and the two of us sat silent and deep in thought. What the Rabbi's thoughts were at that moment I do not know. But I could not stop looking at his shining face, his clear eyes and his white beard, which was more silvery than the rays of the silver moon.

The sleigh stopped at my hotel. I stepped down and took out my wallet to pay the driver. Rabbi Meisel, the aging sage, held my hand and greatly disturbed said to me:

"Young man, I did not expect this of you! All my life I have been hoping to fulfill the commandment of ransom of captives and now that I have the opportunity, you want to deprive me of it!"

I was deeply embarrassed by the Rabbi and his words and I did not try to stop him. He paid the driver and parted from me with a warm handshake.

I could not sleep for a long time that night. The Rabbi's face was before me and his aristocratic personality awakened many different thoughts in my mind ...

The next morning I did my duty and visited Rabbi Meisel at his home to thank him for his kindness to me as he had released me from prison. When I entered the house I found my old teacher, Rabbi Chaim Lev, the head of the Mir *Yeshiva*.

We were both overjoyed to meet after twenty-five years.

"I am proud of you, my pupil," Rabbi Chaim Lev said to me. "I have heard great things of you; you are doing wonders with your sermons."

I held my teacher's hand with great awe and said to him:

"Rabbi, permit me to hold the hand which slapped my face twenty-five years ago, for 'wounds by a loved one are long lasting.'"

"My son," answered Rabbi Chaim, "I may be trusted to have I slapped your face with justice. But tell me what was your sin?"

"Rabbi" I answered, "I remember what happened as if it were yesterday. My sin was 'a sin in its time,' that is to say that at that time it was a sin and transgression. Today our Rabbi would see no fault in it. This is what happened. In the *Yeshivah* there was a supervisor named Rabbi Peretz, a harsh and stern man, he was also related to me and so fulfilled the commandment 'through those near to Me I show Myself holy' by making me an example. Once, between the afternoon and evening prayers [*Minchah* and *Maariv*,] he found me sitting in my room, teaching a lesson in Bible to ten fellow-students. I still remember the chapter in Isaiah I was teaching. I was slowly and clearly reading to my fellow students: 'Ha! Those who write out evil writs.' We were all wrapped up in our study and we didn't sense the presence of Rabbi Peretz. He said nothing to us but told our Rabbi what had occurred. You sent for me, slapped my face in public and commanded me:

"'From this day forth you will sit between *Minchah* and *Maariv* and study *Gemarah* [*Talmud*]!'"

Rabbi Chaim Lev and Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim both laughed.

I gladly responded to Rabbi Eliahu Chaim's request to give a sermon for the benefit of *Bikur Holim* Society [for visiting the ill], and it raised a sizeable income. The city leaders and the

predicator Dr. Yelski blessed me as I left the city in peace. The community of Lodz gave me a gold watch for a gift.

Chapter 16

I always thought of Vilna and Grodno as two neighboring cities. From my childhood days the red letters on the front page of the *Gemarah*, were indelibly in my mind: "The Printing Press of Vilna and Horodna [Grodno]." These words stood out sharply on the dark blue wrinkled and wax stained page. As soon as I would open the tractate *Baba Kama,* the letters would meet my eye and a whole web of images and visions would be spun in my brain. I would be walking in the streets of Vilna and Horodna [Grodo]; I would go into the great houses of study where long shelves full of books were set against the walls; I would see before my eyes the tall Synagogues with their pointed roofs where the dead would gather nightly to pray – I would imagine further, when we were learning a difficult portion of the text and the teacher was striving with might and main to explain an obtuse commentary of Rashi, that I was standing in a large printing establishment and tall sunburned men with rolled up sleeves were standing around the press from which long, heavy copies of the *Gemarah* were falling with red letters emblazoned on them, "The Printing Press of Vilna and Horodna [Grodno]"...

And even later when I had grown up and knew the geographic distance between these two cities, and was aware that they were separate cities in two different provinces under different governors, where policies toward their Jews might not be identical – even than I thought of the two cities as one in their inner life and their material and spiritual condition,

although I was conscious of the fact that the glory of the past and the splendor of tradition hovered over Vilna.

When I finally came to Grodno, I learned that Vilna was superior to it not only in its past, but also in its present. Vilna is a city with all its hustle and bustle, while Grodno is a large village, completely provincial in character. There is no movement in its streets, passers-by walk slowly with the confidence of the villager that there is nothing for them to miss. Here and there a wagon passes with its driver dozing in his seat and even the horse takes tiny steps as if dozing were its main function and its forward progress unimportant. To be sure the houses are beautiful, the streets well paved, and there are lights on every corner, but there is a mantle of secret sadness spread over everything. A silent sorrow and the special dullness of the small Lithuanian villages, strike you as soon as you come to the city.

But this dullness, which came over me when I journeyed from the railroad station to my hotel, passed at once. That very day it was demonstrated to me that I was in a big city, with policemen and inspectors closely watching the footsteps of every stranger who entered their precincts.

Before I had even made my first speech, the Grodno prefect of police forbade me to speak before I obtained a special permit from the Governor of the Province. This decree drove the dullness and sadness from my heart and filled it with righteous anger. My arrival in the city had been extensively advertised and the date of my first public appearance had been set. And now the iron fist of the prefect of police intervened and everything was up in the air. It was no simple thing to get a permit from the Governor, and practically impossible if there was none to intercede for the petitioner. I was completely lost. The Grodno members of *Hibbat Zion* did what they could, they testified that I was not a revolutionary, but their efforts

were to no avail.

A few days later I found out that the Provincial Governor in Grodno was one Batiushkov, who a few years earlier had been Provincial Governor in Yekaterinoslav, where he had been on very friendly terms with the well-known communal worker, Michel Maidansky. I sent a telegram to the latter begging him to get me out of this mess. I received an immediate reply from him that he had already written to the Governor favorably about me and that no doubt I would receive the necessary permit.

Three days later I went to the Governor to request the permit. In a big room I found a large and diversified group of petitioners. There were Jews with long ear locks and beards wearing long cassocks, and peasants dressed in fur skins with rags on their feet. They were all standing with their petitions in their hands waiting for the Governor's appearance. I stood among them with Maidansky's telegram in my hand and waited. An intense silence, a silence that rose from fear, permeated the room when the Governor appeared with his secretary. All those who waited felt that the cruel Russian government that knew no pity had appeared before them incarnate in flesh and skin. The Governor passed in front of the petitioner, heard their requests and his secretary followed him, took the petitions and wrote down the answer of the Governor. When the Governor reached me he read Maidansky's telegram, smiled, gave me his hand and ordered the secretary to inform the prefect of police that permission was given to me to preach. He said to me:

"Yes, preacher, you have my permission, but take care what you say!"

The news spread throughout the city and everyone was talking about it, as this was the first time that the Governor had given special permission to a Jewish preacher.

But the Grodno authorities were not entirely certain of my

dependability, even after I received the Governor's permission. A member of the secret police was assigned to my first speech to make sure that I said nothing subversive against the Russian Government...

While I was in Grodno I felt it my pleasant duty to visit the *Maggid*, Rabbi Moses Isaac, called "The Kelmer *Maggid*," who was living there then. I desired to get to know this man who had added a special chapter to the history of Jewish preaching. He would cast spells over his audiences with fiery words and visions of the World to Come, which he depicted in true artistic fashion as if he had been there himself. The *Makilim* [adherents of Jewish Enlightenment] of his time did not properly appreciate this popular preacher, who was unique in his powerful speech and artistic descriptions, just as they could not appreciate the noble side of Jewish life, but saw only the ugliness, foolishness and deceit.

"The Kelmer *Maggid*" received me very cordially, and with trembling voice said to me: "I have heard of you. I have just come from Lodz and they told me that your audiences burst into tears and weep at the words that come straight from your heart. You do not use the fear of Hell and its torments to accomplish this. I could never do it. The Lord has chosen you to fill my place in this new generation, which has lost its faith in Reward and Punishment. Each generation has the preacher to fit its needs."

These words spoken in naiveté and humility moved me to tears...

Among the distinguished families of Grodno the Yaffes especially stood out. They were the descendants of the learned Rabbi Mordecai Gimpel of Rozhinoi. This family was the pride of the Jews of Grodno. Rabbi Duver Yaffe was a distinguished man who participated in every communal endeavor. His son Bezalel was one of the leading spirits in the

Hibbat Zion movement to which he was completely dedicated. The younger son Leib, began to show poetic gifts and he had already written fine national poems, that forecast that he would become a poet in Israel.

The Jaffe family lived in a suburb by the Nieman River. On both sides of the river there were high hills covered with greenery. I loved to sit there at sunset when the hills were bright with the last rays of the sun and the silvery waters of the Nieman flowed between them – a most enchanting scene!

One of the wonderful types of whom the Jews of Grodno speak, is Reb Nochemke, who was known during his lifetime as Reb Nochum Shemesh. I was not privileged to see this great soul for when I came to Grodno, he had already passed away. But the admiration and awe with which people would mention his name, and the many stories and legends which were already told of him even though only a short time had passed since his death, indicated to me that he had in truth been a great and holy man, unique, with no peers.

The many stories that the Jews of Grodno tell of Reb Nochum, even though there is a vein of folklore about them, revolve around one point, the humility and charity of this great man. He did not spare himself and did not stand on dignity, but would continually make the rounds to collect money, which he distributed to the poor. In the dark of night, in snowstorms, he would drag his feet from house to house for the many poor and destitute people he aided. He did not distinguish between individuals and between Jew and non-Jew.

The story is told that one night at midnight, some of the leading people of Grodno spied Reb Nochum walking in the street carrying a newborn puppy in his arms. They were bewildered by this sight and when they asked Reb Nochum what he was doing, he answered in all innocence: "The wife of my Gentile neighbor has just given birth. Last night I heard

her sighs and screams. When I asked what the trouble was I was informed that she was suffering from too much milk and her swollen breasts caused her enormous pain. I was further told that it would help her if she could give her surplus milk to a newly born puppy. So I searched for such an animal and am now bringing it to her. As it is written: 'And His mercy is upon all His works.'"

They further tell of Reb Nochum that it was his custom to make the rounds during the long winter nights of all the inns where cards were played. He used to take all the money he found on the tables for his charitable work. The card players knew him and his strange custom and used to donate liberally. Once he came to an inn where he was not known and when he approached the table to take the money, one of the players jumped up and slapped his face. Reb Nochum was not angered and calmly said to the man:

"This you gave for me; now, what will you give for the poor?"

His words made a strong impression on the card players and they all made handsome donations. The man who had slapped Reb Nochum got down on his knees and asked his forgiveness.

At his funeral thousands of the poor widows and orphans, Jew and Gentile, followed his bier and lamented the passing of their savior and defender.

Chapter 17

The town of Druzgenik lies a few miles from Grodno. It is unique among the cities of Lithuania for its mineral springs, which greatly benefit those who suffer from rheumatism. When you approach the town you get the impression that you have come to Carlsbad or Marienbad. Wherever you go you come across men dressed in expensive clothes and bejeweled women wearing the latest fashions. They walk slowly, taking a stroll for their pleasure and health, and drink the waters at regular intervals, just as in the famous spas. But in addition to these fortunate patients you meet many poor sufferers who also have come to be cured of their rheumatism even though they can ill afford the expense. The doctor's advice was decisive and their pain so severe that they went to Druzgenik, in the hope that the children of Israel would be charitable and not permit them to die of hunger. I have never seen a place where the extremes of wealth and poverty exist side by side as they do in Druzgenik. Here you see fat, well-fed people together with pale, thin fellow sufferers, men and women clad in the most luxurious clothes next to those dressed in rags. Hardly anyone wonders at the great contrast between the two groups. It is accepted as a natural phenomenon. It is especially interesting to see the diverse elements in the restaurants at meal times: a Rabbi sits next to a traveling salesman, a delicate Polish youth opposite a young woman, a Hasidic Rabbi across the table from bare-headed doctors. The different voices blend, a confusion of languages and dialects, all making a strange

impression upon the bystander.

I came to this town not to be healed, but to heal – to cure the Druzgeniks of the illness of apathy toward the fate of their people. The Synagogue in which I spoke was filled with a most diversified audience. There were Lithuanians wearing short jackets and Poles in long jackets. Hasidim and *Mitnaggedim.* Among them was the Grand Rabbi of Radzin and his entourage and Dr. Dembow and the members of his faction.

Rabbi Mordechi Joseph the Hasidic Rabbi of Radzin was the son of Rabbi Gershon Henick, who was a well-known polemicist in the Rabbinic literature of his time. The son was very proud of his father and had no use at all for other learned Rabbis. When the Rabbis banned the *ethrogs* [citrons] of Corfu, he opposed them violently and commanded his Hasidic followers to make their [Feast of Tabernacles] blessings only on those citrons, the "Corfu Bastards", as the MaLBIM (Rabbi Meir Liebush Weiser) called them.

Dr. Dembow made a great reputation for himself by his defense of Ritual Slaughter, which the Russian government wanted to ban. His name became known throughout Jewry. When I visited him in this hotel, he was sitting with Rabbi Robinsohn of Rotnitza studying the *Yoreh De'ah* [volume of the *Shulchan Aruch,* compilation on Jewish law] . He received me most cordially and passing from subject to subject we spoke also of the proposed ban on ritual slaughter. With great enthusiasm he demonstrated to me how mistaken our adversaries were in their desire to ban ritual slaughter because of cruelty to animals. According to modern medical knowledge no death was as painless as that by ritual slaughter. The Rabbis of the Talmud and Codifiers in their *Halachic* decisions were in accord with the science of physiology.

In the course of my visit with him I became aware of how hard working and diligent this man was, so that he knew no

rest even in Druzgenik. In addition to his studies and lectures, he would continually write letters to the Russian newspapers and to great Rabbis with whom he carried on a constant correspondence. He did all this gladly and complained about his fellow physicians who were becoming estranged from their people.

At that same time, the great Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever, the head of the *Hibbat Zion* movement came to Druzgenik as well. I was of course among the first to greet him. His hotel automatically became the center of all *Hovevei Zion*. Everyone would come to see him, to inquire about his health and the progress of the Movement. 'He who has not seen' the great Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever speaking of *Hibbat Zion* 'has never seen' a happy man. When he would begin to speak of the settlement of the Land of Israel and of the hope of Redemption, his face would light up, his eyes dream, looking into the future, and his voice would ring out strongly. At these moments he was not a man in his seventies, but a youth full of strength and unlimited energy.

During his stay in Druzgenik, I saw him practically every day. We would sit in his hotel or walk through the woods along the bank of the Nieman River. Rabbi Mohilever loved nature and especially its manifestations in Druzgenik. The deep blue sky spread over the thick woods, the fragrant wildflowers and the red roses sprouting from the green grass – and on the side the high lordly rocks, whose bottoms were washed by the waves of the Nieman. Birds would sing and flit from branch to branch. Young people would row joyously on the river. In this blessed corner of the world Rabbi Mohilever would sit for a few hours each day and speak of the natural beauties in the Land of Israel – in the Galilee, along the banks of Lake Kinnereth, along the Jordan and Mount Carmel.

"Yes, my friend," he would say to me, "nature here is beautiful,

but what is it compared to the beauty of the Land of Israel? There is nothing like the glory of nature there - a different heaven and a different earth, a different sun, a different moon and stars. It cannot be adequately described. Dear God, when will we be privileged to return to our land?"

Once toward evening we were sitting along the Nieman. The last rays of the sun turned the silver waters of the river to gold. The woods were still as if they were preparing to go to sleep. Rabbi Mohilever was totally absorbed in conversation about the problem of the sabbatical year, which was then shaking the rabbinical world. The Rabbis, affiliated with *Hibbat Zion*, Rabbi Mohilever, Rabbi Mordecai Eliasberg, Rabbi Yitzhak Elchanan, and the NaTSIV [Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Yehudah Berlin] permitted agricultural work in Palestine during the Sabbatical year. On the other hand, strict constructionist Rabbis banned such work. Rabbi Mohilever stood up, his great height accentuated by the last rays of the sun; he seemed to be a prophet of the Lord and with his face, burning with excitement, he thundered:

"I cannot understand the opinion of my colleagues, the strict constructionist Rabbis, who want to destroy the Settlement in the Land of Israel. Is it their wish then, that everything here along the Nieman should be as it was in Pumbeditha in Babylon?"

His voice in the woods sounded like an echo from Heaven and fear and awe took hold of me.

Rabbi Mohilever, despite his advanced age, worked energetically for *Hibbat Zion*, even when he was in Druzgenick to improve his health and never forgot the work that was as dear to him as his life. Many important questions, internal questions dealing with running the organization were on the agenda at that time and Rabbi Mohilever decided to call a special meeting in Druzgenik to settle them. Aided by the

writer A. I. Slutzki, he sent word to the leading members and all responded to the call and came to the meeting, among them: Erez [Zederbaum], editor of *Ha-Melitz*; the Russian Jewish writer Ben-Ami; Yehushua Sirkin; Rabbi Pinchas Rozovsky and the Yaffe brothers. The meeting was scheduled for a Saturday night, 7 of the month of Elul, 5653 [August 19th, 1893]. The Sabbath too was devoted to the delegates and visitors. All the delegates worshiped in one Synagogue and one of them distributed *Aliyuth* [the Torah honors]. Those who were honored asked the sexton to make a special blessing for Rabbi Mohilever and pledged contributions to the Settlement in the Land of Israel. The meeting itself took place on Saturday night and Rabbi Mohilever, who was the opening speaker, took as his text the opening words of the *Haftarah* [reading from the prophets] of that morning. 'I, I am He who comforts you'. His words electrified the assembly. After protracted discussion that lasted till daybreak it was decided, among other things, to set up in Bialystok a cultural center for the *Hovevei Zion* to be called *Mizrachi*. From this center instructions were to be forwarded to the administrative offices in Warsaw and Odessa.

In later years the name of this center was used by those who set up the *Mizrachi* Organization.

Chapter 18

Of all the cities that I visited in Bessarabia, Volynhia, Poland and Lithuania during my many trips the city of Kovna [Kaunas] made the most distinct impression upon me. Immediately upon reaching this city you felt that you had come to a different district, a different environment even though the Russian language and Russian law were still dominant here. You saw before you different Jews, new faces, lacking the ugly poverty of Lithuania, the gross materialism of Bessarabia and the extreme orthodoxy of Poland. A certain grace and aristocracy of the spirit are present on the faces and in the manners of the Jews of Kovna. Even the most Orthodox among them, who are mindful of the slightest commandment, do not wear long garments, comb their hair and beards and strictly mind their collars. It is possible that this if due to the influence of the Prussian border which is close to Kovna, but it is a fact that the Jews of Kovna do excel in the neatness of their apparel and the civility of their manners.

The city itself impresses you with its beauty and the splendor of the surrounding country. Mountains encircle the city. The most beautiful is Mount Peter and it is a great experience to stand at its peak and to look down on the city with all its streets and squares, with its walls and towers. It is a tradition of the Kovna Jews that [the Hebrew novelist] Abraham Mapu loved to be alone in the mountains and to write his books there. The pure and pleasant air, the soft fresh grass, the complete and delightful stillness would lift him on the wings of his

imagination and he would see before his eyes the splendor of Lebanon and Carmel, the Valley of Sharon and Mount Hermon and Jerusalem, built up in all its glory.

The city is further adorned by the two rivers, the Nieman and the Vilija (Neris) that flow on both its sides till 'they become one' to the west of the city.

Among the mountains that encircle the city is a valley called the "Valley of Mitzkevitch". In this valley the great Polish poet composed his poems and saw his splendid visions. Mapu and Mitzkevitch both sang their songs on the soil of Kovna, on foreign soil. They were both poets of nations in exile, but even so how great was the difference! The place where Mitzckevitch lived and worked is a historical place to the Poles and is called by the name of their poet, while no one knows exactly where Mapu lived and wrote.

There is exile and exile within exile!

When I came to Kovna I considered it my first duty to visit its Rabbi, the elderly sage, Rabbi Yitchak Elchanan. I had heard much of this great man, of his aristocratic personality, of his great heart aware of every communal problem and I had a great desire to see him and to enjoy his company. He was staying then at a summer home outside of the city. I went with his son, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch the Rabbi of Vilna to meet him. I found him lying in the shade of a large tree, sleeping. A cool breeze blew and caressed his full white face and the white hair of his beard. There was a mystic silence all around. At the Rabbi's hand there lay a small book which he was obviously reading before he fell asleep; the wind played with the book and turned its pages. It was interesting to see what book served as light reading for this scholar before he napped. As I came one step closer I was able to make out the title, *Chosen Mishpat* [volume of the *Shulchan Aruch* compilation of Jewish law]...

We waited a few minutes until the Rabbi awoke. When he saw us he immediately stood up, rubbed his hands on the grass and greeted us. When his son introduced me his face lit up and he invited me to come into his cottage. He said to his son: "All strength to thee [*yeshar ko'ah*] Herschele, for bringing me so distinguished a guest!"

As we walked, I wanted to take the pillow on which he had been lying from him and carry it. But he refused to give it to me, saying: "Let my son fulfill the commandment of honoring his father," and handed it to Rabbi Zvi Hirsh.

When we reached the cottage he called out happily:

"Wife (*Rabbanit*)! Set the table. We have distinguished visitors today."

We sat at the table a long time and talked. In the course of his conversation, whose main theme was the condition of our people, I got to know this remarkable man. His great learning and his continuous preoccupation in replying to religious queries from far and wide did not confine him to the narrow world of religious law, to 'the four cubits of Halacha,' so to speak. Everything that was happening in Jewish circles was known to him and close to his heart. A forthcoming edict that would expel Jews from yet another region of the Russian empire, the question of ritual slaughter, improving the conditions of Jewish soldiers in the Russian army – these and similar problems occupied his heart and mind and he dedicated his energy and time to them. When he would speak of the trials and tribulations of Israel a cloud of sadness would come over his face and his words would come from the innermost chambers of his heart. It seemed as if he were personally experiencing all the sufferings of Israel in his body and soul. He was very gracious to everyone and would receive all people, even the non-Orthodox, most cordially. All these fine qualities placed him at the head of Russian Jewry and

in effect he was not the Rabbi of Kovna, but of that entire Diaspora.

When I looked at his splendid face, as I listened to his words, when I saw the graciousness with which he received callers, I imagined that Hillel the Elder [the great sage from the days of the Second Temple] was standing before me.

At this time the controversy over the *Musar* (Ethical) Movement was raging in the Hebrew press (*Ha-Melitz* and *Ha-Tsefirah*). The Kovna writer, S. Rosenfeld, had started this controversy. In bitter articles he opposed the leaders of the Musar movement who were all established in Kovna. He showed by citing facts 'and portents' that they were deniers of the world and misleaders of the *Yeshivah* students. When I was on the spot in Kovna, I decided to visit the strongholds of the *Musar* adherents to see whether 'the outcry that had come to me' was true. In the company of that eminent Talmudist, the writer, Aharon Michal Borochov, I visited the *Musar Yeshivah*. I must confess that I shuddered when I saw how the *Musar* disciples comported themselves. The way of *Musar*, as it existed in Kovna, was not the way of life, but the way of death. The *Musarites* went about like shadows and the melancholy sadness of men condemned to death could be seen in their eyes. My heart bled to see these young boys, the pride of the *Yeshivah,* who had not yet tasted life, and were already looking at the whole world through a gloss of sadness and melancholy. The *Musar* movement killed all feeling of joy in them and choked off all desire for life, so that they seemed like flowers that had withered before their time. Not for nothing did Rabbi Yitchak Elchanan and his son, Rabbi Hirsch, oppose the *Musar* movement and the antics of its leaders, such as [Rabbi Yozel] *Ba'al Ha-horim* ["Master of the Holes"]....*

* This Rabbi was receiving food through two holes, one for meat and the other for dairy products, as he was completely sequestered in his home (translator's note.)

In Kovna I met the writer, Jacob Lifschitz who was at the head of the "Black Cabinet". He was one of the most extreme opponents of *Hibbat Zion* and Zionism. Lifschitz was a cultivated man and a talented writer, but he was fanatically Orthodox and this fanaticism 'deprived him of his senses' and education. He violently hated Hebrew literature and Hebrew writers, Zionism and Zionists and would write and speak against them in words barbed with poison and animosity. He was deeply influenced by the writings of the German Rabbi, S.R. Hirsch and desired to found an ultra Orthodox party in Russia patterned after the group in German Jewry. But this desire, of course, was never achieved, and his attacks upon Zionism did not bring him great honor.

I spent a few weeks in Konva. At the intercession of Dr. Fineberg the Governor of the Province gave me special permission to preach in all the Synagogues of the city. The *Hovevei Zion* and other nationally inclined Jews publicized my speeches, which were designed to refute the "Black Cabinet". I must confess, however, that faces of this cabinet could scarcely be detected in Kovna itself. The head of the cabinet also served as scribe to the Rabbi, and the Rabbi, as was well known, was most sympathetic to *Hibbat Zion* and this to some extent tied the hands of the head of the Cabinet.

Before I departed from Kovna, I delivered a eulogy on the great Rabbi Berlin, the NaTSIV of Volozhin. Great multitudes of people came to pay their last respects to the departed Sage, among them many of his pupils. I described to them the extent of the loss we suffered by the death of this great Sage and the worth of the *Yeshivah* of Volozhin, to which he had consecrated his life, and the great assemblage wept with me.

The trustees of the German Synagogue invited me to preach in that Synagogue where a *Maggid* [preacher] had never before appeared on the platform. The government-appointed rabbi,

Rabbi Schnittkind, and two university students, the Bramsohn brothers, headed the synagogue committee. I spoke to a huge audience, which included ultra Orthodox, for two hours. The makeup of my audience was considered a miracle in the Kovna of those days.

I went to take my leave of Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan together with the writer Aaronsohn, the translator of S. R. Hirsch's books. We spent several hours conversing with him. I could not take my eyes away from his shining face, his fine build, his fare white hands and above all from his eyes that were so full of love and compassion.

Suddenly he broke off his conversation, asked my leave and went into his room.

After ten minutes reappeared and handed me a letter saying:

"Please take these few words which describe the peculiar gift which God has bestowed upon you. They may be of help to you in the future. I am old and grey, but you are young and have the strength to work for our people, our faith and our Torah. As I see it, you are destined to cross the Ocean to America. Everyone goes there. May you come to them and strengthen them. Tell them in my name to strive to maintain our Holy Torah, which has been 'our life and length of our days' these last two thousand years!"

We parted with a kiss and a tear.

Chapter 19

Until you approach Brisk d'Lita [Brest Litowsk, Lithuania] you think that you will find a Lithuanian city with all the phenomena which characterize life in the cities of Lithuania. But when you reach the city you become aware that the name had led you astray and that before you lies a Polish city in every small detail. The Jews dress like their brothers in Poland, wear long clothes and broad-brimmed hats, let their side locks grow long and speak a Yiddish whose accent is much more Polish than Lithuanian.

Since the city is basically Polish in spirit, it is a stronghold of Hasidism. The majority of its Jews are Hasidim with all their good and bad qualities. Consequently it is not strange that the idea of *Hibbat Zion* was late in reaching Brisk. At the time when close by Bialystok was already the center of the Movement the first stirrings were not visible in Brisk and there was not even one organized group.

When I came there and got to know the type of city it was, my spirits fell. The old question: 'What if they do l not believe me and do not listen to me' arose again in all its bitterness and doubt began to bore into my brain. I was afraid lest my voice, which called for the love of the Land of Israel and its resettlement should become 'a voice ringing out in the desert', and that the seed, the grains of nationalism fall on bare rock. But I conquered my doubt and overcame my hesitation and began to speak from the platforms of Synagogues and houses of study in the city. Great crowds came to hear me and my

words on the troubles of our nation and the 'restoration of its fortunes', words that came from the depths of my heart were not spoken in vain, but entered the hearts of my audience.

One of the greatest treasures of Brisk, without doubt, was its famous Rabbi, Chaim Soloveichik, the son and successor of the great Rabbi Yosi Ber. He was a most unusual man. His keen intellect and profound logic brought him great renown even in his youth when he administered the Volozhin *Yeshiva* together with his father-in-law's father-in-law the NaTSIV [Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Yehudah Berlin]. Many writers and Sages, Jew and Gentile alike, marveled at his intellectual ability and spiritual strength. His external appearance was not prepossessing. He was short of stature, had a pointed beard and keen eyes; only his head was large, larger than the ordinary and it was obvious to all that this large head was a receptacle for a very large brain full of profound ideas.

Despite his intellectual attainments he lived in very simple fashion. He did not wear expensive clothes nor did he manage his household highhandedly. At times he would recline on a sofa and read the works of RaMBaM [Maimonodes] when homeowners from the community would call on him or he would take walks with his friend, Rabbi Smichah Zelig, his hand on the latter's shoulder and discuss scholarly questions as he was wont to do in his youth in Volozhin. It is said in the name of the great NaTSIV, that when he would see Rabbi Chaim walking about, his hand on the shoulder of a *Yesivah* student, he would smile and say: "Rabbi Chaim [pun for '*reichaim*' – 'millstones] 'around his neck, shall one study Torah?"" *

He did not usually decide on religious questions of

* Parody on the Talmudic phrase [about a newly wed burdened by "*reicahim*" – millstones]: 'a millstone around his neck, shall one study Torah?' [Babylonian Talmud, *Kiddushin* 29 b].

prohibition or permission. Even when a question arose in his own household he would refer it to one of the recognized judges, Rabbis in the city. It was his custom when he did decide such problems to be lenient especially if it was a matter affecting health. A pale young boy once came to him and asked if he might eat meat during the nine penitential days of the Month of Av. Rabbi Chaim looked at the youth and said to him: "Go and tell your mother that she too may eat meat." When those who were present asked him to explain his answer, he replied that a thin and emaciated child is not born of a healthy and robust mother...

Just as he was lenient in matters of his own household he was at times most firm in communal matters. When the trustee who was in charge of paying the Rabbi's salary, the well known Mandelblatt, mishandled charity funds, Rabbi Chaim did not hesitate to oppose him openly.

He also would not compromise in the affairs of the congregation. When Daniel Chwolson celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday, the intellectual leaders of Brisk wanted to send him a congratulatory message. Rabbi Chaim refused to sign it, curtly stating: "I do not sign greetings to an apostate."

And Chwolson was undoubtedly the best of apostates.* Many of the greatest Rabbis respected Chwolson and asked his aid in matters touching all Israel. And the common people remembered his book against the Blood Libel. Chwolson used to say of himself [in the words of the *Yom Kippur* prayer]: *'Veachshav shenotsarti keilu lo notsarti'* [The words literally mean: 'And now that I have been formed, I am as though I had not been formed.' However, *notsarti* can be penned upon to mean: "And now that I have become a Nazarite (i.e. a Christian), I am as though I had not become a Nazarite."] But

* He converted to Greek Orthodoxy in 1835 and became professor of oriental languages at the University of St. Petersburg (translator's note).

Rabbi Soloveichik paid no heed to this and simply stated: "I will have nothing to do with apostates."

Rabbi Chaim like his father before him was very liberal in matters of charity. He gave to all the needy with an open hand. When he was asked:

"Rabbi with what will you pay your own debts?"

He would reply: "In Brisk there are enough rich people to cover the expenditures I make on their poor."

I knew Rabbi Chaim from the days of my youth. We had studied together in Slutzk when Rabbi Yosi Ber was the Rabbi of my native city. Rabbi Chaim was four years older than I and quite a few times he had hit me when we played together between *Mincha* and *Ma'ariv* [the afternoon and evening prayers]. He was a happy child and quite a rascal in those days.

When I came to Brisk, I went at once to visit him. He recognized me immediately, fell on my neck and said: "Aren't you Hirschel, Rabbi Chaim's son? I am overjoyed to see you after twenty-five years. And now that you have come 'under the shelter of my roof,' I have a favor to ask of you. Let us return to our youth for a few moments and call each other by our childhood names. I shall call you Hirschel and you call me Chamike. How pleasant was our youth!"

"Yes, Rabbi," I answered: "You can call me whatever you wish. It will be my pleasure. But I must treat our Rabbi with respect. After all you are the Rabbi of Brisk and the Rabbi of all Israel."

"If that's the case," said Rabbi Chaim: "how are you, Rabbi Zvi Masliansky?"

After that we spent several delightful hours reminiscing on the days of our youth.

A remarkable type, a remnant of the old days gone by, was Reb Shalom Menasseh. He never served as a Rabbi, and

always lived like one of the plain people. He was a great scholar and a very pious man. He would teach seven lessons a week at regular hours and accept no payment therefore. He would spend the rest of his time going from house to house to collect money for the poor and needy, to help the sick and supervise the needs of the orphans. All the inhabitants of the city loved him dearly, as children love their father. People would come to him from all parts of the city asking him to pray for the sick and for women in childbirth. When people would come to Rabbi Chaim with such requests he would send them to Reb Shalom Menasseh.

"Reb Shalom Menasseh," Rabbi Chaim would say: "His devotion is greater than mine. Go to him."

Another righteous and pious man in Brisk was Rabbi Hirschel Bromberg. He devoted his entire life to charity and good deeds. He took care of all the sick people in Brisk who had to be sent for the cure to Druzgenik or Chechochink, and many were cured thanks to him.

I spent pleasant hours with the learned sage and linguist Rabbi Arieh Leib Feinstein, author of the book *Ir Tehilah*. In his home I saw his great library rich in books of various types. He was a great old man, who labored at his varied literary work day and night. He was a loner; the people of Brisk did not recognize his greatness.*

* Family note: Masliansky does not mention the gift he received from *Hovevei Zion* in Brisk (autumn 1893) - a lovely *Hanukah* lamp with an engraved dedication, which is still in possession of the family.

Chapter 20

The city of Dvinsk, formerly Duenaburg [Daugaupils], is a comparatively new city. It is not yet a hundred years old. When you come to the city and walk in the streets, when you see the large and beautiful houses built in west European style, you are aware that you are in a new city.

The majority of the inhabitants are Jews, whose forbearers settled in the city in the days of Nicolas I at the beginning of the nineteenth century when the fortress of Duenaburg was built. The well-known Friedland family was the first to settle here. The members of the family acquired wealth and fame from the building of the fortress. Their wealth increased and the Friedland or Friedlansky brothers moved to Moscow. They were renowned for their activities throughout Russia during the reign of Alexander II. When the monarch was assassinated in 1881 the family fortunes declined drastically till they reached dire poverty.* All the inhabitants of Dvinsk, Jew and non-Jew alike, lamented the decline and fall of the Friedland family. But the family did leave a memorial in Dvinsk – the Synagogue and institutions, which they had built and which were still called by their name.

There are to be sure, recently arrived wealthy people in Dvinsk, people whose wealth surpasses that of the Friedlands at their height, but they all lack the character of the Friedlands. They are selfish and are not concerned with the fate of their

* see below, chapter 30 p. 211-212 (translator's note.)

people. They live in the greatest of luxury, ride in carriages, their wives adorn in themselves in silver, gold and gems arousing the ire of the anti-Semites, and the wretched common folk suffer because of their action. Rabbi Shlomo Zachs is an exception – he is interested in our literature and a member of the Odessa Committee of *Hibbat Zion*.

I was walking along the Dvina river one day on the road that leads to the fort, when a wagon passed loaded with iron beds made in the Friedland Vocational School. Sitting next to the driver was an acquaintance of mine, a teacher in the School.

"Where are all these beds being taken?" I asked my friend.

"These beds," he told me, "were ordered from our School by the wealthy Mr. Wittenberg, who is donating them to the flop-house in the Fortress."

I followed the wagon until it reached its destination. The superintendent came toward us and with bitter sarcasm said: "Look at the charity of these damn Jew boys! They want to get medals from the Government. It's not enough that they have robbed us of all this gold and silver. Now they are looking for medals! The leeches!"

When I heard the 'thanks' of the superintendent to our brother, the philanthropist, I recalled the hungry and barefoot children, I had seen yesterday at the *Talmud Torah* school and my heart cried out: "You wretched rich, you turn away from your own flesh and blood. All you want is to get recognition from strangers. You miserable slaves, who sing songs of flattery and kiss the stick that beats you, you have no eyes for the great catastrophe which threatens you!"

I visited the two Rabbis of Dvinsk, Rabbi Meir Simcha Ha-Cohen and the Hasidic Rabbi Joseph Rosen – both great scholars. The former reminded me by his appearance of Rabbi Yosi Ber Soloveichik, but so different from him in his character

and qualities! During the hour I spent in his company I did not hear one word about our people, its misfortunes and its hopes. He had no use for anything.

I knew Rabbi Joseph Rosen from my childhood days. When he was about twelve years old he was known as "The Prodigy from Rotgatchove". His father who was a *Habbad* Hasid brought him to Slutzk to study with Rabbi Yosi Ber Soloveichik. The child had a marvelous memory. All Rabbi Yosi Ber's students were dumbfounded at the arrogance of this little genius as he stood before this great sage in Israel.

"Tell me, my son," the Rabbi asked him, "how many tractates of the Talmud do you know?"

"I am thoroughly familiar with half of the Talmud," answered the prodigy.

"In which half" asked Rabbi Yosi Ber.

"In whichever half you test me."

Rabbi Yosi Ber examined him closely in various subjects, and the boy responded with the keenness of an old hair splitter.

There is no doubt that had this extraordinarily gifted prodigy received a systematic education he would have become one of the most brilliant stars in the firmament of Israel and brought honor and glory to his people. But unfortunately there was nobody to polish this precious stone and let it shine, and it ended like all other rough stones that roll in the Jewish quarters unclaimed by their people.

His great memory was matched only by his burning desire to belittle all the great sages of the time including Rabbi Yosi Ber.

His appearance: he was a short man, with a bent back, short arms and legs, thin with an invisible neck and an oversized head. He wore a long silk caftan that was too big for him. He was short sighted and ran around the room deep in thought.

When I entered his chamber, he gave me an angry look and opened the flow of his speech with an immediate attack on Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan and Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever together with the *Hibbat Zion* movement and the idea of settling the Land of Israel. He was profuse in praise of the *ethrogs* [citrons] of Corfu and completely ruled out the existence of Jewish settlements in the Land of Israel. "It is a figment of the imagination of freethinkers and heretics." Like a volcano, he poured brimstone and fire on modern Hebrew literature and its writers.

I refused to dignify this outburst with an answer. I said goodbye and left.

I received a telegram from the Rabbi of Vilna, Zvi Hirsch Rabinowitz and from *Hovevei Zion* to come there and eulogize Alexander Zederbaum, the editor of *Ha-Melitz*. I accepted and when I came to Vilna I found that in one of the large synagogues every thing was prepared for the service. The ark covered in black, the synagogue full to over crowding – all the *intelligentsia* [intellectual elite] was assembled: Rabbis, doctors, lawyers, communal workers and writers. Policemen guarded the entrance and maintained order. The city cantor, accompanied by a choir, recited the prayer *el maleh rachamim*. I then ascended the podium and eulogized the deceased communal worker. I explained to the assembled what a great loss the people of Israel have suffered upon the death of Erez (Zederbaum), the tireless communal worker. The greatest of his achievements was obtaining the authorization of the Russian government for the Committee of *Hovevei Zion* in Odessa. I applied to him the Talmudic phrase: 'A field in which there is an *adar* [type of cider tree (*Erez*)] can be neither robbed nor forcibly purchased and its fruits are protected.'

After the eulogy the assembled contributed to the Odessa Committee.

From Vilna I returned to Dvinsk. I spoke on behalf of the soup kitchen and a society called *Moadei Shabbat,* which the teacher and educator Elchanan Melamed established to give free instruction in Hebrew and Jewish History to the young.

The people of Dvinsk held a fine farewell party for me. The sextons of the synagogues presented me with a gold inlaid Hebrew written inscription and with *The History of the Jewish People* by Graetz handsomely bound.* The poet I. L. Gamzu recited a poem he wrote in my honor. I had a wonderful time till morning and they all escorted me as I left for Rajitzah.

From Dvinsk I went to Razhitsa, which is one of the main cities of the Vitebsk District. It had about ten thousand Jewish inhabitants most of them merchants and shopkeepers, with very few artisans among them. Trading in flax was the leading business. German merchants would come to Razhitsa to buy flax from the Jews who did quite well.

The Rabbi of Razhitsa, Yitzhak Zioni, was a very interesting type. He was old and weak at that time. He would sit all day wrapped in his *Tallith* and weaving his *Tephillin* [phylacteries]. On Sabbaths and Holidays he could discuss only sacred matters. When he was asked to rule on a question of permission or prohibition he would respond only by a nod of his head. He was as far from actual life as Pumbeditha in Babylon is from Russia. He reviewed life from up high and had no knowledge of the trials and tribulations of the Jews in Russia. After all, how was he to know? He read no newspapers, spoke with no one and was distant even from his wife and children.

He made an exception by conversing with me. He com-

* Family note: Though no longer "handsomely bound", volume I of Graetz's work, complete with a dedication, is still in the possession of the family.

plained of the *Talmud Torah* School in Razhitsa, which had been founded that year by the Government-appointed Rabbi, Jacob Pollock.

"My Heart bleeds," he said with the utmost gravity, "over the doings in this *Talmud Torah*! A great wickedness has been done in Israel. They are taking infants and estranging them from Judaism, God Forbid."

"What do you mean, Rabbi?" I asked. "I visited the *Talmud Torah* yesterday and examined the children and found them to be quite proficient in their studies."

He replied quickly: "You examined them only in the religious studies. But do you know they are also studying secular subjects from Russian books? When they grow up they will know Russian and go to Petersburg, where they will be admitted to the great colleges to study medicine and become freethinkers and desecraters of the Sabbath."

These last words came from a broken heart.

"Rabbi," I said, "you need have no worry on this score. They will not study in the great colleges of Petersburg, because of an edict of the Czar barring Jews from these schools."

"Is this true?" he cried joyously. "I never knew that Jews were not accepted in these schools. God bless the Exalted Government for its kindness to us!"

From this conversation I became aware of the great naiveté of Yitchak Zioni, who had served as Rabbi of Razhitsa for thirty years in the same room and possibly in the same *Tallith*...

It is typical that his wife, sons and daughter were far removed from him. His wife would receive visitors most cordially. His daughter was a pretty girl who knew both Hebrew and Russian. She had many intelligent friends who would discuss world problems with her. His sons studied Russian and Mathematics with a teacher. It was only the youngest son that

the Rabbi taught himself; he would not let him out of his sight or entrust him to a teacher. He wouldn't even let him learn Yiddish. The inhabitants of Razhitsa had the greatest respect for their naïve Rabbi as for the innocence of his heart and his ways while those who tended even slightly to free thinking could only nod

Chapter 21

From Razhitsa I traveled to Homel [Gomel]. Homel is an industrial city full of noise and vitality. Its commerce increased greatly after the expulsion of Jews from Moscow in 1892. About thirty thousand Jews live in Homel and have a comfortable standard of living. Lumber is the town's main industry. Rafts are floated down the Dnieper River to the south of Russia, to Yekatreinoslav and Kherson. Homel lies between Little Russia and White Russia, between the provinces of Tchernigov and Mohilev. Each year merchants from the south and north of Russia meet in Homel to transact business. The southern merchants buy lumber from the northerners and in turn sell them the products of their area – wheat, corn and spelt.

The great majority of the Jews of Homel are *Habbad* Hasidim. They are very tolerant and do not quarrel with the *Mitnaggedim* as do their brothers in Volhynia. "You begin your prayers where you wish and we will begin where we wish," they tell the *Mitnaggedim*, since their spirit is one of commerce, "and at the repetition of the eighteen benedictions let us each use the form of the *Kedusha* prayer we are accustomed to." They have acquired some of the good qualities of the Jews of the south and of the Jews of Lithuania – they live well like the former and have a reasonable knowledge of the Torah and the *Haskalah* [modern Jewish learning, Enlightenment] like the latter.

Each city and town in Russia has its "Count" or "Prince"

of whom the Jews tell stories from generation to generation during the long winter nights by the stove and in the clear summer nights under the stars. They tell of these noblemen's glory, wealth and good deeds. Homel had both a Count and a Prince. Every Jew in Homel can tell great stories and anecdotes about the Count Rumyantsev and the Prince Pashkevich. They both were righteous Gentiles and were benefactors of the Jews of Homel. Count Rumyantsev built the great Synagogue in the middle of the town for the Jews. This Synagogue greatly resembles the churches of the Russian and Poles and it is obviously built by the same architect using similar plans. Prince Pashkevich was very helpful to many individual Jews in the time of their troubles. Many Jews were able to rise in the world because of him. They tell of a Jewish rag picker, who with his wife, would pick rags from the refuse piles and sell them to the Prince's paper factory. The Prince took a liking to him and before many years had passed this Jew became the chief contractor for furnishing rags and straw to the factory and he eventually became one of the wealthy men of the city – as it is written: 'He raises the poor from the dust, lifts up the needy from the refuse heap...'

On the Sabbath I was invited to the house of my friend Mordechai Ben Hillel Ha-Cohen.* It was a spiritual treat to be seated at his table where all the holy and pure customs were observed. Saturday afternoon we visited Mr. Levontin, one of the old members of *Hibbat Zion* and the founders of the settlement of Rishon Le'zion.

The three of us walked the streets of Homel. They showed me the historic street where a national tragedy occurred in 1648 in the days of Bogdan Khmelnytsky. In that street is the old cemetery where the slaughtered saints of that period

* M. Ben Hillel Ha-Cohen was the great uncle of the slain Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin (translator's note.)

lie. Not far from the cemetery stands an ancient church. According to the old tradition, when Khmelnytsky entered the city, he forced all the Jews, men, women and children to be assembled in that street. He then decreed that any Jew who did not present himself to the church to be baptized would be killed. The whole Jewish community stood fast with the exception of one solitary renegade. The Ukrainian soldiers fell upon them and slaughtered them all. Of the whole Jewish community one girl survived. She lay among the corpses all night. At daybreak she rose and with a desperate effort fled the city and escaped to a nearby village. When she grew up and married she returned to the city and built a house near the graves of her holy parents and brothers. Her name was Beba and her descendants adopted the family name Babushkin in her honor.

The annual fair in Homel was at its height. The city was boiling over. Thousands of merchants had come from near and far, gloomy faced agents and commissioners were running from buyers to sellers, from borrowers to lenders. But the winter was late in arriving and the first real snow had not yet fallen. Consequently the logs could not be brought to the banks of the Dnieper and the lumber business was in a sad state.

It was interesting to see the streets filled with people, all talking and shouting at the same time, many of them figuring accounts and gesturing with their hands and all their limbs. They were all immersed in their trade like priests in the Temple of Mercury. They were working with such dedication and enthusiasm that they did not feel the cold that was freezing their ears. I was astounded by this sight, and said to myself: "This is the life of a petty tradesman, a life of exile with no order and no sense."

I saw the charitable organizations in Homel and the anarchy

that reigned there. The *Talmud Torah* school was shut down and the children ran around in the streets like lost sheep. The girls had no knowledge of their people's history. Rudeness and ignorance were to be found everywhere. There was a druggist who considered himself an intellectual and idealist. He would criticize Judaism in this fashion:

"By what are we chosen above all peoples? By Moses, our Teacher, who slew an innocent and righteous Egyptian because of his love for Pharaoh's daughter? By Aaron, his brother, who built a palace for Bathsheba and killed her husband, Uriah the Hittite?"

His friends, the *intelligentsia* [intellectual elite] of Homel, listened to his fine 'sermon' and applauded his words of wisdom.

Chapter 22

Bobruisk is one of the largest cities in the Province of Minsk, perhaps the largest. Over forty thousand Jews live there. Two thirds of them are Lubavitch [*Habbad*] Hasidim and the rest *Mitnaggedim*. The Rabbi of the Hasidim is Rabbi Shmaryahu Noah Schneersohn, the grandson of Rabbi Mendele of Lubavitch, and the Rabbi of the *Mitnaggedim* is Rabbi Raphael Shapira, a son-in-law of the great NaTsIV, Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Berlin, the head of the Volozhin *Yeshiva*. The two Rabbis and their communities live in peace.

Rabbi Raphael was the possessor of a holy soul, a pure heart and a noble character. He was patient, considerate and liberal in all his dealings. His beautiful large eyes would light up with love and compassion. He was humble like Hillel, and was honored and beloved by all groups of the community. The Hasidim admired him too. The intellectuals and the progressive youth accorded him the greatest respect. But despite this, he still resided in a small poor home where he lived a life of poverty and spent day and night in study of the Torah.

Not so the rabbi of the Hasidim, a direct descendant of the [Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi founder of Habbad and] author of the *Tanya*. He lived well, surrounded by material pleasures like a Grand Hasidic Rabbi. His Talmudic learning was limited., but he was always besieged by Hasidim, who would make various requests of him and who would leave fine gifts for him.

I went to visit the learned writer, Shmuel Alexandrov. He was well versed in all the treasures of our old and modern literature. He would astound his listeners with his marvelous memory. It was a real spiritual pleasure to sit with him and discuss literature. Pearls would fall from his mouth as he discoursed new ideas on the Hebrew language, history and research. When he was still a boy it was obvious that he would be a great name in Israel. It is reported that when he was eight years old, his father took him one Saturday to the Rabbi's house. At the meal the Rabbi preached on Hasidic lore and Mysticsm [Kabbala]. The young boy listened to every syllable that fell from the Rabbi's talk word for word. He even included the Polish word "*Zaraz*" (immediately), that the Rabbi continually repeated, thinking innocently that it was one of the concepts of Hasidism, like "*Tsimtsum*" [withdrawal] or "*En-Sof*" [the Infinite Being].

Happy is he who waits! The day I hoped for finally arrived!

In my youth, when I grew up in the house of an Orthodox *Mitnagged* in a city of *Mitnaggedim*, Slutzk, I heard much of the Rabbis of the Hasidim who would preach sermons on the mysteries and symbolism of the Kabbala, where the Hasidim would swallow every word without understanding a single letter. I said to myself: "When will I have an opportunity to hear such a sermon?" My request was granted on the Sabbath of *Ki Thissa* in 1893.

With my learned friend Shmuel Alexandrov, I went one Saturday evening to the Synagogue of the Hasidim to hear the sermon of Rabbi Shemaryahu Noah, who would preach 'Sabbath after Sabbath.'

The Synagogue was crowded with Hasidim, some sitting, some standing, all waiting to hear the words of their Rabbi. We too sat and waited.

It was twilight. The last rays of the sun lit up the faces of

the Hasidim who were conversing with one another and arguing, all talking at the same time. The room was noisy as the breaking waves of the ocean. The darkness grew deeper and the noise grew louder. In the middle of the Synagogue was a table and large chair, which also awaited the coming of the Rabbi.

It was pitch dark. We couldn't see each other. Our patience was almost exhausted. Suddenly silence reigned. We heard light steps, we could see nothing, then we heard the sound of a man sitting down on the large chair. We knew that the Rabbi had come, that he was with us.

After a few moments of silence a voice was heard, not clear, but wrapped in mystery like a voice coming from a great distance. We heard only a few words [the opening words of the weekly portion] –*'Ki Thissa et rosh Bnei Yisrael'* – 'When you take a census of the Israelite people' – these few biblical words were repeated time and again in different tones. The voice uttered these words a whole hour, wove, spun and tied mysterious bonds, wrapped in Kabbalistic secrets, wondrous and superman mysteries, hidden allusions. Suddenly he was in the highest sphere, in the seventh heaven, not far from the Seat of Glory and the Heavenly Household. We heard the gates of the Holy Shrine being opened to him "by the power of withdrawal [*tsimtsum*]". He walked in the hidden light, in the holy apple garden, and as he walked he was breaking the vessels, he then rose up to Infinity and spoke at length of the ten spheres, the primordial man , *Abba*, creation and *Zeir Anpin*...

Suddenly the voice ceased. There was a deadly silence, a door opened quietly and closed again.

The first words of the Evening Service were heard in the darkness. In a few moments [the Sabbath ended as] the *Havdalah* candle was lit and the Rabbi was nowhere to be

seen.

"Where is the Rabbi?" we asked the Hasidim.

"His Eminence does not pray with us," they answered.

After the evening prayer we heard the Hasidim telling each other that they had never heard such an exposition of Hasidic lore.

I asked them to give me a brief explanation of the Rabbi's speech, but I was told that a *Mitnagged* like me was incapable of understanding these things.

As I left the Synagogue one of the respectable Hasidim whispered to me: "Don't worry, young man! We Hasidim too do not understand his speeches. But that is how things are and we are not permitted to question."

I gave fifteen talks in Bobruisk. Rabbi Raphael attended every one of them and congratulated me warmly each time, with the blessing '*Yeshar Koʾah*' [all strength to thee].

When I left Bobruisk, Rabbi Raphael accompanied me to the station and gave me a peculiar parting blessing, which has been fulfilled to this day.

These were his words: "Go in peace, my friend! May God preserve you from wealth!"

"What do you mean, Rabbi?" I asked in wonder.

"Just what I said" Rabbi Raphael answered naively. "If, God forbid, you should become wealthy, you would no longer visit our cities and preach your sermons. We need you!"

He was not a Hasid nor the Rabbi of Hasidim. He was a plain Rabbi in Israel and his blessing was fulfilled...

Chapter 23

Mohilev is a provincial capital, but is quiet and off the beaten path. The railroad does not go through it and merchants do not travel there. Homel, a smaller city, has much more life and movement than Mohilev. Only the Dnieper River, which passes by it, gives life and sustenance to its hundred thousand inhabitants, mostly Jews.

With great difficulty and with the intercession of the government-appointed Rabbi, Cohen, I received permission to speak in the Synagogues of Mohilev. I was specifically instructed to deliver my first talk in Zuckerman's Synagogue on a Saturday morning after the Reading of the Torah. It was the 26th February, a Royal Holiday, the birthday of the cruel Czar, Alexander III, who had inflicted so much suffering on the people of Israel and embittered their lives. When I entered the Synagogue that morning I was appalled. The hall was decorated with Russian flags. Facing the Ark sat high government officials, the vice governor, the chief of police with their retinue. They came to see and hear how the Jews prayed for the health of their merciful King on his birthday.

My heart filled with anger and hatred as I saw the faces of the voracious officials. Disgust and hatred started to brew inside me towards the accursed Czar and his wicked and murderous servants. I was full of pity toward my downtrodden brethren and I saw in them latter day Marranos [crypto Jews].

"Poor Marranos", I said in my heart, "You are congregated today in the Synagogue to sing songs of flattery, to pray for

the health of the murderer of your wives and children, to ask for length of days for him who lays waste your homes and condemns you to booty and pillage. Revenge and retribution are in your hearts and blessings on your lips! How wretched is your lot, O modern Marranos!"

With these bitter thoughts I ascended the platform by the Holy Ark to preach my sermon. I should like to summarize my talk so that the historian may be acquainted with the full horror of the lives of our brethren in the days of Alexander Romanov III.

I said as follows:

"My brothers and sisters, children of Israel and subjects of Russia!

"We are gathered today in this holy Synagogue, like millions of our brethren throughout Russia in their Synagogues, to celebrate the birthday of our King, the anointed of the Lord, to pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for the health of our King, the Czar Alexander III, in the presence of his noble minded officials and princes. We have been commanded by our prophets and sages to be faithful to our King, our protector and savior, and to our blessed land. The sages of the Talmud required that he who sees a King, pronounce the benediction: 'Blessed be He who hath imparted of His glory to flesh and blood.' The kingdom of earth is like the kingdom of heaven. God rules in heaven and the King rules on earth. Just as we give thanks to God on High, so are we required to give thanks to the King of our Land."

"Our sages have taught us that 'a man is bound to bless for the evil in the same way as for the good.' At first glance this seems strange. Why should we give thanks for evil? But in truth, the matter is quite simple. We are shortsighted human beings and we do not know what is good and what is evil. There are things that appear evil to us and yet at the end we

see that much good lies in them. Let me give you an example. A man rushes to the railway station to catch a train. When he comes to the station he finds that the train has just left. He was late and he had to postpone his trip to the next day. In his eyes, the eyes of a short-sighted human being, an evil has befallen him. The next morning, when he gets up he reads in the paper that a terrible accident happened to the train. The locomotive left the tracks and all the coaches were smashed and all the passengers killed. Then his eyes are opened and he sees that what appeared to be an evil yesterday was really a good that saved him from death. Therefore, 'it is incumbent on a man to bless... for the evil in the same way as for the good.' For even the supposed evil is good. This is the meaning of the saying 'Whatever the All Merciful does is for good.' Our obligation to our King is similar. We are required to thank him for evil, for the expulsions and pogroms, as well as for mercy and kindness. For all that he 'does is for good.' Take for example his latest decree by which he commanded that one hundred and ten cities and towns be considered as the countryside [where Jews were not permitted to reside] and one hundred thousand Jewish families be expelled from them and deprived of their means of livelihood. On the surface this appears to be a great evil."

At this point I described scenes of the expulsions, which I had seen with my own eyes. The whole congregation was shaken and began to weep. Tears appeared even in the eyes of the officials as well.

"But", I continued in a loud and firm voice, "Only at the first glance does this appear to be a national catastrophe. When we examine the matter more profoundly we can understand the true intention of our emperor and see clearly that he is our king, our protector and our savior. He watches over us as a father watches over his children. In his great wisdom and

broad understanding he averted the evil so that the benighted multitude would not perpetrate pogroms against the Jews as they did in Southern Russia in 1882 when our sovereign ascended the throne. Therefore, he decreed that the cities be considered as the countryside, so that the Jews would leave them and not be at the mercy of the mobs."

"My brothers and sisters!" I cried with tears in my voice, "you can see now the kindness and mercy with which the Emperor has treated us. And just as we have been privileged to celebrate his birthday, let us now pray for his welfare and that of his family."

The congregation arose. I turned to the Holy Ark and pronounced my prayer in Hebrew:

"O King of Kings, Almighty God, source of all wisdom and knowledge, Thou art a good and faithful God. Thou knowest the truth of all the kindness and mercy of our King toward us. Bestow, we beseech Thee, such kindness and mercy upon him, his family and all the princes of the House of Romanov, guard them, strengthen them, protect them and prolong their lives as they have prolonged ours, deliver them from their enemies and adversaries as they have protected us from those who would rise against us! Amen."

The whole congregation trembled with fear at my prayer and answered "Amen" after me.

The officials thanked me for my talk and the following week the whole sermon was printed in the official paper of the province. The censor saw nothing wrong and special thanks in the name of the governor were sent to me.

There are many rich Jews in Mohilev. But most of them are misers, who harden their hearts against and withdraw their hands from their needy brethren. It is characteristic that all the wealthy are God-fearing men, who attend prayers morning and evening and are as 'careful with a light precept

as with a grave one.' But all their observance is confined to the commandments 'between man and the Omnipresent,' while they trample over the most important commandments 'between man and his fellow man.' With my own eyes I saw how one of the wealthier men gave his phylacteries to a poor scribe to repair and haggled with him until he was forced to reduce his meager fee.

I was especially disgusted by the tyrannical rich man who prided himself not only of his wealth but also of his pedigree being a descendent of Rabbi Yehezkel Landa author of *Noda bi-Yehudah*. In the previous generation there were two rich men in Mohilev who were of a generous heart and spirit – Zuckerman and Schmerling. However they left no descendants to follow in their footsteps.

It was especially aggravating that practically all the wealthy men of Mohilev were usurers who sucked the blood of the small merchants and desecrated the name of Israel.

The whole city was boiling over. A new provincial governor was coming to the city and he would have to be greeted with a gift. The leading men of the city met in the community house to decide what to give him. It was finally decided to present to him bread and salt upon a silver tray on which his name would be engraved in letters of gold. But where was the silver to come from? Such a tray would cost two hundred rubles. The poor were in favor – but had no money, the rich had the money but were against the plan. They talked about it and about it until the treasurer got up and revealed a secret – in the communal treasury there were about two hundred rubles. The faces of the wealthy lit up and everything was finally settled.

I went with the lawyer Mr. Gissin, who was a friend of mine, to hear the sermon delivered by the preacher Rabbi Gershon Feiston at the Zuckerman synagogue. We enjoyed his speech that was full of life, national ideas and free of the

numerical calculations and traditions, hair splitting and text distortions that were typical of the traditional *Maggid.* It was the anniversary of death of Zunz. The preacher gave a live description of the spiritual character of this great scholar and his role in Judaic Studies.

I found five Rabbis in Mohilev, none of whom was worthy of this post in such a large city. It was sad to see that such a city had no appropriate spiritual leader. And there were times when one of the great sages of Israel, the MaLBIM (Rabbi Meir Liebush Weiser) of blessed memory, officiated as Rabbi there. But his tenure was of short duration, as evil men slandered him and made his life miserable till he left the city.

Chapter 24

Libau exerts a great attraction on the beholder - with its beautiful paved streets, its tall houses and its wonderful port on the Baltic it seems magical. It is well known for its vast commerce, both import and export. When you first come to the city it is difficult to believe that you are in a Russian city. You imagine that you have crossed the border and are standing on German soil. The city's population numbers more than fifty thousand; the majority are Courland Germans; there are a few Latvians and about eight thousand Jews. The few Jews are the driving force not only in Libau, but in all Courland on the Baltic coast. German is the chief language of Libau and even the Russian police and officials speak German.

When you stand in the harbor and see the great warehouse filled with corn and wheat and the many ships that sail to Germany and other countries and when you hear the rumbling of the trains and ships and the thousands of laborers loading and unloading goods, you are reminded of the prophet Ezekiel's description of the great commercial center of Tyre.

It is remarkable that Saturday is the day of rest in this bustling city. All the commercial offices are closed; even the stock exchange is shut down. The gentile merchants rest willy-nilly, since as there are no Jews there is no business. Would that Libau would serve as an example for the cities in the south of Russia, especially Odessa.

In Libau I discovered a solution for the problem of the Rabbinate, one of the most pressing problems in Jewish life in

those days. In Russia there were two types of Rabbis – those crowned by the Torah and those crowned by the government. That is to say the spiritual Rabbis and the government-appointed Rabbis and on the whole neither type was suited to its role. The scholars, the spiritual Rabbis, were far removed from daily life and its needs. They walked on the earth but lived in heaven. The government-appointed Rabbis were as distant from Judaism as a Russian peasant or a Don Cossack from the poems of Judah Halevi. These Rabbis had never studied Talmud and were completely estranged from the life of the Jewish masses. Were it not for fear of the government they would speedily have been removed from their position. The government-appointed Rabbis were as far from the spiritual Rabbis as the Kingdom of Russia from the Torah of Israel.

But Libau was different. The Jewish community had only one Rabbi who served both as the government-appointed Rabbi and as the spiritual Rabbi and he was admirably suited to both roles. He was a fine rabbinic and secular scholar. He had received his Rabbinic ordination while yet a youth in *Yeshivot* of Vilna. He was completely versed in our ancient literature - the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, and the codifiers of the Law. After having received his rabbinic credentials he went to Germany to acquire secular knowledge. After a few years he returned home with a medical degree. In St. Petersburg he edited two papers: *Russki Yevrei* [*The Russian Hebrew*] in Russian and *Ha-Yom* [*The Day*] in Hebrew.

Dr. Y. L. Kantor was the first to publish a daily Hebrew paper. He opened a new period in Hebrew letters. He revived dead words, awakened the Hebrew language from its slumber of two thousand years, removed the mantle of sanctity from it, brushed off the dust and restored it to the rank of living languages. What veteran Hebraist does not recall with what desire *Ha-Yom* was awaited for its lively articles, its well

written feuilletons and news columns? Everything was fresh and vibrant. Kantor displayed the same ability in the Russian language in his *Russki Yevrei.*

The Jewish community of Libau chose this great scholar to fill the place of Dr. Hillel Klein who had left to accept a rabbinical position in New York.

Dr. Kantor conducted himself with great dignity. He was a traditional Jew both at home and in public and was highly esteemed by all sectors of the population. The judges and other religious functionaries honored him for his rabbinic scholarship while the enlightened groups (such as the Eliasberg, Luria and Katznelsohn families) respected him for his great secular learning.

I greatly enjoyed the time I spent in Dr. Kantor's company. We strolled along the Baltic and discussed world and Jewish problems. I learned a great deal from this great man, his logical mind, common sense and warm-heart. He excelled especially in his good qualities and in his speeches.

On the day after the holiday of *Shavuot* the thirty days of my Libau permit expired. At 8:00 A.M. a Russian policeman came and ordered me to leave the city. I love punctuality, but the punctuality of the Russian government was most painful, it almost moved me to tears. I drew the policeman to the window and pointed out the dogs, pigs and cats in the street and I asked him:

"These four-footed animals are permitted to reside in the city, but a Jew...?"

I did not finish my question. The policeman looked down abashed and groaned:

"Yes, yes, it is a malignant law, but it is a law of the Czar and we must uphold it."

I speedily took leave of my friends and many of them accompanied me to the train that brought me to Riga.

* * *

Riga, the capital of Latvia is one of the largest and most beautiful cities in Russia. There are more than one million inhabitants. Germans, Finns and Latvians and a recent influx of Russians as well as about thirty thousand Jews who have had the right of residence since the days of Nicholas I. Riga is a great commercial center as it lies on the Dvina River that flows into the Baltic. The logs from the Great Russian forests are floated down the Dvina to Germany. There is also considerable trading in grain. There are large factories, which give employment to tens of thousands of workers. The streets are wide and well paved, and the houses are built with good taste. Beautiful parks and boulevards with planted trees help purify the air. As you walk through the streets you imagine that you are in one of the great spas.

I visited the government-appointed Rabbi, Solomon Focher, who was appointed to serve in Latvia and Courland. He is an old man, well over seventy but still young in spirit. He had been the Rabbi of Mitau [Jelgava], the capital of Courland, for thirty years, until Riga asked him to transfer there. He is well versed in Talmud and Hebrew and an excellent speaker in German and Russian. I heard many fine interpretations of Rabbinic Legends from him.

I met a distinguished Hebrew journalist, I. H. Tevyov. I found him to be a fine, pleasant and learned person. In addition to his comprehensive knowledge of Hebrew literature and his excellent style in the articles and feuilletons published in newspapers and quarterlies, he read and wrote six living languages – German, French, English, Italian, Russian and Dutch. He also was a good classicist, proficient in Latin and Greek. He does not live on his writing, which is amazing, but is rather an agent for a large grain company. He spends his days in the office, but consecrates his nights to his avocation

– literature - and still has time left over to spend with his friends.

One evening a laborer came to visit me. His clothes were torn his hair wild and his hands were not too clean. I was a little frightened of him at first. But after a few moments I was amazed. A great scholar, a thinker and a nationally minded Jew, stood before me. He spoke a perfect German and understood Hebrew. He had letters from prominent doctors attesting to his medical discoveries. He used to discuss abstract mathematical problems with the head of the University. He gave me a brochure of his in which he considered *Kashruth* [the Jewish dietary laws] from a scientific point of view. He proved by statistical data that Jews were not subject to many diseases because of their dietary observance. He spoke with me for two hours and he was so interesting that it seemed to me 'but a few' minutes. What did this man do for a living? He was a tinsmith. By day he would repair roofs and by night he would study and write scientific treatises.

I found two veterans of *Hibbat Zion* in Riga: Shalit and Lunz, both important merchants. They corresponded with Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever, M. L. Lilienblum and ShePheR and were totally committed to the movement.

In Riga the Russian government was revealed to me unmasked, in all its openness. The chief of police had read in the local paper that a Jewish preacher had arrived in the city who would speak in the Synagogues and that the collections from the audience would be considerable. He immediately sent for me. He did not forbid me to speak publicly or put me in jail as some of his colleagues had done in other cities. He simply said to me: "Fifty-fifty". My fees were to be evenly divided between us and that is what happened. A policeman would come to the Synagogue and sit by the cash box. After the talk he would divide the money between us. I was very

happy as this was the first and the last time that I could say what I wanted without fear.

* * *

Later I visited Mitau [Jelgava], the capital of Courland. The Synagogue stands along the Aa River. The courtyard is full of tall trees and the Synagogue shines like a palace in their midst. The homes and communal buildings of the Jews of Courland are noted for their neatness. They are untouched by the taint of the Diaspora.

In the past Mitau was one of the wealthy cities, but in recent years it has declined from its former greatness. This decline filled the neighboring cities of Libau and Riga.

At the edge of the city there is a large and beautiful palace. The princes and counts of Courland formerly lived there. The Duke Biren lies in state there. His body is embalmed as in ancient Egypt and is on display.

* * *

From Mitau I journeyed to Tukum. Last century Tukum was renowned as a city of Torah and learning and was the 'proud crown' of Jewish cities in Courland and Latvia. There were also wealthy men, scholars, philanthropists and 'men of deeds'. Tukum was like the excellent cities of Lithuania. But today it has declined woefully. There is no longer any Torah or commerce, no knowledge and no philanthropy. Boorish ignorance is everywhere. Tukum of Courland reminds me of Dubno of Volhynia. The glory of ancient days hovers over Dubno, which was once renowned for its great scholars. The Rabbinic literature is full of references to the "Sages of Greater Dubno." Today, where are these great men and sages? Tukum's fate is similar. Its ancient greatness is buried in the old cemetery. The present inhabitants of the city are

ignorant boors. The children grow up without any Hebrew education, know nothing of the new national movement and are completely cut off from the main stream of Jewish life.

Chapter 25

I shall never forget the city of Shavli [Siauliai]; it was there that my wanderings through the cities of Russia were terminated. It was the last stop for me. There the officials of the Russian government completed their harassment and banished me from the country.

Shavli was one of the principal cities of the Kovna province. More than fifteen thousand Jews lived there – among them affluent men, scholars and philanthropists. The average Jew was not untutored like in the other cities. When you went to the Synagogue, you would find many poor people sitting and studying Torah, vying with each other in interpretation of the Talmud in the fashion of Volozhin. Many the young men were *Maskilim*, educated people, who had mastered of foreign languages and sciences and had a good knowledge of Hebrew literature as well.

The Rabbi of Shavli, the well-known scholar Yosef Zechariah Stern, was sui generis. His memory was exceptional and surpassed that of any Rabbi of his generation; he truly was 'a plastered cistern that loses not a drop.' He never forgot a thing that he had learned, seen or heard since he was three years old; and he had studied much during his lifetime. But his great knowledge and reading in all fields of literature caused much confusion and the information he stored was all mixed up without a beginning or an end. When he started to speak (and he was a great talker) he would pass from subject to subject from idea to idea with no organization so that the listener could not

follow him. He spoke with me for two hours without a pause; he gave me no chance to get a word in edgewise. His words came forth like bolts of lightening, with authority, sarcasm and humor. He quoted from all periods of Jewish history, from the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud, the responsa, from works of science and poetry, from Rabbi Judah Halevi, Ben Gvirol and Immanuel Ha-Romi to our modern literature. He combined legal assumptions in *Halacha* [religious law] with anecdotes and legends of *Aggadah* [homiletic commentary]. But I could not get even one complete idea of the many that came tumbling from his mouth so quickly that he never quite completed one theme before launching into the next. He was a sickly man and spent most of the day in bed. There he would receive his guests and speak with them drawing on his prodigious memory haphazardly. He had little praise for the Rabbis of his generation and judged even the Rabbis of the past severely. He especially shed fire and brimstone on the ancient poets, authors of the *Piyyut*, from the Kalir to the last of them. The multiplicity of penitential prayers and lamentations made him furious and he had them omitted from the prayer service held in his home. One should not, so he said, interrupt the prayer order compiled by the Men of the Great Assembly in favor of senseless poetry.

"Is there any poetic beauty in the *Piyyut* 'Lo! As the potter mouldeth plastic clay', and yet the fools take extra care and recite it in front of the open Holy Ark..."

He was terribly agitated as he cried out these words and his entire frail, dying body shuddered.

"Who allowed my colleagues the Rabbis to crown one another with great titles and exaggerated praise? Great luminaries and geniuses have sprung forth in our generation like mushrooms after the rain", so were his words.

During the conversation he quoted many sources and gave

them an original interpretation. One is worth mentioning here: he interpreted the final words of Balaam '*mi-sumo el*' [in the biblical verse 'Alas, who can survive except God has willed it?'] as referring to the son of Meriam from Bethlehem [Jesus], who considered himself God [*sumo el*]. The opened eyed prophet [Balaam] foresaw the deceitful actions of the medieval inquisition and exclaimed the words of this verse [Numbers 24, 23].

This great Rabbi had a truly amazing knowledge of the sources: all periods of our literature – from the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud, through the various books of *Midrash* [Homiletics], the Responsa of the *Geonim* to Medieval and Modern Literature were stored in his mind as in a chest – but they were completely jumbled, with no order at all.

When the sickly Rabbi began to speak of the *Hibbat Zion* his eyes would light up like beacons and all of us, who stood at his bedside, looked upon him with awe.

In Shavli I encountered another of those special types who are hardly to be found in our midst nowadays. I am referring to the charitable person, the philanthropist who uses his money to benefit others, so rare in our modern age of bonds and checks, of moneychangers and middlemen. All the people of Shavli, residents and passers by, knew Rabbi Mordechai Aronstam, or better to say "Rabbi Motel Weinschenker". This man made a living manufacturing raison wine and selling it. He saved some money from his trade, but did not use it for his own benefit to enlarge his business. He lent the money to struggling small tradesmen and to woman selling in the market. His home was like an unofficial "pawn shop". Twice weekly, on Fridays and Sundays, the women would crowd in front of his house. On Friday they would come to fetch the candlesticks they had pawned so they could light their Sabbath candles, and on Sunday they would come to return

them. It was told that once a woman did not return her pledge on Sunday; a few weeks later she came back to pawn her candlesticks for a loan.

"Motele" his wife whispered to him "this woman has not paid the first loan back yet."

"Quiet" signaled Rabbi Mordechai to his wife "for she may hear and be put to shame."

And he gave the woman a second loan for the same pledge.

I delivered only one sermon in Shavli, when I was forbidden to speak any more. The pleading of the leaders of the community, headed by the communal worker Mr. Ephrati, was to no avail – the Chief of Police would not change his mind, nor could the well-known Russian remedy of bribery be of any use. I was also confined to my quarters. I had to report to the Chief of Police twice a day and could not leave Shavli without his permission. He reported to the governor of the province in Vilna that he had arrested an itinerate Jewish preacher who was stirring up the multitudes to revolt against the government.

And so I had been confined in my hotel room a few days, when one morning two policemen appeared and hustled me to the Chief of Police. He gave me a document, which he had received from the provincial governor – an order in the name of Czar Alexander III to leave Russia. I was given a month's time to settle my affairs and was forbidden to speak in public. With a dark glance of a policeman's eye I was instructed to sign the document and with beating heart and trembling hand I signed my name in Russian for the last time.

This signature closed an era of my life, The Russian era. A new era was to open before me, an era that would take me from slavery to the freedom of America.

Chapter 26

Before leaving Russia, I considered it to be my duty to visit the head of the *Hovevei Zion*, Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever, for the last time and to receive a parting blessing from him. Because of the governmental edict my coming to Bialyistok was make known only to the leading members of *Hibbat Zion* in the city. The information was spread by word of mouth and all the leading members met in the home of the Zionist leader Litman Rosenthal. This was a real 'conspiratorial' meeting. If the *Bundists* and other Socialists boast that it was they who introduced the 'conspiratorial' element into Jewish communal life, their claim can easily be refuted by the evidence of this gathering. Even the *Hovevei Zion* members of the older generation who were not engaged in plotting against the government knew the art of 'conspiracy' and used it to evade the attention of the authorities.

That night was sacred. Many members of *Hibbat Zion*, old and young, were assembled in true brotherhood and I took my leave of them and through them of all of my friends and acquaintances in Russia. My words were colored with my heart's blood. Tears welled up from the eyes of all of us. They were sacred tears. The house was securely locked. We spoke in muffled tones. And so we were there together until midnight.

Then like a good and faithful father, Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever fell upon my neck, kissed me and said to me:

"You are the preacher to the people and your lot is that of the people. Like them you will wander from land to land. Go

in peace to our brethren beyond the sea and continue your work, your holy work! Arouse them from their sleep, awake them from their slumber, tell them that our national home is not in the West but in the East, that even though they may be in the West, that they should not forget the East! I trust you to remind them of their duty to their God, their people and their land."

Thus, it was that I left Russia. At dawn I crossed the border and found myself in Prussia, Germany.

That last night was a vigil to me. Powerful feelings filled my heart, thoughts and memories flitted through my brain, and sleep did not visit my eyes. With closed eyes I lay all that night and the forty years of my life in Russia, the Land of deep darkness, coursed through my mind, especially the last fifteen years from the day that I became affiliated with *Hibbat Zion* at the early stages of the movement. I recalled the first meeting in Pinsk when I became aware of the sacred flame within me, of my glowing desire to speak to my brothers, to awaken them from the slumber of the dispersion, to portray to them frightful scenes of their lives of slavery. I remembered how I would hide the protocols and letters from our offices in Odessa and Warsaw in pillowcases of my bed that they might not fall into the hands of the Russian government. I recalled the stormy gatherings when Rabbi David Friedman of Karlin was still active and was preparing to go to the meeting at Kattowicz, which had been convened by Dr. Leon Pinsker and Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever. How holy and dear were the memories of those days, the memories of the holy work to which the first *Hovevei Zion* dedicated themselves!

I also recalled that night how the sad tidings reached us that our spiritual father and teacher, the great national thinker, Peretz Smolenskin, had died in his prime while holding in his hands the telegram announcing the Kattowicz Conference.

All of us young activists gathered at midnight in my small apartment and silently wept over our great loss. We could not speak because our grief was too great. We were only able to compose a letter of consolation to Smolenskin's widow and children, which we sent to *Ha-Melitz*.

My memory skipped a few years and my imagination, half asleep, half awake, transported me to Odessa where I had become a national preacher. It was there that the Russian government began to pursue me from city to city, from province to province. The first of my persecutors was the Prefect of Odessa, Zhlyoni, who commanded me to leave that city within four hours. The second was the provincial governor of Bessarabia, who imprisoned me for three days and then ordered me to leave Kishinev. Against such odds I visited the cities of the Pale of Settlement. I was jailed many times. In Minsk and Lodz the police removed my *Tallith* as I stood by the Holy Ark and took me to prison where I was placed among the criminals. Finally I came to Shavli where the governor put an end to my troubles and drove me out of Russian territory forever.

Suddenly the voice of the conductor was heard: "Koenigsberg."

I awoke from my dreams and felt as if a heavy load had been removed from my shoulders, as if I had just been released from prison or as if I had been rescued from the jaws of a predatory beast. It seemed to me that 'a new heaven' was above my head and 'a new earth' beneath my feet. My whole being was aware that the arm of the tyrannous government could no longer reach me and that I was freed from its punishments and restrictions and from the shameful laws that oppressed both the body and the spirit. I was a free man now. I walked out of the Russian train, stood on German soil and uttered the blessing: 'Blessed is He who sets prisoners free.'

The whole city was seething. The streets were full of people reading the newspapers and discussing the news of the day. The banner headline read: "Alexander III, the Czar of Russia, died at 3:00 P.M. in his palace of Livadia in the Crimea."

My heart skipped a beat. Subconsciously I began to repeat the words of Isaiah: 'But the Lord will pardon Jacob... once you thought in your heart, I will climb to the sky... Instead you are brought down to the Sheol, to the bottom of the pit...'

When I returned to my hotel I found a large group of fellow Jews. Everyone was overjoyed at the sudden death of the Czar, the oppressor of the Jews. We sat around the table and emptied one glass of wine after the other. When I was honored with a toast I called out: 'Who alone works great marvels' [alone, *levado*, pun for Livadia] and everybody cheered happily.

Many people in the group were exiles expelled from Moscow and 'political criminals' like me. In our naiveté, we thought that the Crown Prince Nicolas II would be better than his father and more favorably disposed toward the Jews. Today we know how mistaken we were. 'For from the stock of a snake there sprouts an asp.'

I visited Rabbi Bromberger. He gave me a most cordial reception. I found him at work - teaching the principles of Judaism to a gentile girl, who desired to become converted. She diligently learned the prayers and customs. To me, who came from darkest Russia where an apostate Jew was forbidden to return to the religion of his fathers, this was a most pleasant surprise. "Blessed be freedom", I cried joyously.

On the Sabbath in the Synagogue I heard the Cantor pray for the welfare of the government. Instead of the name Alexander III, to which I had become accustomed in Russia, this time I heard that of Kaiser Wilhelm. The change of name made a great impression upon me and led to melancholy thoughts. How

many kings and rulers do the children of Israel have in their lands of dispersion? In each and every land they pray for the welfare of their ruler and the downfall of his enemies. In what a tragicomedy do they play their part every Sabbath! The Jews in Russia pray for the downfall of the enemies of Russia – the Germans, while the Jews in Germany pray for the downfall of the enemies of Germany, the Russians, and similarly in every country. O my people, my poor and storm-tossed people! You pray for the welfare of your mortal enemies.

When I returned from the Synagogue to my hotel I found a large group of Jews arguing about *Hibbat Zion*. It was strange that the extreme Orthodox who would walk on the Sabbath with their handkerchiefs tied around their necks and the extreme freethinkers were as one in their hatred for the settlement of Land of Israel. The few members of *Hovevei Zion* who were present did not say a word.

Koenigsberg is the birthplace of the great philosopher Immanuel Kant and the citizens of Koenigsberg take great pride in this.

The Jews of Germany are as distant from the Jews of Russia as the west from the east. They have no understanding of the life and wishes of the Russian Jew, of his hopes and expectations, sadness and joy. They look down upon the Jews of Russia as they would upon heathen Chinese and Japanese. They are completely convinced that the Russian Jews are a benighted group. Could they but read the letter, the letter of God engraved in the wrinkles on the foreheads of the Jews of Russia they would be aware of their error of judgments.

I became conscious of this at the first speech I delivered to a large audience in the *Junkerhof*. When I had finished my talk Dr. Bomberger, Professor Minkowski and other learned men came to me and thanked me for my talk. They fully admitted that they did not think it possible that a Russian Jew

who spoke Yiddish could capture and hold their attention for two full hours, which seemed to be only twenty minutes and bring them to laughter and tears. The subject of my talk was a telegram announcing the death of a tyrannical ruler. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, was the ruler I described. I pictured his greatness and power and then his complete downfall. I showed that the power of tyranny does not last forever and that the end of tyrants is everlasting abhorrence.

The German official, who was present, shook my hand and said to me:

"You spoke about the King of Babylon, but you meant the Russian Czar. I understood the allegory completely."

I gave my second talk in the Synagogue, *She'erith Israel*, named after the great sage Rabbi Israel Salanter. When he resided in Koenigsberg he used to pray in this Synagogue. I shuddered when I saw that this Synagogue was closed throughout the week. It was opened only for Sabbath services and very few worshippers would attend. The Synagogue itself was desolate and dismal, with just a few torn books in the broken bookcase.

This was the memorial to that great sage, Rabbi Israel Salanter!

* * *

Memel [Klaipeda] is a frontier city, situated on the border between Russia and Germany. It is hard to tell if the city is Russian or German. Among the Jews of Memel you find traits of both countries. They love learning and conduct themselves according to the laws of the code *Shulchan Aruch* as do the Jews of Lithuania, but they are as distant from Hebrew language and literature and from the national movement as the wealthy Jews of Germany.

I visited the Rabbi of Memel, Rabbi Gavriel Feinberg,

brother of the well-known Kovna doctor. He was an old man, a patriarch, with a large head and high forehead, bright eyes and a long white beard. He suffered from ill health but his ideas were crystal clear and healthy not only in matters of Torah but in world affairs as well.

All the inhabitants of Memel, old and young, men and women, Orthodox and freethinkers came to the large *Beth Ha-Midrash* to hear my talk. Dr. Isaac Ruelf, Mr. Jacob Shapira, the communal leader and the Hebrew writer Scheinhaus were present. The talk was very favorably received and even the Orthodox admitted that they had not heard so heartwarming a discourse since the days of Rabbi Israel Salanter of Blessed Memory.

I learnt of the good deeds preformed by the Jews of Memel for our brethren from Russia who escaped for their lives from that bloody land. Dr. Ruelf directed this aid work, and was like a redeeming angel to the miserable wanderers. He was busy with his aid work day and night.

I saw a Jewish funeral in Germany for the first time in my life. A poor woman had died. Her funeral was marked by so much order and décor. Two black horses led the black wagon. The mourners followed in quiet and dignity.

Chapter 27

As the sun rose, I saw imperial Berlin, the Capital of Germany. The early morning sunrays poured a flood of light on the high towers and on the roofs of the palace overlooking the royal city.

After I had rested from my journey, I went to visit Rabbi Azriel Hildsheimer and his son Dr. Hirsch Hildsheimer. I found the old Rabbi wrapped in his *Tallith* [prayer shawl] teaching his students. He received me most graciously. I brought him greetings from Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan and Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever and we discussed the condition of our brethren in Russia. He was a stranger to the national movement. He took me to the seminary where I found the students of the same type as the students of the *Yeshivoth* of Volozhin and Mir, but attired much more neatly and engaging less in hair splitting.

Dr. Hirsh Hildsheimer was a modern European man, a well-known writer, a faithful supporter of Jewish nationalism, and quite close to the *Hibbath Zion* movement. He was the founder of the Young Children of Israel movement and lectured to the members on Jewish topics. In addition he was an indefatigable worker in communal affairs.

Together with the well-known bibliographer, Dr. Heinrich Loewe, I toured beautiful Berlin, its impressive clean streets and broad squares, embellished with statues and flower gardens, the museums and libraries. As we sat in Unter den Linden, not far from the Kaiser's palace, we heard military band music as a detachment of cavalry passed with all the

pomp and ceremony of the German army. Suddenly a carriage drawn by two white horses came by. A woman holding a year old infant sat in it. The commander of the troops gave a signal and all the soldiers unsheathed their swords, and cried: "Hoch!! Hoch!!" in a loud voice.

The woman in the carriage was a nurse of the imperial household and the infant in her arms was the last-born child of Kaiser Wilhelm. A one-year-old infant was accorded royal honors by the assembled cavalry! Such is the power of an autocratic government!

For the first time in my life I went to a vegetarian restaurant, one of the largest in Berlin. I was most pleased to see people of different nationalities and different religions seated together and eating of the bounty of the earth – vegetables, herbs, baked and cooked fruits, and various cooking oils proper for Jews, Christians and Mohammedans alike. There was a Hindu from Calcutta wearing a turban next to him was a Turk with a red turban, opposite them a Jew and a Catholic – all were sitting together and dining in peace and quiet.

These men who did not eat meat and did not spill the blood of any living thing awakened a holy feeling within me. I recalled the age old cry of the children of Israel: 'If only we had meat to eat'; I recalled the problems of slaughterers and butchers, the rules of slaughtering, inspection and salting, the laws governing the use of meat and milk, things prohibited and things permitted, slaughterers who were forbidden to function during internal quarrels in Jewish communities while their children went hungry, the special meat tax, the blood of the children of Israel that has been spilled like water for that of bulls and calfs - and an idea arose in my mind: How good and fine and elevated would our people be if the children of Israel decided to become vegetarians...

Of course this is pure imagination, but one could hope for

its realization.

One morning I was awakened from my sleep by strains of music and sounds of cheering. I opened the window and a glorious spectacle lay before me. All Berlin was celebrating; all Germany was joyful. The streets were full of soldiers, scores of bands were playing the German national anthem; the people in the street were singing the national songs: *Deutschland Ueber Alles* and *Die Wacht am Rhein*. The crowds shouted: "Hoch! Hoch!" in honor of the Kaiser. Every face shone with happiness and joy. I went out into the street and at once I was caught up in the stream of humanity. I discovered that it was the birthday of Kaiser Wilhelm. The crowd marched to the strains of the music until they reached the Kaiser's palace in Unter den Linden. The procession paused, cannons thundered, bells rang, and church choirs sang.

Suddenly a flag waved on the porch of the palace. Silence, all eyes were turned towards the flag. At that moment the Kaiser appeared in his military uniform, at his right the Kaiserin and all the princes, at his left, the crown prince. A loud cheer burst from the crowd when the Kaiser bowed his head to them. The noise lasted for ten full minutes. Then – complete silence. The Kaiser stood straight as a ramrod. The many golden medals inlaid with gems on his broad chest sparkled in the sunlight. Graciously he raised his hand and thanked the people in a pleasant voice. He spoke for a few minutes and the crowd stood entranced. Tears appeared in many eyes. Unconsciously I sighed and my lips whispered the words of Isaiah: 'When your eyes behold a King in his beauty.'

Who could imagine then that this mighty monarch, so dear to and honored by his subjects, would be exiled from his land and that Germany would become a republic...

* * *

After traveling a whole day I arrived in Rotterdam, Holland. As I was in a hurry to reach London, I did not spend any time there but went directly from the railroad station to the harbor to take a boat. The Dutch porter who carried my baggage walked at my side and neither of us said a word. Suddenly he examined me carefully and began to stammer: "Jew"... "'*Shema Israel*'" [hear O, Israel] – In confused words half German, half Dutch, with the aid of his hands and fingers he explained to me that his parents and ancestors had been born in Holland. Besides "*Shema Israel*", "*Shabbas*", "*Yom Tov*" [holiday] he knew no Hebrew. When I asked him his name, he replied: "Reuben Tirado.

The name Tirado moved me deeply. I looked again into the face of the descendant of Jacob Tirado [the founder of the Amsterdam Jewish community] whose total knowledge of his people's language and lore was "*Shema Israel*" and a bitter thought gnawed at my brain and weighed on my heart.

When the ship departed, I stood for a long while on the deck and peered into the blackness of the sea and the blackness of the night and added to them the blackness of my thoughts...

Chapter 28

London made an unfavorable impression upon me. The great city with its multitude of inhabitants, with its tall buildings blackened by soot and gray of smoke, with its befouled atmosphere, its constant humidity and cover of dark clouds – all this was very depressing. You feel as though you have arrived in a different world, a world beneath 'the Mountains of Darkness', and you are walking slowly, feeling your way cautiously, involuntarily bending over as you go along. The tall buildings crush you, as it were, by their height and mass, and their dull gray color cast a mysterious dread over you... But when you beheld the Englishmen standing erect with their blue eyes and smooth faces, when you consider their 'gentlemanly' walk, their fine manners, their nobility of spirit and their calm glance – you have the feeling that an ancient and noble people is standing before you, a free people, to whom political and individual freedom are of their very essence and spirit.

The east side of London, East End, is a special world in itself, inhabited mostly by Jews. When you enter this section it is as if you had come to Vilna or Minsk. At every step you come across stores owned by Jews. At their doors stand the storekeepers, with their bearded faces, of the type of the mild young scholars of Russia, or their energetic wives with their black hair and eyes like the 'women of valor' of the Lithuanian towns. In the market there are haggling tradeswomen dressed in blouses and covered with kerchiefs, selling bagels and fruit. Heads covered with skullcaps, faces heavily bearded with side

locks peep forth from the cellars as their owners are bent over a shoemaker's bench or sewing machine. The children of Israel earn their livelihood with difficulty and not with ease, a bare sustenance with no luxuries.

Ugly poverty prevails among the Gentile inhabitants of this quarter. Almost all of them are habitual drunkards, who drink in solitude and in company, young and old, women and children. Drink wreaks havoc among them and ruins them completely. It is not a rare sight on Saturday night or early Sunday morning to see men and women, the latter with infants in their arms, standing in line in front of the saloon waiting for their turn to buy a glass of whiskey. The women give it to their infants, inoculating them with the poison of drink from their earliest childhood. Drunkenness produces such poverty among them that they literally have no bread to eat, no clothes to wear and no place to live. They loiter aimlessly in the streets, on the ledges of the houses, half naked and hungry, drenched with rain, frozen with cold and even this 'rest' is controlled by the police.

I preached my first sermon in East End in the neighborhood of the Lithuanian and Polish Jews who understood me and my language. 'I saw a topsy-turvy world' among them: 'the upper [class] underneath and the lower on top'– both in the material and spiritual realms. Those who have been rich in Continental Europe were now poor, and the former poor were now wealthy. Religious and God-fearing men had thrown off all restraints and had become free thinkers and anarchists. Radicals and free thinkers returned to the fold as penitents and become Orthodox fanatics in whose eyes truly God-fearing men had no standing whatsoever. As our sages expressed it: 'In the place where penitents stand even the wholly righteous cannot stand'.

One morning a committee from the Anarchist Club of

London came to challenge me to a public debate on religion. I was astounded to recognize among the members of the committee two students of a well-known *Yeshiva* in Lithuania. At home they had been *Musar* [Ethics] students, ascetics, studying day and night, but when they came to London they freed themselves from all restraints, passed through the Mission stage and entered the camp of the anarchists and now they were spreading the gospel of Kropotkin among the Jews of Whitechapel and the East End. They were pouring fire and brimstone upon the people of Israel, their Torah and their faith. Their hatred for things Jewish was as thorough as that of full-fledged anti-Semites.

I refused to have anything to do with this delegation.

As they left a second deputation arrived in the name of the society of Observers of the Sabbath and Strengtheners of the Faith. They invited me to speak for the society, to increase the membership and activities. I was shocked to recognize in the chief spokesman, the notorious anarchist from the city of N. in Russia, who had inspired many Jewish youths to leave the paths of Judaism, and had been pursued by the Czarist authorities. He fled to London, and here he repented and became an Orthodox fanatic. He embittered the life of his wife, who did not wear a wig, while in Russia he would try to prevent her from kindling the Sabbath candles. More times than one he had thrown out the candlesticks with the candles.

When I saw the two extremes – utterly confounded – pious students of *Musar* become anarchists, and an anarchist become a pillar of the faith, I said in my heart: "How great is your power O London! You are as the Red Heifer. You render the impure pure and the pure impure..."

With great reverence I went to visit the Chief Rabbi, "The Great Eagle", who controlled all the congregations in Great

Britain and its dependencies. All the Rabbis, "Reverends", ritual slaughterers and cantors were dependent upon him and without his consent could not function in the communal field. The name Rabbi Naphtali Adler is well known throughout the world. While he was still in the house of his father, Rabbi Nathan Adler, author of *Netina la-Ger* on the Onkelos translation of the Bible, certain Rabbis entitled him "Exilarch" [Leader of the Diaspora] and praised him and his works. I, who especially in the course of my travels, had come to know the great Rabbis of Russia and Poland, thought that I would find here the greatest sage and scholar. I was bitterly disappointed when, after I had discussed various topics with him, I found him to be like one of the government-appointed Rabbis of Russia and not the best of them. He excelled only in diplomacy. He knew life and he knew how to act with different classes of people. When he stood upon the platform in the Synagogue he was a God-fearing Jew; in the company of Englishmen he was an English gentlemen and aristocrat. In his rabbinical court in the East End he was a bitter fanatic; he persecuted the non-Orthodox as ruthlessly as the Hasidic leaders did in Galicia and Poland. But how 'enlightened' was this 'High Priest' in the society of the British aristocracy in the West End! He conducted his rabbinate with a high hand and those who were dependent upon his good will, stood before him as slaves before their master. This is a brief sketch of the Chief Rabbi's character. He was especially known as one who showed little love for the Jews of Russia and their Rabbis. When the Jewish community of Manchester summoned the Great Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines, founder of the *Mizrahi* [religious Zionist] movement, to serve as its Rabbi, Adler demonstrated, in his diplomatic way, his true attitude towards the immigrants and their Rabbis. It was then that I coined the phrase, which was accepted by all English Jews: Rabbi Nathan Adler, I said, was author of *Netina*

la-Ger [impartment to the convert (i.e. Onkelos) or sojourner] and his son, Rabbi Naphtali Adler, is author of *Sin'ah la-Ger* [hatred of the sojourner].

Our Hebrew writers spill gallons of ink when they describe the poor and chaotic state of education in Russia. If they came to London, they would soon see that education in London is seventy-seven times worse. It is horrible to see the old established Jews leaving their Judaism, with only the singing of *Yigdal* in the synagogue and the eating of the fish surviving on Friday nights. Their children are educated in the public schools. Those who mourn read the *Kaddish* [mourner's prayer] in English letters in the back of the *Siddur* [Prayer Book]. What about the Jews newly arrived from across the channel? These latter are more faithful to the tradition and don't leave out anything they did in their little hamlets. They see to it that their sons are taught mechanical reading in Hebrew and the cantillation of the Bible by teachers of a former generation who really do not know the Hebrew language and history, not to speak of English. The majority of these 'educators' cannot write an address correctly.

I had no satisfaction from the Zionists in London either. They are divided into scattered groups all building up themselves and heaping slanders on the others. Many of these Zionists came to visit me in my hotel and all of them complained about their fellows. The Zionists in West End complain about the Zionists in East End and the national idea is almost completely forgotten. Every group of Jews in Whitechapel is a group of refugees. The Jews of Russia, the Jews of Poland, the Jews of Lithuania, the Jews of Volhynia all maintain separate establishments, and the Jews of Germany keep aloof from all the others. The names of the Synagogues indicate the countries of origin of the members! "The Synagogue of the Children of Lithuania"; "The Synagogue of the Children of Volhynia"; "The

Synagogue of the Children of Hungary"; "The Synagogue of the Children of Germany".

"My brothers and friends," I asked them: "Tell me where is the Synagogue of the Children of Israel...?"

In the evening, I went for a walk on the great bridge that spanned the Thames. The sky was deep blue and studded with myriads of stars. Hundreds of electric lights from the great Parliament Building were reflected in the calm waters of the Thames. The scene was enchanting. I stood on the bridge and looked at the palaces of the old Lords and the wonderful statues. I was completely enraptured by this marvelous view in the capital of the world.

But when you compare the gray and black buildings in London to the white and shining structures in Berlin, you are forced to conclude that the Germans are better artists than the English.

* * *

The leading figure among the important Jews in London who were close to the 'green' Jews, the refugees from Russia and Poland, was the well-known communal worker, Herman Landau. He himself was of Polish origin and interested himself in the problems of the Polish Jews like a big brother. He visited me in my hotel and we spent quite a few hours discussing various Jewish questions, especially the national ideal of *Hibbat Zion*.

It was characteristic that even he, Landau, a good and gentle man, complained to me bitterly about the Jewish youth from Russia. He repeated the statements of the English Jews in London, that these young people were desecrating the name of Israel in England and in all the countries of Western Europe by their dangerous ideas originating in Russian Nihilism and Anarchism. They would come as strangers to free England and

wave their red banners and preach the theories of Kropotkin. They would cast off the yoke of Jewish religion and custom and destroy decent family life with their theories of free love. It was not strange that the English government regarded them as criminals and destroyers of society.

I listened calmly to all his complaints, which came from the depths of his heart. Then I answered him:

"You are not quite correct, Mr. Landau. You and all those fortunate ones, whose parents arrived in this country at an earlier period, were granted the benefits of a good, sound education and you grew up peaceful and law-abiding citizens. You fortunate ones look down from above upon your unfortunate brothers, recent refugees from Russia, and are prejudiced in your judgment of them. If you would examine this problem more profoundly, you would see that the fault lies not in your brethren, who were born in Russia, but in Russia itself. Russia is a land of slavery, a prison for 160 million people who have never had a taste of freedom. For hundreds of years they have been bearing the yoke of the Czar like blind men in darkness. How can you complain about slaves who burst out of their confinement and go from slavery to freedom? It is as if a man lay languishing in prison for many years in complete darkness. Suddenly he is released and brought into the light. Such a man may well be blinded by the sudden light or go out of his mind. Such is the case of these Jewish anarchists. They are prisoners who were suddenly released from confinement, pity them, but do not hate them; But to our sorrow our brothers in the West do not understand, whether consciously or unconsciously, the plight of their brethren, the refugees from Russia. What is there in common between citizens of free England and Russian slaves? What has the West to do with the North? They are only members of the same religion not of the same nation."

My words had a profound affect upon Mr. Landau and we parted on the best of terms.

I wish that all of our writers, poets and preachers, who heap praise upon our brethern in the countries of the West, and especially England, would come here and see the attitude of the English Jews toward their immigrant brothers. They would see the Jewish Pope, 'The Reverend High Priest', dressed in the garb of a Catholic priest – would that he knew Hebrew as well as the great Bishops! – They would come here and be convinced of their error. They would see with their own eyes, that there are no big brothers here, no sages of Israel, no sons loyal to their people, but haughty assimilationists, strutting about like peacocks, who look down upon their immigrant brothers and regard them as savages. They would find no true Judaism here but rather Catholicism without the cross...

The Jew haters in Russia denounce us for observing the ancient Talmudic law of *hazakah* [tenure]; the apostate of Kalts, Brafmann, is especially bitter about it as we see in his [slanderous] work *The Book of the Kahal* [communal leadership]. Had these blind dogs come to London they would have seen that the English people observe the law of "tenure" without the Talmud. All renters in London enjoy the right of "tenure" on their apartments and the landlord may not rent to another man without the previous renters consent. An apartment renter who leaves receives "key money" from the next tenant who replaces him.

Great and wealthy London may rightfully be proud of its commerce, wealth, freedom, great banks, newspapers and literature, of its squares and parks, its institutions and museums. But the sun, moon and stars are not included in its blessings. They only give grudgingly of their light here.

I am shut up in my room, which is completely closed, so that the external dampness may not penetrate indoors. Heavy

dark clouds cover the sky; all space is covered by dark fog. Thousands of street lights cannot repel the darkness which envelopes the streets and the obscure houses. As far as the eyes can see, there is endless blackness.

I sit and warm myself by the fireplace. But only my face and hands are warmed, my body shivers in the cold. I sit and consider the extreme contrasts to be found in London – on the one hand wealthy lords, statesmen, expert diplomats wiser than the diplomats of all Europe – on the other hand – multitudes of benighted people, rotting in their poverty and filth, with no strength and energy, drinking to excess and more downtrodden than all the multitudes of Europe.

The two parts of the city of London, the West and the East, symbolize the extreme contrasts – the "Lord" uptown and the "Yokel" downtown.

In the West End one never grows tired with gazing upon the beauty and glory of the squares, parks and houses in which live millionaires who are supported by their ancestral holdings that pass from father to son, tilled by enslaved workers, and by their wealth piled up in the Bank of England.

But when you come to the East End, a walk of just ten minutes, you are shocked by the poverty and degradation you meet. Poverty lurks in the narrow alleys, over the coffin-like houses, on the faces of the naked and barefoot beings in the guise of men and women. The lot of these living grave dwellers is better than that of thousands of their brothers and sisters in the lower part of the city. These latter ones walk about in the shadows of Whitechapel at night until they fall exhausted in the filth of the saloons. The watchmen who make their rounds in the city take them to collection centers which are too small to take them all in. The plague of drunkenness is wide spread, even the women, the mothers of the future generation, drink the national drink, Whiskey, Brandy or Gin, to use its proper

name, until they fall upon the sidewalks. The human likeness has departed from those women and the last vestige of self-respect has disappeared from their countenances. Every morning you can see hundreds of these poor unfortunates being led away by the police. They are used to insults, rebukes and even blows despite the English law which accents respect toward women, a law observed all over the Empire. But this law only warns against abuse of the healthy and satisfied women of the upper classes. But who cares if it is breached in the case of these poor unfortunates who have nothing but their tattered bodies and souls...?

To be in London and not to visit the British Museum is worse than to be in Rome and not to see the Pope. So of course I visited this great and world famous museum. For hours at end I passed from collection to collection, from room to room, from case to case. I looked at statues and deities, at mummies and pictures. I saw the remains of the Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Greeks and the Romans, as I passed by the history of the world throughout the ages.

Here I am standing in the Egypt of five thousand years ago. I see the statues of the Egyptians, their kings and magicians, primitive, granite statues, devoid of beauty. I enter another hall and find myself in Assyria, Babylon and Persia. I see the assassins and murderers known to me since my childhood as a pupil in the *Heder*, Sennecharib, Nebuchadnezzar, Nabuzarodon. Unconsciously, I am reminded of the murder and rape and destruction to which they subjected our people. Then I see an entirely different world, a world of magic before me in the Greek section – a world of pure and glorious art – mighty gods, beautiful goddesses carved out of white marble. After the Greeks come the Romans, Julius Caesar and all the emperors through Titus, "that righteous man in Rome and wicked man in Judah." All of them are before me with haloes

of victory on their brows.

Automatically the question arises: Where are these mighty ones? Who are they and who are their descendants? There is naught left of them, but the ancient, cold marble, the work of artists.

Far different is the lot of Jacob, the vanquished people of Israel. Our place cannot be found in museums and art collections. We are alive and well, we live and create life, and our deeds and accomplishments are our memorials.

Hovevei Zion arranged a large assembly in honor of the holiday of Hanukah. It took place in one of the large halls of the city. Herman Landau was chairman and there were three speakers: Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler, the preacher Rabbi Haim Zundel Maccoby, known as the Maggid of Kamenitz, and myself. I did not understand the chief Rabbi's address at the time, because he spoke English. However, from its cold reception by the audience I gathered that it was not very successful. The preacher Maccoby, on the other hand, stirred the hearts of the listeners with his words, as ardent as fire, and with his deep love of our people and our land. This preacher made a great name for himself both in Russia and in England thanks to his eloquence, his solid logic and vast knowledge. It is a shame that at the end of his life he became a follower of Samuel Montagu and turned away from the idea of the Return to Zion, becoming totally indifferent, though not openly opposed, to it. I was very saddened when I visited my friend Maccoby in his dreary flat. It was situated in the Rothschild houses, built by the lord for poor people from good families. Seeing the poverty and need in his home, I said to myself: So is the fate of men of talent in Israel.

* * *

The plague of the missionaries is like a 'festering sore' to the

Jews of London; their net is spread to the breadth and length of the city. These despicable creatures who have sold their own souls to foreigners are now toiling with all their might to capture other pure innocent souls and are sowing the venomous seeds mainly among the children.

One day I read in the papers that the missionaries had arranged an affair for Jewish children. About 600 children, who came with their mothers, participated. The children sang Christian songs and the organizers gave them gifts and mementoes to take home. This news infuriated me. I saw the great danger the children were facing because of their naïve mothers. In the sermon I preached I drew attention to this great outrage committed in a major city in Israel. My words had an effect, and as I read in the papers the following day that many of the fathers destroyed the presents that had been given to their children and forbade their wives and children ever to cross the threshold of the missionaries who are lying in wait to trap their souls.

* * *

I visited the Crystal Palace, a unique and splendid building of iron and glass. It is situated in a large and magnificent garden and serves as an "aquarium". I saw thousands of visitors from various countries and faiths there. All standing spell bound at the sight of this wonderful palace and its precious treasures, including brand new inventions. One is a weaving machine made of hundreds of joints. Great mechanics stood there for hours on end looking at the machine and studying it. For three pence the portrait of Queen Victoria, or of the dignitaries of the realm Beaconsfield and Gladstone are woven on the spot in sheds and colors as bright as the sun. The English are proud of the Crystal Palace and tend to ask the foreigner visiting their country whether he has seen it.

* * *

It was a pleasant experience for me to visit the Synagogue of the Sephardic Jews. It is a very old structure and the glory of age hovers over it. It has no electric or gas lights, but is illuminated solely by large candles in ancient copper candlesticks. All this gives the impression of antiquity and you are carried hundreds of years back in time. As I considered the Synagogue and listened to the monotonous oriental tunes of the Sephardic Jews, I seemed to be in an ancient Prayer house in Cordova or Granada. But when I approached the Cantor and the community leader after the services and greeted them in Hebrew they did not understand my words and looked upon me as a speaker in Barbarian tongue.

To such a sad state have the descendants of Judah Halevi and Ibn Gabirol sunk!

Chapter 29

The provincial towns of England produce a peculiar effect on the tourist, especially if he has come from Russia. There in that great center of Judaism, the town is more effective than the large city in preserving the values of Jewish life lest their form be blurred and their content emptied. The town in Russia serves as a barrier against the madness of the city, which attempts to overturn and tear out every tree, every plant that is firmly rooted in the past. The Jewish town preserves those customs and traditions that the rapid stream of life in the city has already swept away and consigned to oblivion. When you leave the great city, with all its turmoil and confusing distractions and come to the small town you feel an inner peace as though you are being caressed by a loving mother's warm and soft hand. The quiet and modest life that is rooted in the tranquility of the past; the old customs and ways grounded in the glory of tradition; the simplicity, piety and special Jewish charm all inspire upon you a tranquil, relaxing spirit and in your heart you feel the strengthening of your faith and trust in the eternity of the Jewish people, in the survival of Jewish life, and in the preservation of its spiritual wealth and national treasures. You can see before your eyes the historical process from the past to the future.

The situation in the cities of Western Europe is quite the reverse, I am referring to those cities where Judaism is not yet deeply rooted and has not spread. In the large cities, where the Jewish population has reached a certain, not insignificant,

number, Jewish communal life has a form and substance of its own and is not swallowed up in the general life of the greater community. But in the provincial towns where the Jewish population is very small, there is hardly any trace of Jewish communal life visible to the eye. The Jewish environment is limited and poor with no form or color of its own.

The English country towns made such a pathetic impression upon me. In London there is Jewish life with its own form and stamp. A large Jewish neighborhood, Jewish affairs, organizations and communal workers – all these factors unite and flow, as it were, in an unending stream that follows its special course through the ocean of life in the great city. But in the towns of the countryside where the Jewish population is practically non-existent, where the Jewish neighborhood is confined to two or three streets, there is but a vestige of Jewish life – a pale, almost imperceptible hint that can hardly be discerned.

In Leeds I observed not only this pale, almost imperceptible Jewish life, but also a life of poverty, of wont and deprivation. Leeds is the "city of the needle" and most of the Jews are employed in the needle trades. When a Jew from Russia, Galicia or Romania, no matter what his occupation had been, once he comes to Leeds, he could forget his past and become a needle worker. It was not uncommon to find among these tailors sweating over sewing machines Talmudic Scholars, teachers of religion and *Maskilim* [adherents of Jewish Enlightenment] who had received *Yeshiva* and *Gymnasium* educations. Many of them suffered from terrible diseases – tuberculosis, heart trouble and anemia – sorely afflicted until death delivered them from their agony.

By actual count the sun appears over the British Isles about sixty days a year. The other three hundred days find the islands soaking in rain or snow. The air is damp, the skies are leaden

and many of the inhabitants suffer from rheumatism. Those 'greenhorns' who come from a different climate are especially prone to this disease. How horrible these newly arrived afflicted look. Their faces are green; their eyes can hardly see, they are thin and bent over as if old age had come upon them in the bloom of youth. The Russian consul told me that many Russian Jews came to him and pleaded to be returned to Russia. They were even ready now to perform their military service. England held out no hope for them.

In Leeds I got to know Prof. Joseph Zvi Strauss, a reform Rabbi in Bradford and a teacher of Hebrew Literature at the University. He was in the audience when I delivered a talk in Hebrew. He was unable to find words to express his wonder and admiration upon hearing the ancient, dead Hebrew language issuing from the lips of a living man. When I told him that there are many Jews in Russia who use the Hebrew language for their correspondence and records, he looked at me with such amazement, as if I were telling him about men with two heads.

Such are our scholars who do exhaustive research into the past of the Jewish people, but who know nothing of our present situation and have no hope for our future.

It was this professor who told me of an interesting conjecture of Leopold Zunz. Zunz was of the opinion that the Yiddish word *nabbich* [unfortunate], which has no root in any language, is a combination of the three words *Nicht Bei Eich*, [it shouldn't happen to you], said to avert trouble. This is quite a reasonable supposition.

* * *

The quality of modesty, which distinguished Israel throughout the generations, is unfortunately on the decline here. Daily disgraceful events take place and there is no one to raise a

voice in protest.

On this very day a bride and groom were married in the Great Synagogue of Leeds. The officiating Reverend-Preacher spoke before the young couple on chastity and modesty in Israel. The Cantor sang sweetly and the relatives spoke much in praise of the modesty of the bride who gave birth while still under her father's roof, furthermore she had brought her infant along to attend his mother's wedding...

It was sad and absurd to see that the Rabbi in the Great Synagogue is a fifty-year-old bachelor, performing marriage ceremonies and preaching the sanctity of marriage like a Catholic priest. Indeed, this is Catholicism without a cross.

In Russia when we read Spencer's book on education, we considered England, the native land of the great educator, to be an earthly paradise and Englishman to be angels on high who lived in peace and loved strangers as outlined by Spencer. How vast is the dichotomy between theory and practice! It was only when I was in England that I saw the cruelty of the English youth toward strangers and foreigners. Children would throw stones at poor peddlers and pelt them with dirt and there was no one to protest! This is the situation in the nineteenth century in an enlightened country like England!

When you see savagery of this kind you become more convinced than ever that humanity will not be saved by Darwin and Spencer, but by prophets and visionaries like Micah and Isaiah who had their visions and said their prophecies when the ancestors of these Englishmen walked nude and barefoot in the primeval forests, eating human flesh.

I heard a tailor tell his companion as they walked in front of me: "Another calamity happened to the steamship Victoria which sails between Russia and England."

"What happened?" asked his friend.

"It brought my wife and children to me."

How much cruelty and malice are hidden in this dull-witted jest.

England prides herself on all her possessions, especially on the English language. It is difficult to find an Englishman who speaks a foreign language. Jules Verne correctly remarked about the English that "Great Britain is the whole world, English is the universal language, and Victoria the Queen of the world."

It is not only the English who have this attitude. The English Jews too regard themselves and their "Chief Rabbi" in the same light.

* * *

Manchester is second only to London. Her factories and commerce entitle her to a place among the great cities of the world. Her population is about a million of whom twenty thousand are Jewish. Most of the latter are shopkeepers and workers but there are a few usurers, whose activities contribute to the hatred for the Jewish community. Manchester is also subject to the prevailing Jewish disease – internal dissension. The community is divided into four dissenting groups and there is no peace among them.

In Manchester I enjoyed greatly the company of my friend the Hebrew poet Joseph Massel, translator of several English books into Hebrew. These included Milton's *Samon Agonistes* and Longfellow's *Judas Maccabaeus*. He is an amicable man and his home in Manchester is open to every educated Russian Jew whose fate had thrust him to England. In the British Isles Hebrew literature and culture are practically non-existent. Even Rabbis, preachers, cantors and lay leaders can only read, and with vowels only, the Hebrew in the Prayer Book. Some among them consider the English translation sufficient. The *Kaddish* [mourners prayer] is printed in their Prayer Books

in Latin characters. These ignoramuses are Orthodox. They build large and ornate Synagogues, have Torah scrolls written for them, engage in communal affairs and squabble over every minor office - this is English Jewry!

I had been in England for several months and I still was not accustomed to the peculiar climate. The weather changed several times a day from cold to hot, from hot to cold and the dampness was ever present.

The rooms of the apartments were built one on top of the other. The kitchen was on the ground floor, the dining room above and above that were the bedrooms. The stairs were steep like ladders. The fuel used for the metal stoves was not wood, but soft coal, which filled the rooms with coal fumes. In London I did not feel it but I did in Manchester, where large smoking chimneys hide the sun.

* * *

The Jewish community of Liverpool invited me to give several lectures. When I came to Liverpool, which was about an hour's distance from Manchester, I was amazed at the difference in the atmosphere, they are distant as 'east is from west.' Manchester is covered with smog, its houses black and the streets dark. But Liverpool is bright with light and cleanliness like one of the pretty cities in Germany; the ships that arrived daily add life and gladness to the city's atmosphere. A different spirit, one of happiness, comes upon you when entering the city.

Saintly and pure people, the type of Rabbi Shemele Kaftan of Vilna, Rabbi Nochum of Horodna, Rabbi Sholem Menashe of Minsk, Rabbi Mordechai Heinai of Shavli may be found in large numbers (though in lesser greatness) in every city and town in Russia, but are not to be found in the cities of Western Europe, where culture and civilization reign supreme. There were many moments during my stay in England when I would

have been overjoyed if one of my companions from Russia were with me, so that I could show him what I saw. He surely would have understood me, and see, as I did, that there was no vestige of so many good traits and customs which once distinguished Jewry. I do not know how many hungry Jews walk the streets on Sabbath eve with none to take a visitor into his home for the Holy Sabbath, while every home all over the Jewish Diaspora is wide open to every visitor and stranger to satisfy his hunger and ameliorate his pain. But what is Sabbath eve if the spirit is gone from the whole Sabbath, and the form and content from Judaism at large?

Not only have good Jewish customs been abolished, but they even added unsavory traits and negative ways. In recent years the number of Jewish money lenders and usurers multiplied to such an extent in English cities that their evil ways give the English sufficient excuse to see the Jews as a people of Shylocks. Usurers of our people are brought to trial every day and the English press gives this extensive coverage and pours fire and brimstone on the Israelite public.

* * *

I was sitting in my hotel room one day talking to two Manchester Rabbis, Rabbi Yaffe and Rabbi Teomim, when a young man knocked on the door. He was well dressed and most presentable. He introduced himself as one of the modern, Hebrew *Maskilim* [adherents of Jewish Enlightenment] a contributor to the *Ha-Melitz* under the pseudonym of *Gevir*. I recalled some of the articles he had written and introduced him to the Rabbis.

"I have heard your name, Sir," he said to me, "while still in Russia, but we have never met. And now, as I am passing through Manchester, I wish to make your acquaintance."

He joined us and spoke in florid style about Hebrew

literature, the future of Israel and the ideal of *Hibbat Zion*. In passing from subject to subject he mentioned some legal issues, items of *Halacha* [religious law], and displayed profound knowledge of the Talmud and codifiers of the Law. The Rabbis were astonished that he had such an acquaintance with rabbinic literature and such a traditional view of Judaism untypical of writers. He spoke like a man of religion, with sparks of piety in his eyes.

I did not like him. It struck me that something was not right about this young man.

When the rabbis took their leave of us and we were alone in the room he suddenly stood up, faced me, and said in a dramatic tone:

"Yes, my friend, I was an observant Jew. I occupied myself, as does a Rabbi in Israel, with the Torah until my eyes were opened and I saw the light of Truth – The Holy Trinity. I became a believing Christian and I now believe that the redemption of Israel will come only through the Christian religion. I heard you speak in London. I was especially impressed by your speech against the missionaries. You have a great gift and are wasting it. I was sent to you by the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews. Come with us; work with us for your happiness and the happiness of our unfortunate brethren!"

He spoke passionately and enthusiastically and I was ashamed to look him in the face. I listened to him disgusted, feeling nauseous to stand next to this man who had sold his soul. I couldn't utter a word. But when he had the nerve to take a check out of his pocket in order to give it me, I cried out furiously "Get out wicked apostate, out of my room!" I opened the door of the room and physically ejected him in disgrace.

* * *

I took a walk in one of the suburbs of Manchester with my friend Mr. Massel. There we enjoyed English freedom – 'free' stones were hurled at us from all sides. We barely got away from these wild and unruly youngsters. An old man let us into his home.

* * *

Forty Jewish immigrants were sued for selling Passover wine without a permit from the authorities. The judge imposed a fine on them and rebuked them for the defamation they brought on Israel. The large papers were quick to pick up the story, make it a great sensation and besmirch the Jews and Judaism.

This event reminded me of the large signs the Rabbis posted in all synagogues forbidding all Jews to sell Passover food and beverages without rabbinical sanction. I asked myself why should they not supervise all the food unfit for Passover to be found in the community – in the hands of the Rabbis and leaders, the directors and their sextons, and the synagogue members who deal in Passover wine?

This is a difficult question indeed and there is none to settle it but the English judge...

Chapter 30

From England I traveled to Antwerp, Belgium.

This city is not very large; it is not a metropolis in the American sense. There are no ten story high buildings, no El [train] and no subway. However it does have all the advantages of a city and of a metropolis. There are modern hotels, major newspapers, theatres, warehouses, offices and factories, but none of the hectic atmosphere, the mania for commerce of the big cities. When you enter the city it may seem as though you have entered a small, quiet and peaceful town, where life flows like a calm river. People passing in the street are in no hurry, they do not shove you by arm or shoulder; they walk slowly, with small steps, as though they have finished their entire business successfully and have no reason to rush. If you happen to come to this city in the summer months you will be astonished by the great number of flowers that meet your eye from every house and wall. The railway station, one of the most magnificent buildings in Europe, is surrounded by flowers; the hotels drown in flowers, even the lampposts are decorated with flowers – in short, you will see flowers wherever you look. And what great cleanliness reigns in every corner and angle. I have never seen a people as meticulous as the Belgian; concern with cleanliness has become their second nature, a national trait. The outer walls of the buildings are washed with soap and water every morning, as are the sidewalks. I must confess that during the first days of my stay I could not walk at the edge of the public domain in the mornings. A servant,

or the lady of the house herself, stood before every single building, cleaning and rinsing the sidewalk. How could I be so discourteous to step in a place a woman was busy cleaning? Then I saw, however, that the Belgians have no inhibitions and do not consider it discourteous at all. The woman is doing her job – cleaning and rinsing – and the passers by are doing theirs – walking. Then I too became 'Belgian' and started walking on the edge of the public domain in the mornings as well.

The meticulous observance of cleanliness is evident in the attire and habits of the Belgians as well, especially on Sundays. Walking in the streets of Antwerp on Sunday one observes a festive crowd. All are finely dressed and you can hardly tell the poor from the affluent in every sense of the word. The artisan and laborer who live by their work are clad in new clothes on Sunday, and their wives go out in finely fitted, veiled hats like true ladies. They spend most of the day in the coffee houses that excel in their cleanliness and decorations. The coffee houses serve as meeting places for friends, acquaintances and family. People gather there and spend their time over a glass of beer, soda or a cup of coffee. The women come to the coffee houses as well and drink with the men. However, it is nothing like the despicable inebriation of London. It is rather a social amusement stemming from peace of mind and satisfaction.

The meticulous observation of cleanliness is at the core of the Belgian's attitude to the Jews, they are neither openly fond of them nor do they love them in secret. One cannot, however, say that they hate the Jews. The number of Jews in the country is not large enough to plant the seeds of anti-Semitism. I have been told that there are many places in Belgium whose inhabitants have never seen a Jew in their lives. And yet the Belgians are dissatisfied with the Jews and some even find them disgusting. The fact is that no Belgian would buy anything in a Jewish grocery and they all keep their

distance from bread baked in a Jewish bakery. The reason is not hatred or anti-Semitism, but rather the Belgian's suspicion of the Jews as far as observance of cleanliness is concerned. And, entre nous, we must admit that there is a certain element of truth here. Our fellow Jews – and I am referring to the Jews of Russia and Poland – have not been accustomed to careful observance of cleanliness in the countries of their origin since their neighbors too scorn this principal. So when a Jew comes in contact with a Belgian for whom cleanliness is an "idée fix" the contrast is just too great. Sometimes the Belgians avoid renting their houses to Jews, again, not out of anti-Semitism but because they do not trust their cleanliness.

When I arrived in Antwerp the Jewish presence was in the formative stage. Jews like us were mostly absorbed into the majority group, that of the Dutch Jews, who were considered citizens. Among the Jews of Russia Antwerp was known only as a port, a station in the long route of trial and tribulation leading to America. When a Jew considers his situation and concludes that his present location brings him misfortune, he decides to travel far across the seas, to the United State, Canada and in less fortunate times – to England, but not to the cities of Western Europe. This gives the Jewish settlement in Antwerp a unique character. German Jews, intermediaries in the export-import business between Belgium and Germany settled in Antwerp, as did Austrian Jews undeterred by the cities of the West; they were joined by some Russian Jews, part dealers in precious stones, others wanderers who left their home towns to go to America but later ran out of money en route and were 'forced' to stay in Antwerp. Knowledgeable people have told me that among the very rich people in Antwerp there are many who arrived in the city penniless with nothing but their shirt on their back, and that they are now leading traders in the precious stone and pearl exchange.

The Jewish settlement in Antwerp was not of one kind, and its different components did not merge into one group. The Jews of Holland, Germany, Austria, Russia and the Sephardic Jews were all links in this chain bound together only by a thin thread which made them into one entity – the Jewish community of Antwerp. The social, public and religious lives of these Jewish groups who came from different countries and were accustomed to different cultures and habits created a series of separate worlds with no points of contact between them.

The Dutch Jews, as previously mentioned, are considered citizens. Their knowledge of Dutch, a language so close to Flemish, and of the Dutch ways they were accustomed to, gave them a local aura, and so they are the official Jews of Antwerp. The Jews of Antwerp call the Community recognized by the authorities "The Dutch Community"; its Rabbi, like the priests of the dominant religion, is awarded a sine cura by the government. The Dutch Jews are for the most part distant from Judaism. Their Jewish character has been eroded and there is hardly any difference between them and the majority population, yet they do not conceal their Judaism and refrain from mixed marriages. The majority fulfills their duty to Judaism by celebrating *Bar Mitzvah*, eating some *Matza* on Passover and avoiding work on *Yom Kippur* [The Day of Atonement]. Only a small minority is Orthodox: they observe the Sabbath and follow the religious customs carefully, but all this is a mere formality, nothing but an ancestral tradition. Even the religious among them are, almost to the last one, ignoramuses; he who is capable of reading the prayer book or translating a verse of the Pentateuch correctly is considered a great scholar.

The German Jews are of the renowned Frankfurt am-Main types who consider the writings of Samson Rephael Hirsch to

be the embodiment of the entire Torah. They have a synagogue of their own where they pray and sing *Lechah Dodi* and other parts of the service together and use melodies usually attached to certain prayers for the lamentations and *Kol Nidrei*. They are almost all very generous and excel in charitable works; many have been a great help to the Jews of Russia and Poland in their hour of need.

The Jews of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires are a group in themselves and are the life and soul of the Jewish settlement. The Austrian, i.e. the Galician Jews hold the key positions: they are the first in commerce and communal activity and the leaders of the society in general, while the Jews of Russia and Lithuania are 'second class'. This situation, quite the opposite of that in England and America, is typical of Antwerp. These differences have gone so far that the Austrian Jews refrain from marrying the Russian Jews, and if any of them unluckily happens to marry his daughter off to a Russian born and raised lad, the rest of the community sympathize with him and shake their heads sorrowfully...

The Jews of Antwerp deal in precious stones and pearls. Commerce is mostly held in the Club and Exchange – where one buys and sells, weighs and counts the tiny 'packages' covered in silk paper that look like packets of medical powder but are worth hundreds and thousands.

The major tradesmen hold their dealings in the "club" and "exchange", they are the 'big fish' of golden fins and silver scales, but there are also many minor traders, 'small fish', dealing in gems and they operate in the coffee houses and streets. Passing on Pelican Street one sees lots of people, a multitude humming like a beehive. These are the small tradesmen, the intermediaries who stand in front of the club, the exchange and the coffee houses discussing matters of commerce and world affairs in general. This street is like the 'lost and found' center

of the Antwerp Jews. A man in need of his friend has only to go there and he will bump into the sought person immediately as nearly all the Jews of Antwerp make their living in the gem trade, some legally, others illegally. It is worth noting that aside from the Jews of Holland only the Jews of Russia and Austria engage in this trade. The German Jews have no inclination towards this 'airy' business and prefer a more down to earth trade – so that the vast majority among them is in the export and import business. However the Russian and Polish Jews do earn a good living in the gem trade. Knowledgeable people have told me that in the early years there were no poor people among the Jews of Antwerp, and those who wished to give charity would send their contributions to the Land of Israel or to their hometowns.

In one of the speeches I made in Antwerp I urged the public to come to the aid of the Brisk fire victims. I mentioned the rich Jews in Russia, and praised them for their acts of charity. To illustrate my point I described the institutions established in Dvinsk by Friedlansky family. I commented, en passant, that this very rich family had lost its fortune in the days of Alexander III due to the policy of that evil government, and that the Friendlansky brothers have been reduced to poverty and sorrow. Suddenly the sound of a man falling to the floor was heard. I stopped my address and some people told me that an elderly and respectable man has fainted. The man was taken out of the synagogue and brought to the hospital. Nobody knew who he was or where he had come from. When all came back to normal I continued my speech and the crowd made a generous contribution to the victims of the fire in Brisk.

The next day I received the following letter:

"Esteemed Preacher,

I am the man who, much to my chagrin, disturbed your

speech. I was truly heartbroken to hear of the terrible plight that befell the Friendlansky family. They are my brothers, Meyer and Leib. They have already passed away, as for me - I am persecuted constantly by the Russian government. I reside in this city under a false name. Nobody knows my true identity and none shall till I manage to prove my innocence and refute the libel brought against me concerning the building of the railway station in Brisk.

Kindly pay your friend a visit,

Mordechai Friedlansky"

I visited him at his residence. We embraced and kissed each other and spent many hours discussing pleasant memories of the past. He was a just and righteous man who had fallen victim to the evil Russian government.

* * *

Before leaving Antwerp I went to see the Steen museum; its collection includes documents and items of past generations and regimes, of the days of Spanish rule.

In a deep and dark dungeon I saw the destruction instruments of the Inquisition: The seat of the judges, the stock to which the hands and feet of the tortured were bound, the spikes on which they were hung alive, the nails they were forced to stand on, the hooks used to pinch their flesh. Cold sweat covered my entire body. It seemed as though I could see the judges of the Inquisition clad in black, sense their thirst for human blood reflected in their burning eyes; hear the ravaged sighs of the tortured Marranos, the groans of the dying, and the unceasing whisper *Shema Yisrael* [Hear, O Israel] uttered from their burnt and bleeding lips – all this froze my blood, made my hair stand on end and pressured my mind like tongs of fire.

I walked out of the Museum and back into the open air; I

felt as though it were I who had escaped from Spain, I who had been saved from the sharp jaws of the Inquisition, from the 'justice' practiced by its cannibal judges...

Chapter 31

The trip from Belgium to in Holland takes only a few hours, and one can hardly feel the difference leaving the one and entering the other. These two small countries resemble each other in language and manners and are like "sister countries" even after their partition. The villages make a special impression on the passing traveler. The stone houses are small and pretty. From the window one can see the curtains gleaming in white. Cleanliness reigns supreme. Every step of the way one sees a farmer or farmer's wife in their national garb and wooden shoes. Children run back and forth looking at the passing train, flashing their little white teeth as they laugh. There is an expression of tranquility on every face, the tranquility that comes from peace of mind and deep roots in the soil. Anybody who had the chance to travel through the Russian country side, to see the small straw roofed huts, the farmers and their wives with their gloomy faces and parched skin, to witness the miserable poverty evident in every angle and corner, could not but notice the difference between an enlightened, cultured country and a savage barbaric one. A silent feeling of envy then creeps into your heart and your lips whisper as of their own volition: "O, would but our share, in our home land, the ancient and new, the desolate and built home land, be like that of those people..."

Antwerp had been the cause of my visit to Belgium, and it was Amsterdam that drew me to Holland.

I was familiar with the name of that city ever since my early

childhood in the *heder*, and bore a feeling of sublime love towards it. A title page of the *Gemara* [Talmud] with the name "Amsterdam" printed on it in red letters arouse my esteem. The name sparkled in a special way and its sound was as music to my ears when I whispered it: Am-ster-dam. One might say that a *Gemara* printed in Amsterdam is no different than any other *Gemara* printed in Vilna, Horodna, Zhitomir or Slavita, but nevertheless I thought it superior. This *Gemara*, printed in Amsterdam comes from that wonder land, the land about which my good and clever mother tells such lovely stories, the land she praises for its cloth, its rich cheeses and tasty herring – the two typical Jewish foods that were brought from there.

When I grew older and studied Jewish history Amsterdam seemed like a bright star in the dark tortured skies of the people of Israel. Historians had called the city "The Jerusalem of Holland" for a good reason. This was the first city to open its gates wide to the people of Israel when their blood was being shed like water in Spain and Portugal at the end of the sixteenth century. The ship of Israel, harassed in a sea of trails and persecutions by the Jesuits and the Inquisition, found a safe haven on the shores of Holland. Amsterdam opened its gates to hundreds of Marrano families who settled there, engaged in trade and did much for its development.

As early as 1523, on April 22 of that year, Jacob Tirado arrived in Amsterdam with his group of miserable Marranos, and Prince Wilhelm of Orange became their shield and protector from those Catholic beasts in human disguise.

The Jews have recognized and cherished these Dutch deeds of kindness both then and in present days, and have done everything in their power to enhance the development of the country in commerce, industry and science, especially medicine.

Just as the Sephardic Jews of Spain found refuge in Holland

so did the Ashkenazi Jews during the Thirty Years War. Both communities developed rapidly and achieved an important place in Jewish History.

I was drawn spellbound to the city of Amsterdam by the tragedies of Uriel d'Acosta and Baruch Spinoza, by the memory of great leaders such as Rabbi Yitzhak Abuhav and Menasheh ben Israel.

Immediately upon arrival in Amsterdam I went out to see the town, without freshening up or resting. I walked from street to street, from alley to alley absorbing the sights of this beautiful old town incessantly. How graceful were the canals passing through the streets, the boats sailing on them, the people walking calmly with a constant smile on their face – all this gives you the impression that you are in another world, an ancient world devoid of the noise and tumult of modern life, of its jealousy and hatred, a world where people simply enjoy the blessing of their freedom and tranquility.

I found the Jewish Ghetto oppressive. The ancient Jewish quarter, that used to be under lock and key, still exists. The Jews who live there have the right to reside all over the city, enter the quarter or leave it at any time, and yet the sight of the Ghetto has hardly changed. The streets are dark and narrow, wooden ladders lead from the first to the second floor, the gates to the courtyards still have those small wickets through which the Jews of Medieval days would look out to see what was going on outside the Ghetto. Degrading poverty reigns there and the children roll in the streets naked, barefoot and filthy.

True, there is great poverty in London's East End and in New York's East Side, but over there poverty is hidden inside the houses and is not to be seen outside - the houses are large, some are decorated. This is not the case in the Amsterdam Ghetto. Here poverty lurks in the entrances of the houses, in

the gates leading to the street.

Most important among the ancient monuments in Amsterdam is the Sephardic synagogue; it is very old and was built, according to tradition, by Yitzhak Abuhav. The beggars of Amsterdam hold it in great esteem and crowd around it all day long. To finally enter the synagogue I had to pass through two camps of poor and destitute people, disabled in every possible way, who surrounded me from all sides with their hands stretched out - like the scene at the Vilna Synagogue on *Yom Kippur* [The Day of Atonement]. To pave my way in I took a handful of Dutch coins and threw them to the ground. Both camps swooped down on the prey and so the path was cleared for me.

I entered the building and naturally remained at the entrance door. A holy silence was everywhere, there is no gas or electric lighting, but only large wax candles that give a dark glow. All is enveloped in the splendor of antiquity and the shadows of the past. The Sephardic Rabbi who hardly spoke Hebrew showed me the inscription over the entrance to the synagogue: 'But I, through your abundant love, enter your house.' He pointed out that some of letters were emphasized marking the name 'Abuhav', for the founder of the synagogue.

It is said the Uriel d'Acosta and Baruch Spinoza were excommunicated in this very synagogue. However research on the subject led me to conclude that the bans were not pronounced in this synagogue but rather in the *Beth Ya'acov* synagogue founded by Jacob Tirado, which had been destroyed a long time ago.

Interestingly the *Shamash* [sexton] who opened the synagogue for us and showed us around bore the name of 'Saint Cruz' being a descendent of the Marranos who returned to Judaism in Amsterdam.

I also went to see the ancient cemetery of Ouderkerk

accompanied by Mr. Hananya. We took a boat across the Amstel and arrived at the cemetery. I walked among the ancient graves for a long time; grass was already growing out of some of the tomb-stones; I walked from grave to grave, from one monument to another and an ancient, forgotten world came to life in front of my eyes. Here is the grave of Rabbi Yitzhak Abuhav who died in the year 5453 [1693], and here are the graves of Joseph Tirado, Rabbi Menasseh ben Yisrael and Uriel d'Acosta. Some of the tombstones also bear the title of "Duke" or "Councilor", like the tomb of Rabbi Yitzhak Abuhav describing him as councilor to the King of France and physician of the Queen. The king ordered him embalmed after his death and he was finally laid to rest in l688 [sic].

All the visitors to the cemetery owe a debt of gratitude to the affluent and learned Mr. De Kastra. This descendent of a well known Sephardic family has devoted his life to the preservation of the cemetery. He has mended the graves and cleaned the tombstones, restoring the inscriptions to their initial state all at his own expense. He also wrote a book about this ancient cemetery.

Ancient tombs surround you, ancient memories of great men who did great deeds and sacrificed their lives for their people. One chain stretches from their predecessors to their own generation and continues to ours, and this chain links us together into one entity, one people in this world.

The historian who said: "the cemetery creates the people" was right indeed. I would advise all who still ponder whether we are a people or merely a sect to visit the ancient cemetery in Holland. I am sure that there they would truly repent and return to their people.

Chapter 32

Paris was the last city I visited in Europe. I rephrased the famous saying "See Naples and Die" and said to myself "see Paris and say farewell" – after all I could not leave Europe without seeing this beautiful and charming city, the capital of the world. I thought that all the cities and lands I had visited were but the anteroom of Europe and I had not yet entered the parlor. This parlor lured me in its thousands of treasures, in its myriads of lights and seemed to me from afar like a magical palace. I could not resist the urge to see Paris.

When one arrives in Paris from England, especially from London, one sees a new world, 'a new heaven and a new earth.' It is hard to believe that only six hours separate these two countries. The French are different from the English in their looks, character and way of life. The Anglo-Saxons are tall and cold-tempered, the French, on the other hand, are short of stature and hot tempered. Their capital cities are as different as they are – London is like a huge factory where seven million people labor, and Paris is like a grand hotel, where millions of bon vivants eat, drink and are merry.

The city made a great impression on me: its broad and clean streets, its monuments standing out in every square surrounded by flower gardens, the large cafes, the frivolity of the Parisians, their fickle nature and cheery talk – all this brings forth a new spirit in you – the spirit of intoxication. You see a new world, its atmosphere sizzling with excitement, everything stirring, craving for life and enjoying life to the utmost. Seeing the

Parisians staring at you with their smiling eyes, hearing their talk that sounds like a brook rushing over pebbles, coming across establishments of pleasure and amusement on every corner, you feel envious of this people, a people who know the secrets of life, who know how to sweeten its bitterness, how to disregard its trials and tribulations and make it one long holiday...

But something in Parisian life does disgust you – that is their licentiousness and debauchery. And besides your feelings of envy you feel reproach for of the ten *kabs* [measures] of modesty descended to the world they have not taken even a quarter of one....

I visited the Chief Rabbi Zadok Ha-Cohen, and spent a very pleasant time with him. His good looks, shining eyes and pleasant voice charm all his visitors. He received me cordially and addressed me in Hebrew immediately:

"Take a seat, Sir, to my right."

He expressed interest in the *Hibbat Zion* movement in Russia and in the other countries of my travels, enquired about the health of the great rabbi Shmuel Mohilever and the other leaders of the movement. He encouraged me to go to America and promised that I would find a wide scope for my work there. I asked the poor immigrants who came to his home about him and they had nothing but praise for the man. All who come to him tired and broken in spirit leave his presence happy and light hearted. He is ever 'charitable to the thousands' in both deed and money.

I remembered his colleague, the 'Great Eagle', the Chief Rabbi of London, who shuts his heart to the wandering immigrants and they depart from him depressed and broken hearted – I said to myself: "each of them is a 'high priest' [Cohen], Rabbi Naphtali Ha-Cohen in London and Rabbi Zadok Ha-Cohen in Paris. The first is as the 'priest of Beth El', the second 'the priest

of Jerusalem'. Amaziah, the priest of Beth El said to prophet Amos: 'Seer, off with you to the land of Judah! Eat bread there'. British 'Amaziah' too rebukes the wandering immigrants for coming to London, the City of the King".

My friend Rabbi Lubetsky was right in saying that had we merited and returned to our Land Zadok Ha-Cohen would have been our High Priest.

On Sabbath I prayed at the Ashkenazi synagogue. After the morning prayers Rabbi Weisskopf ascended the pulpit and prayed for the welfare of the French Republic. This was the fourth prayer for the welfare of a government that I had heard. Last week it was in honor of Wilhelmina Queen of Holland; two weeks ago for the welfare of Leopold King of the Belgians; three weeks ago – in honor of Victoria Queen of Great Britain. Four different prayers in four weeks! Is this multiplicity of prayers not the most obvious sign of our dispersion and exile?

I toured the city with Rabbi Lubetsky. I climbed to the top of the Eiffel Tower and saw the entire city. On a clear day there is no finer view. We sailed on the Seine by boat, saw the palace of Queen Eugenie which casts fear on all its viewers. We visited the Louvre, a royal palace that became a Museum, second only to the British Museum.

Anyone who has studied the history of the peoples who have disappeared from the face of the earth, would recognize, when visiting Paris, the decadence of the French people and be witness to the signs of aging, perhaps even of death, it demonstrates.

The nightly wantonness, the gluttony and inebriation in the streets, the dance halls and licentious dancing, the relations between the sexes, the philandering conduct of the women who are busy with their make up from cradle to grave and think of nothing but seducing men, the government's indifference

to the promiscuous behavior of the young – all these prove to the stranger that France is going down the drain.

And yet none equal the French as far as manners and aesthetics are concerned. Even the children are polite. They would never insult a stranger, not even a German. When a foreigner asks them a question they answer with respect and show him the way. They are nothing like the English children who curse the stranger loudly and throw dust on him if his clothes are different from theirs.

I bid goodbye to my friends and acquaintances and left France, and Europe, behind me. In Le Havre I embarked on the ship La Bourgonia headed for America.

Europe and America – two different and distinct worlds and I am caught in the middle, hanging between them as between two magnets. On the one hand there was the Old World, the world I knew for all its suffering and all its pleasantness, there was the land of my birth with all its evil decrees, pogroms and the arbitrariness of its despotic rulers, the land of my dear brethren, my beloved family - on the other hand, on the other side of the ocean there was a new and strange world, a world of wonder, casting fear in its greatness and novelty.

Deep in thoughts such as these I stood on the deck as the ship sailed. The coast became ever further, the houses ever smaller – and Europe disappeared from my sight…

I was the only Jew on board. Most of the passengers were Italians from Sicily, poor people whose language I did not understand; the minority were Swiss with whom I could speak German. Like prophet Jonah in his time I went down 'into the hold of the vessel' and sat there sad and somber. Out of boredom I gathered the little children, gave them centimes and amused myself in their company.

After a long voyage over the sea, between sky and water, we arrived in New York. When I saw the tops of the huge

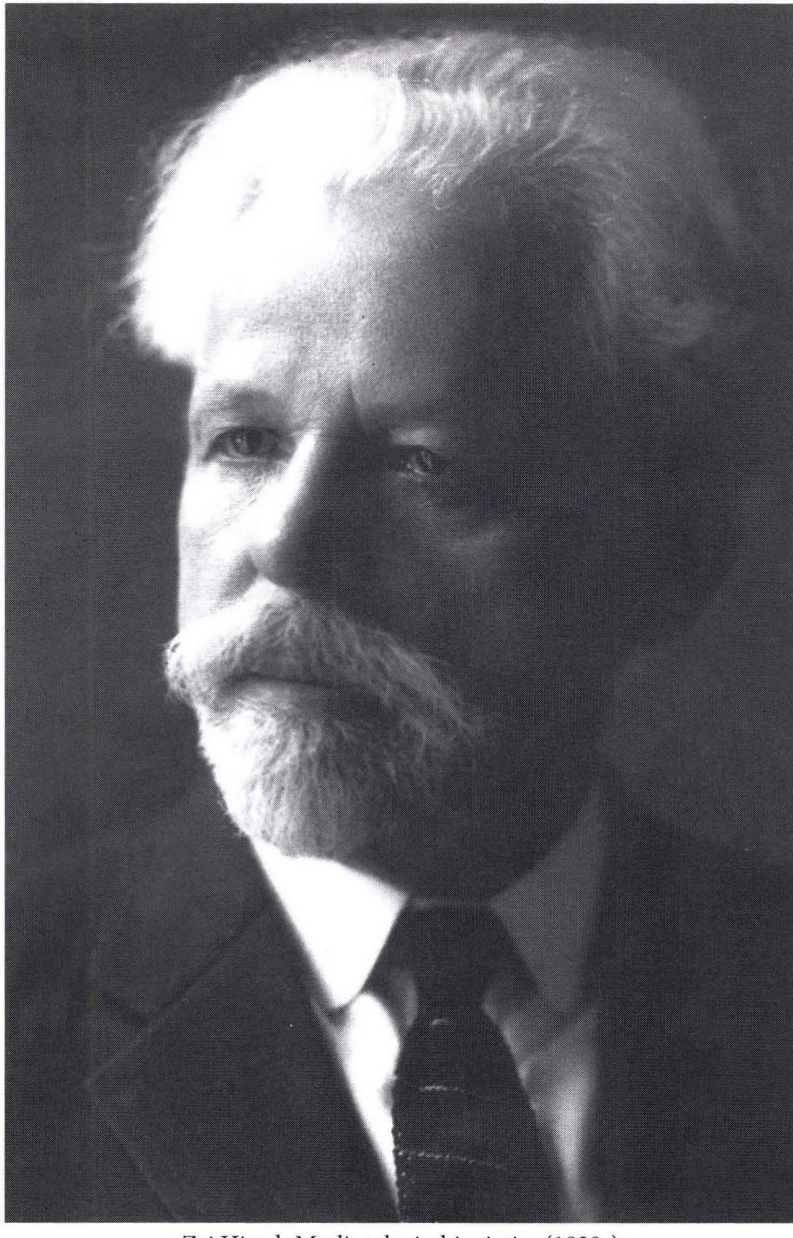
buildings, the 'sky scrapers', from far a mysterious feeling filled my heart. I now sensed that I have severed my ties with the land of my birth and that this great and bustling city which I see from afar is about to open a new stage in my life – the American stage. What will this stage be like? What has it in store for me? I looked at the approaching shore, at the Statue of Liberty as it gradually became visible through the fog – and searched for an answer to the question stirring in my mind...

As an immigrant I had to go through the last of the sections of hell awaiting us wanderers. I passed through the valley of tears, through Ellis Island. Here I got my last taste of conduct not unlike that of the Russian authorities. It being Sunday the immigrants were not allowed to disembark and the Jewish inspector did not let the passengers' relatives see their loved ones whom they had missed so much. My brother and son who had come to meet me were not allowed in as well. When I asked the inspector to give me permission to see my brother and son he answered as harshly as a Russian policeman. I could not restrain myself, I already sensed the atmosphere of free America, and gave him the answer he deserved. My impudence, *'chutzpah'*, surprised him and he started enquiring about me. Hearing my name he changed his manner completely, asked my forgiveness and allowed my brother and son to see me. However I did not comply till he gave the other passengers the right to meet their relatives.

The next day I left Ellis Island and came to New York. A new chapter in my life began.



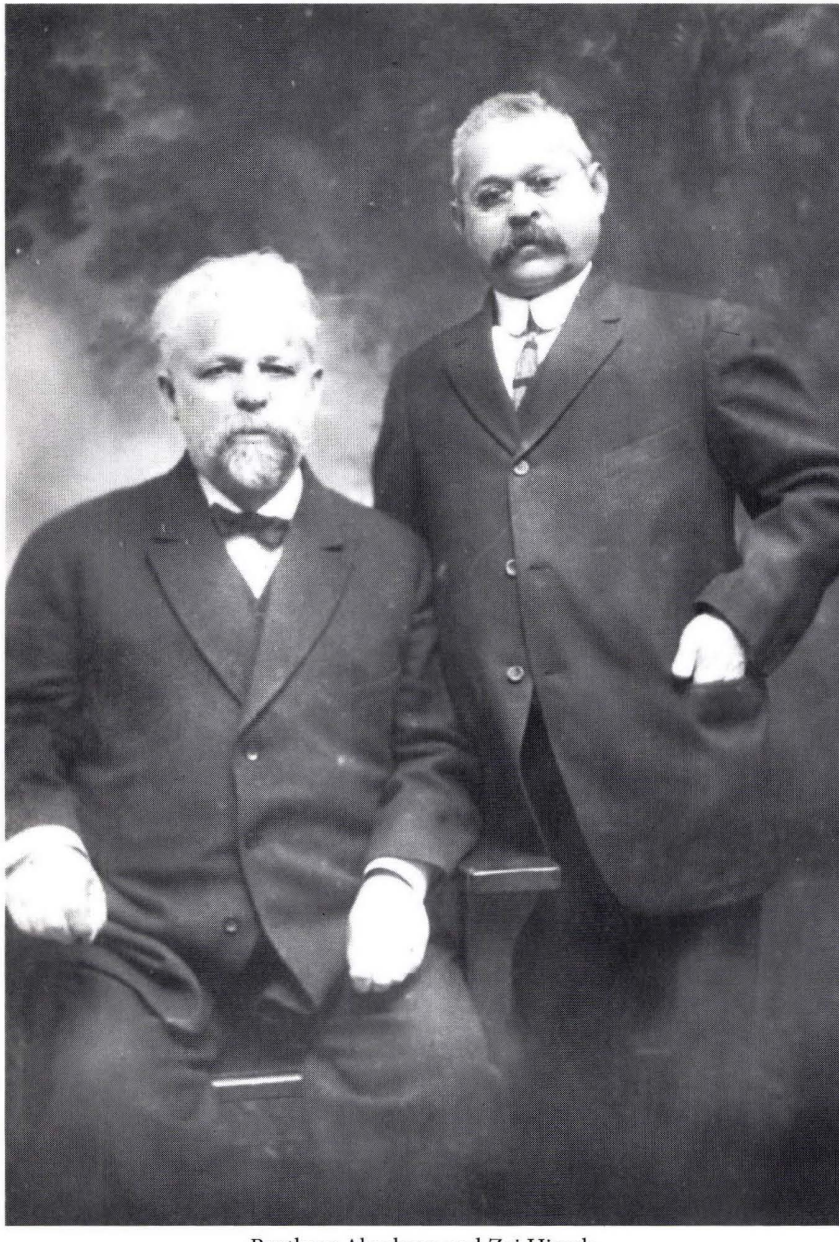
The Masliansky family in Yekaterinoslav, Russia, l892: Zvi Hirsch is in the center flanked by his son Pinchas (Philip) and his wife Yetta to the left, with daughters Fruma Gittel (Fanny) and Bertha to the right. Standing in the front are the younger daughters, Batya (Beatrice), left and Hannah (Anna), right.



Zvi Hirsch Masliansky in his sixties (1920s).



Zvi Hirsch Masliansky with his daughter Fanny.



Brothers Abraham and Zvi Hirsch.





Yeta and Zvi Hirsch in Tel Aviv, 1935.



Zvi Hirsch Masliansky in Tel Aviv, 1935.

America

Chapter 33

New York in 1895 was nothing like New York nowadays. Its population was only a quarter of what it is now; the number of Jews was 300,000. Brooklyn was a separate town. The Bronx had not yet been built, and 125th Street marked the end of the uptown area. Horse drawn wagons drove slowly along the boulevards, accompanied by the sound of the grooms' voices as they whipped the disheveled horses on their backs. There were yet no automobiles in the land. The streets were lit with pale gas lighting. Only Broadway was fortunate enough to have electric lighting. Above the boulevards small engines pulled the cars of the El [train], complete with their ear-screeching whistle and black smoke that covered the passengers faces with charcoal.

New York and Brooklyn were two separate cities, with two separate municipalities, two mayors, two police forces and two separate elections every year. Only one bridge, the old Brooklyn Bridge, connected the two cities. There were no tunnels or subways. When a resident of Brooklyn wanted to pay a visit to his friend who lived in New York, he would take a boat and cross the river. Going from New York to Brooklyn and from Brooklyn to New York was inter-city traveling in every sense of the word.

The two cities were united and joined together in but one sense, that which unites all human beings of every type and stature, that which levels the differences between great and

the small, rich and the poor, master and slave – death. As all the cemeteries were, and still are, situated in Brooklyn. And so when a man suggested to his friend that he move from crowded New York to spacious Brooklyn, he would get the following response:

"I am still young, the time for me to move to Brooklyn is yet to come on my last day..."

The lovely suburbs of Brooklyn such as Brownsville, East New York, Borough Park, Bensonhurst and the like were not yet in existence. Large swamps, deserted fields, barren rocks, parched hills and valleys, a low rickety wooden shack here and there, black goats at pasture and some dancing he-goats – these were the beginnings of the large affluent suburbs which were to serve as secure dwellings for hundreds of thousands of the children of Israel who transformed the wilderness, barren land into large and flourishing residential areas.

My brother and eldest son came to greet me when I disembarked from the ship, and brought me to their home in Brooklyn. The following day I took a boat to New York to see the Jewish neighborhoods, East Broadway and its environs and nearby streets. I immediately found myself in my natural habitat as I heard the sound of Yiddish and saw the Yiddish signs on all the shops on both the main streets of Canal and Grand.

I took special notice of the word *kosher* on the windows of butcher shops and restaurants. Indeed, that day I ate in a *kosher* restaurant for the first time in my life, i.e. in one with the word K*osher* inscribed on it in large letters. I have not seen anything like this in Berdichev, Vilna or any other Jewish city of the Diaspora. If a Jewish man in Vilna were to post a *kosher* sign on his butcher shop or restaurant people would be amazed and ask: "What is he trying to tell us, what else is new? Is it conceivable that a man of Israel would sell non-*kosher*

meat?"...

In those days, thirty years ago, East Broadway was given the Russian name of *East Broadviskaia Ulitze* and for a good reason, as the Russian language reigned supreme being the language of our brethren, the immigrants from Russia. Most of the *intelligentsia,* doctors, lawyers and former students, all spoke the language and were advocates of Russian nihilism and socialism. Yiddish was not yet a written language with a modern literature of its own as it is today. The Yiddish papers – starting with the oldest – the *Tagblatt* and its weekly supplement the *Yidishe Gazetn,* through the *Harold* with its weekly *Folksadvokat,* to the socialist organ *Abendblatt* with its *Arbeiter Zeitung* – were the spiritual source for all the Jewish population in the American Diaspora, and their combined circulation did not reach that of the smallest paper today. Literature, books were non existent. The veteran readers would satisfy themselves with the cheap pamphlets that appeared weekly, such as *Die Geheimnisse von die kaizerliche koenigliche Hoffen* (The Mysteries of the Courts of Kings and Emperors), *Yevgenie die fransozishe Kaizerin* (Eugenie Empress of France), *Yekaterina die Sweite mit Potyomkin* (Catherine the Second and Her Lover Potyomkin). It is not surprising that the educated, intelligent people of East Broadway stayed away from these pamphlets and adhered to Russian literature year after year, until they absorbed the American spirit, its language and literature. It is not easy to dissociate oneself from great literary masters like Turgeniev, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. And so a small colony of Russian *intelligentsia* was born in the Jewish neighborhoods of East Broadway and the adjacent streets.

The first visit I paid was to the publisher of the *Tagblatt*, Rabbi Kathriel Zvi Sarasohn. He received me cordially like an old and familiar acquaintance.

"I have known of you, Sir, for years," he told me, "I know of your work in Russia and Western Europe. To prove my point – here is a detailed report my paper gave about your departure from London en route to America. Welcome!"

Sarasohn's words encouraged me as I started out in this new land. Mr. Sarasohn was a pleasant and amiable person; he represented the true type of a fine and respectable member of our society, his home was open to all, and he received every man graciously. He introduced me to his sons, Ezekiel and Abraham Haim, and to his son in law Leon Kamaiky. We all entered the editorial office together where the editor, Yonah Paley, and his assistants greeted me.

The next morning, when I entered the editorial office an article set for print was presented to me, all full of my praise and laudation. The name of the article was "Reverend Doctor Masliansky." With my very own fingers I removed the word "Doctor" from among the set letters. The writers and set-up type workers looked at each other with amazement: "what kind of a strange person is this, who belittles his image..."

"Sirs", I said to them, "why do you bestow a crown that is not rightfully mine on me? I have no right to be called 'doctor'".

"These are the words", they answered, "of a 'greenhorn', you, sir, evidently do not know the ways of the land. We grant people the title 'doctor' every day, and they live a long life with this crown on their heads", at which point they named a number of "Reverend Doctors" who received their honorary titles from the press, and nobody 'opened their mouths and chirped...'

Indeed, had I known then how many delusional acts are preformed in America by people entitled "reverend" I would have removed those letters from the set up type as well, but it could no longer be undone. And so I kept that title and it has accompanied me through no will of my own all my days...

Dr. Moshe Mintz, one of the members of *BILU* and a veteran preacher on behalf of *Hibbat Zion*, published a weekly named *Der Recorder* at the time. He stood by me and helped me a great deal with his nationally inclined weekly.

Chapter 34

The papers announced that I was to deliver my first speech on the Saturday noon, July 11, at the *Beth Ha-Midrash Ha-Gadol* [The Great Synagogue]. Subject: Peace Overseas.

On Friday night I went to the abovementioned Synagogue for Sabbath prayers. The cantor and choir conducted a very pleasant service. And yet I was astonished by the announcement made by the *shamash* [sexton], of a type I have not heard in my entire life. Before the concluding prayer of *Aleinu* he stroke a leather pad with a small leather hammer and proclaimed in a strange voice: "Let no man say *Kaddish*. It is *Jahrzeit*."

I was astonished by this strange announcement and could not understand its nature. Why should no man say *Kaddish* [the mourner's prayer]? And what does it have to do with the marking of a *Jahrzeit* [the anniversary of the death of the beloved departed], and who is doing so? And if a man is marking a *Jahrzeit* why should he not say the mourner's prayer – the *Kaddish*?

All these queries were answered for me by a respectable elderly man from my hometown:

"This is the custom in America, and nowhere else, for it starts with 'business' and with 'business' it ends, and the spirit of 'business' prevails in all the institutions, the synagogues, the hospitals and even the cemeteries. When you have spent more time in America you will understand the nature of things."

"But explain to me, please, what the *Shamash*'s announcement means? What has 'business' to do with non-recited *Kaddish*?"

"Yes, my friend," the elderly man answered with a smile, "non-recited *Kaddish* prayers are a 'business' for the synagogue and especially for the *Shamash*. In America the Jews do not go to synagogue morning and evening, and only a small number, a limited quorum, come for *Schacharit* and *Arvit* [morning and evening prayers]. And who are those who do come? They are the mourners, and those who have a *Jahrzeit*; they come since they have to say *Kaddish*. *Kaddish* and *Jahrzeit* are the pillars of the synagogues of America, even of the Reform temples. The customs pertaining to the dead cast fear on the living and they fulfill them with greater care than they do the entire Torah. Every mourner is, during his twelve-month period, a source of income for the synagogue and the *Shamash*. But the main source comes from the people marking a *Jahrzeit* who come to synagogue once or twice a year. They pay the synagogues handsomely for an *Aliyah* [for being called up to the Torah], and reward the *Shamash* for a memorial prayer. When a *Jahrzeit* observer comes to the synagogue the Shamash shuts up all the mourners so that the right to say *Kaddish* is reserved for the man marking a *Jahrzeit* alone. And now you, my townsmen the greenhorn, tell me what do the sexton's announcement and the non-recited *Kaddish* prayer have to do with 'business'. When you spend more time in America, you will become wiser and understand to what extent death revives and sustains all of American Jewry. You must have heard of the large 'orders' and their 'lodges' that count their members by the hundreds and thousands. These are useful institutions that would have harbored much good for the entire people of Israel had they possessed the living spirit of Judaism. Unfortunately they are great only in quantity and nil in quality as they too live on death and its customs, on things such as land, cemeteries, tombstones, fences, fees for the mourners during the *shivah* [seven days of mourning] and

these issues fill their lives completely."

Leaving the *Beth Ha-Midrash Ha-Gadol* with my good and clever townsman, I was shocked by what my eyes saw. Outside, at the entrance to the synagogue, stood a group of Jewish youngsters and sold Jewish newspapers. The boys half naked, bare footed, rushed around the people leaving the synagogue crying out in joyous youthful voices: "Two papers for a cent!"

Passers by and some people who just emerged from the synagogue bought papers in public while the cantor's voice was still echoing from inside the synagogue, 'The Israelite people shall keep the Sabbath'...

On Saturday afternoon at the scheduled time I went to deliver my first speech in the *Beth Ha-Midrash Ha-Gadol* [Great Synagogue]. When I reached the corner of Grand and Norfolk Streets, where the synagogue was situated, a great crowd was standing ahead of me, and I could not take one step forward. A multitude of people, old and young, men and women, were standing packed closely together and making their way toward the entrance of the synagogue. The crowd reminded me of the Sabbath of the *Hanukah* festival in London when I spoke at the New Synagogue. Here too, in New York, like in London, policemen helped me enter the synagogue.

A feeling of love and gratitude to America and its institutions overwhelmed me at the touch of the policemen. At that moment I recalled my contact with the Russian policemen who interrupted my sermons and pulled me out of the synagogues in Odessa, Kishinev, Lodz etc. with savage cruelty. Tears of joy streamed from my eyes as I sensed the difference between the policemen of New York and those of Kishinev. The latter, full of revengeful fury like ferocious animals, pulled me out of the synagogue, the former, respectful and courteous, escorted me into the synagogue. Light and darkness, bondage and freedom – how great the difference! And my lips whispered: "Blessed

are you, America, and blessed is your freedom."

I ascended the platform with great effort. As I looked at the dense crowd that filled the *Beth Midrash*, including the women's gallery, completely, I felt inspired. On their faces I could see the expectation to hear something new, something extraordinary. The synagogue was packed and yet quiet and still. Four thousand pairs of eyes were fixed upon me. All this ran through me like an electric current and elevated me higher than my usual state of mind when ascending the pulpit. How amazing. I have been accustomed to address crowds of people in synagogues and great halls in different cities and different countries, but I have never been in so exalted a mood as when I delivered my first sermon in America at the *Beth Ha-Midrash Ha-Gadol.*

At that time I felt that a new period in my life had begun. I sensed that this land of America, refuge to a quarter of a million of the children of Israel, was to become a safe haven and a desirable, good and broad land for millions of our brethren wandering in their masses from the poverty stricken lands of Europe. I sensed that my first speech would enable me to put an end to my own exile. My heart prophesied that I could establish my own home here in New York, a city destined for greatness, as I had found here a new sphere for my work, a new field to till. It was a deserted and abandoned field, lacking order and focus, with no spirit, no knowledge and no will. The Jewish immigrants coming from different lands, speaking different languages and practicing different customs were like the dead in prophet Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones.

With a loud and powerful voice that caused all my limbs to tremble, I started my first sermon by quoting our sages of blessed memory (tractate *Brachot* 58a [of the Babylonian Talmud]): "'If one sees a crowd of Israelites, he should say: 'Blessed is He who discerneth secrets'. If he sees a crowd of

heathens, he should say: 'Your mother shall be ashamed,' etc." This profound saying served as the foundation upon which I wove various images of the life of the Jewish people in exile. I spoke for two straight hours during which I led my audience through different states of mind, causing them to weep and to laugh, to be sad and be happy.

After the sermon the audience expressed its appreciation with heartfelt blessings of *Yeshar Koah* [all strength to thee], many embraced and kissed me and shook my hand with much love.

At that time I felt my fate was cast, I am to stay in America. I am a free citizen; fear of the policemen shall no longer terrify me. From now on I shall no longer speak in allegorical terms, my tongue shall know no fetters, it shall be free to speak according to its own will, not to follow that of others.

The next day articles in praise of my talent were published in the Jewish and foreign press, including even the *Deutsche Staats Zeitung* and the *New York World*. Soon I was asked to come to various cities to address their audiences. The first city to invite me was Baltimore, at the initiative of the group of veteran of Ho*vevei Zion* who were living there at the time.

I was in no hurry to leave New York. I wanted to learn more about the nature and character of the new life in this new land. I delivered dozens of sermons in various synagogues some of them large like the synagogue on Eldridge Street, the synagogue of the Kalwarie community and the like.

Wherever I went the large signs of *Kosher* on all establishments dealing with foodstuffs, and the title of "The Workingman's Friend" on all saloons, upset me. It seems that of the ten *kabs* [measures] of *Kashruth* and friendship to the workingman that descended to the world, nine were taken by New York and one by the rest of the world ...

Chapter 35

When I was still in Russia I read a description in the Hebrew papers *Ha-Tzfira* and *Ha-Melitz* of the grand reception the New York Jewish Community gave in honor of its first Rabbi, the Rabbi of Vilna, the Great Rabbi Ya'acov Yoseph who was appointed Chief Rabbi of New York. This great Rabbi was well known all over Lithuania as a brilliant student of *Halacha* [religious Law] and an extremely talented interpreter of *Aggadah* [homiletic interpretation]. In his praise the people gave him the name of Rabbi Yankale the Sharp Minded. Bringing Rabbi Ya'acov Yoseph over was no easy task for the community of New York as it meant removing him from his seat of honor in Vilna, "The Jerusalem of Lithuania", to the newly established community of New York. He received a grand regal reception when he disembarked. The representatives of synagogues and congregations came to greet him. Hundreds of carriages (there were no motor cars at the time), and tens of thousands of people escorted him to the living quarters prepared for him and him family. Many kissed his coat tails. They carried him from the carriage to the house with tears in their eyes. Not all were fortunate enough to see him and greet him personally. Legends of his greatness in Torah and wisdom started to spread. The reception for the Chief Rabbi was carried out in American style, with great pomp, loud announcements and such tumult that the Christians started to take interest in the 'Chief Rabbi' since the English press published articles in his praise.

Yet, like all sensational movements that start with fire and tumult and end in cold and freezing, so has been the tragic fate of the great Rabbi been. His aura and glory soon faded. The papers started to mock and ridicule him. Suddenly it turned out that all 'The Holy Beasts' that rose in his honor with 'great tumult' did so only for their own honor and benefit. They were not concerned with the Rabbi but with the business of *Kashruth* [dietary laws]; they did not need his knowledge of Torah and his wisdom but rather his signature of authorization – *hechsher* - guaranteeing the ritual cleanliness of meat and foodstuffs. The pernicious cry of the Israelites in the desert 'if only we had meat to eat' burst out with vehemence, and seals of authorization, *hechshers*, butcher shops and slaughter houses bearing the sign "authorized by the chief Rabbi", sprung all over the Jewish neighborhoods in the East Side of New York. Even today, twenty years after the death of the Chief Rabbi one can still find these authorizations – *Hechsher* – on the windows of a number of commercial establishments dealing in *Kosher* commodities.

The Chief Rabbi was shocked at the outrages preformed around him and in his name. He realized he had made a mistake when he decided to trade Vilna for New York. In his heart he sensed the disgraceful acts carried out by his entourage. He started to feel and understand, but it took some time. He could no longer save the situation. His great heart burst inside him and he lost the feeling of his limbs one by one.

It is in this deplorable state that I found him lying in bed, lonely and neglected. When I introduced myself he sat up on the bed, embraced and kissed me as he looked at me with eyes full of tears. Using no words his gloomy look said: "Woe to me that you have seen me in such a state!"

At that very moment I recalled the saying of our sages: 'How is a scholar regarded by the ignorant? - At first like a golden

ladle; if he converses with him, like a silver ladle; if he [the scholar] derives benefit from him, like an earthen ladle, which once broken cannot be mended.' So was the fate of the great Rabbi. The communal workers of New York and their patrons made him into a 'fragile potsherd.' The Rabbi lay in his bed ill and despondent and the members of his household lived in depravation and poverty.

I had no quiet, no rest. I did all I could. In my sermons I alerted public opinion to the terrible state of the sick Rabbi. I also attended a number of meetings of the communal workers on the East Side and something was indeed done to alleviate the suffering and pain of the great man.

"'How dull-witted are those people'" I exclaimed in one of my sermons, quoting the saying of our sages, "'who stand up [in difference] to the Scroll of Torah, but do not stand up [in difference] to a great personage'. You respect the Torah scroll, pour a lot of money out of your pockets for synagogues, and do not concern yourself with the plight of this great man of Israel!"

The last days of the Chief Rabbi were terrible and tragic indeed, and his death and funeral were even worse. The funeral turned into a national disaster, an insult to the people, and an anti-Semitic riot in the land of freedom, in America.

"The chief Rabbi is gone", "The great Rabbi has departed", "Rabbi Ya'acov Yoseph is no longer with us" – so announced large headlines in all the newspapers of New York on Wednesday, the 24 day of the month of *Av* [Aug. 15], 1902. The distressing information spread rapidly all over the city. Thousands and tens of thousands of people from New York and the nearby towns streamed to the East Side, to the home of the Chief Rabbi, to pay their last respects to the great deceased and fulfill the ancient dictum [based on the names of three sequential portions in the book of Leviticus]: 'After a

man's death of his holiness do speak.' All the streets were full of people, a live wall of human beings stood upright, no one could leave or enter.

"People, children of Israel" my heart cried inside me, "where were you yesterday and the day before, where were you a month ago and a year ago, when the Rabbi needed help and companionship? Had but one percent among you come at that time, you would have had no need to crowd together for a funeral now..."

It was with great effort that the police managed to maintain order among the mourners, and to make way for the coffin and hundreds of carriages. A large group of pupils from *Talmud Torah* schools walked in front of the coffin reciting Psalms. The procession followed by thousands of mourners flowed through East Broadway to Grand street, all walked in silence, their backs bent, their faces darkened with grief.

When the procession arrived at Hoe's Factory where hundreds of German workers were employed, suddenly, as though an earthquake started, an avalanche of stones, wood planks, mud and mire poured down on the coffin and on the heads of the mourners from the windows of the factory. The crowds became as agitated as a stormy sea, and within a minute hundreds of glass panes in the windows of the factory were smashed. The crowd stormed the factory, broke its doors and a bloody fight ensued between the Jewish multitude and the factory workers. There were many wounded on both sides till the policemen pushed their way in, arrested the culprits and calmed the agitated masses. The mourners then went on their way to the Grand Ferry towards Brooklyn.

Thousands and myriads filled the cemetery. The coffin was lowered into the ground with great respect and in total silence. The entire crowd wept out loud upon hearing the words of the speakers, who overwhelmed them with their eulogies. I was

one of the speakers.

Just this did my heart cry out within me: "Where have all of you been when the great Rabbi was still with us, alive and tormented...?"

Chapter 36

I found Jewish education in New York at the end of the 19th century in a state of complete chaos and lack of order. There were more than a quarter of a million Jews in New York, but there were no Hebrew schools. I found only two *Talmud Torah* schools: *Machzikei Talmud Torah* on East Broadway, and a second, smaller one, uptown. The number of pupils in both those schools was less than a thousand.

A sub-committee of the so-called "Education Committee" invited me to visit the *Talmud Torah* School on East Broadway. The teachers were decent old style *melamdim*, with a partial background of *Haskalah* [Enlightenment, modern Jewish learning]. Their minds were cluttered with Bible and Hebrew grammar, a few of them even knew Talmud as well, but they all lacked order and method in their teaching. The principal was advanced in years, knew German perfectly and was well acquainted with Mendelsohn's translation of the Pentateuch. He therefore was very strict in ensuring that German be the language of instruction at least 50% of the time. The style of the newspapers was similar then. They did not know pure Yiddish, nor were they interested in knowing it. I felt sorry for the young Jewish pupils of America who were forced to bear the yoke of three languages. Till three o'clock in the afternoon the children studied the language of the land – English – in the Public Schools. From 4 P.M. till 8 in the evening the children were tortured in two foreign languages – Hebrew and pigeon German together. Had the teachers translated the Hebrew

texts into Yiddish, which they heard from their parents at home, the children would have rushed to listen. German as an instruction language for Jewish children in America - this was a true folly.

I questioned the pupils and was surprised to find out that they read Hebrew well according to all the rules of vocalization. The principal supervised the teachers and they supervised the children less they, God Forbid, exchange a certain usage of a vowel – *shevah nach* (*quiescens*) - for its alternative – the *shevah na* (mobile) – or mix a *degesh forte* with a *dagesh lenis*. They guarded the laws of the ultimate and penultimate accent like the apple of their eye. The children's minds were burdened with these pedant grammatical details that robbed them daily of one valuable hour of study after the other. When I asked the children what they had been studying, asked them to explain a story form the Torah [Pentateuch] to me, they answered mechanically in broken German and did not know what they were talking about.

The following fact is worth recording and remembering, as it illustrates the extremes reached in this pedantic observation of correct reading and rules of grammatical vocalization. We are told of four Jewish scholars, well known in the field of Hebrew Literature, each in his specific branch, who failed to be appointed as teachers in the *Talmud Torah*. The principal and "Education Committee" had no idea whom they were disqualifying, and did so for imperfect reading of Hebrew. The first was the learned Zossnitz who was failed over a light vowel; the scholar and writer Dubsewitz was disqualified over a *dagesh forte*; the poet M. M. Dolitsky stumbled on ultimate and penultimate pronunciation; the story of the forth, which brings us to both tears and laughter, is that of the great grammarian Moshe Reichersohn disqualified over a *shevah nach*...

That is indeed 'smallness of mind' [*Katnut de Mochin*], to use the Kabbalistic phrase.

When the scandal became known in the Hebrew circles the directors of the uptown *Talmud Torah* corrected their mistake and appointed the two older scholars, Zossnitz and Reichersohn as teachers.

Where then did the tens of thousands of Jewish children in New York study? Who were the educators of the new generation? There were only two *Talmud Torah* schools, no Hebrew Schools what so ever, only few old style *Hadarim*, and yet the children of Israel did study Torah, but the under a reversed system. It was not the children who went to the Torah, it was rather the Torah that came to them. It came to their homes. Decrepit old men, weaklings recently arrived from overseas, who lacked the strength to go from door to door with merchandise, peddled Torah instead. Equipped with a prayer book and Pentateuch under their arm they would go from street to street, knock on doors, spend fifteen to twenty minutes in each place teaching one or two children. They would read a bit of Hebrew or translate a verse from the *chomash* [Pentateuch], and then proceed to other homes to teach other children Torah and the wage thereof was a quarter or a half of a dollar a week.

It is not difficult to imagine how beneficial this leaning is for a child who just came back from public school and is suddenly placed in the hands of an old feeble Jew, speaking to him in a mixture of Hebrew and Yiddish, neither of which he understands. The child, naturally confused, regards his teacher with fear and his mind does not apprehend what this strange Jew is talking about and what he wants from him. Once he gets used to this instructor he mocks him and his teaching.

A story is told about a teacher-peddler of this type who sat in an apartment on Henry Street in the middle of the day as

the children were leaving school. He was instructing a pupil in a separate room, when suddenly the child's father heard the *melamed* cry out "*Gewald*, Help!" The master of the house opened the door of the room and was shocked to see his son, his beloved child, holding his teacher's beard and pulling at it with his two strong hands.

"My son," the father scolded, "what are you doing? Stop that!"

The sobbing child answered:

"Believe me, Papa, he started..."

While every man of Israel who still has a spark of religion and national feeling in his heart would bemoan the notoriously chaotic Hebrew education, he would also be totally shocked when seeing and hearing what takes place in the public meetings for the youngsters held in various halls. This was the notorious period of destruction when balls took place on *Yom Kippur* [the Day of Atonement], when blasphemy and curses were directed at the Heavens and a furious war against religion and tradition was waged. Ardent speakers 'set their mouths against heaven' and desecrated everything holy with words of contempt and vituperation, both orally and in writing. One of the newspapers, of extreme liberal inclinations, would publish a series of articles on Saturdays, exposing the lack of modesty of our Mothers – Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. The articles were full of venom, written with hair splitting left wing folly and nonsense.

And the Orthodox of the left considered this foul spring to be a fresh source of water to quench the public...

One Saturday afternoon I sat deeply observed in conversation with Bucanski (alias Ben Porath), editor of *The Harold* and the *Folksadvokat* at the time, and with the poet Yitzhak Rabinowitz of Kovna, who was full of enthusiasm, devotion and ardent love for our people and tradition. Bucanski was

not a sentimental person, but rather a rationalist, very learned and well versed in a number of literatures. As we sat there the bell suddenly rang, the door opened and two young people entered:

"Which one of you," they both asked impertinently together, "is the preacher Masliansky?"

"It is I," I answered, "What do you want?"

"The Socialist Party sent us. We have a letter for you. Read it and give us your answer."

The letter and the address were written in red ink. It was an invitation for me to enter in a public debate about God and nationalism with one of the socialist speakers. An admission fee is to be collected and the profits awarded to the winner of the debate. The letter was signed by B.F.*

This foolish letter made a bad impression on me. Bucanski started kidding with the members of the delegation. With his clothing and grown beard he looked like a simple middle class homeowner.

"Tell me, my children," he asked with supposed innocence, "what is Socialism? Explain it to me, so I may join your party."

The youngsters smiled impudently, as though saying: "what do you have to do with Socialism? You will be a benighted believer till the day you die." But Bucanski would not let go, and continued to address them in his innocent tone, bringing up issues as blunt as sword-thrusts, till they started to realize that he knew and understood more than they did.

Suddenly one of them saw a periodical on the table featuring Bucanski's photograph with the caption "Editor of *The Daily Harold*". He showed the picture to his friend and the two left

* Benjamin Feigenbaum (1860-1932), Socialist lecturer, agitator and contributor to the Yiddish socialist press in Europe and in America (since l891); known for his anti-religious views (translator's note).

immediately without waiting for my answer. The debate, of course, did not take place.

Chapter 37

The first city to invite me was Baltimore. A group of *Hovevei Zion*, young enthusiastic people, completely devoted to the national ideal, met me at the train station. Among them were the President, Reuven Aharonsohn, his brother in law P. Mervis, Dr. Fox, Horowitz and Shneur Abel.

I immediately felt at home, surrounded by brothers in spirit. I could hardly believe I was in America. The atmosphere was totally national, like in Vilna or Bialystok. I visited the public institutions, and the synagogues where I met the Rabbis – a pure Jewish spirit prevailed everywhere, the spirit of ancient tradition and its positive qualities. The Orthodox like the Freidenwald and Levy families, Rabbi Dr. Schaffer, Rabbi Tanchum Silberman and others were worthy even of Vilna. Torah, greatness and good breeding reigned supreme in Baltimore. It was for a good reason that I named it "Bialystok of America" at the time (the end of the l890s).

A wonderful person I met there was Rabbi Dr. Benjamin Szold, father of the national worker Henrietta Szold. Torah and wisdom, humility and kindness characterized him. I very much enjoyed our discussions and the time we spent together. In those days he was working on his commentary for the Book of Job. He was old, but young in spirit with a heart full of love for our people and tradition.

His wife and gentle daughters were no different. They lived a patriarchal Jewish life, a life of love for the people and being loved by them.

* * *

I experienced an interesting episode on *Yom Kippur* [the Day of Atonement] of 1895. I was staying at the home of Rabbi Aharon Aharonsohn, the father of the President of *Hovevei Zion*. Rabbi Aharon was middle aged, a great scholar, and a kind hearted and moderate man. He was God fearing, credulous but far from hypocrisy and fanaticism.

I had come to New York from Russia, a land where dark censorship prevails, and finding a free Yiddish press, I devoured it. I especially read material on economics including the Socialist monthly *Die Zukunft* that was publishing *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx in Yiddish at the time.

I came back from the Synagogue on *Yom Kippur* Eve. I was exhausted after delivering the sermon that followed the *Kol Nidrei* prayer, and so retired to my room. Rabbi Aharon was sitting at the dining room table reading a book by the light of the *Yom Kippur* candle. My briefcase was open on a chair near the table, with the *Zukunft* on top. I then saw Rabbi Aharon rising, approaching my books, picking up the *Zukunft* and glancing at it curiously. He had probably never seen books like that in Yiddish. As he turned the pages of the monthly he came across the sequel of *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx. From this point on he did not let the *Zukunft* out of his hand, returned to his seat and continued reading the periodical. A few minutes had passed and I suddenly hear the singsong tone of Rabbi Aharon, reading the article as though reciting a page of the Talmud. His voice was silent and pleasant and his face reflected great enjoyment. He lifted his head, patted his wrinkled forehead with his hand and hummed to himself: "very nice, the words of a sage, like a kiss on the lips!"

I took the greatest pleasure in this wonderful psychological scene: a God fearing scholar devouring the words of Karl Marx, not knowing who he is and what he stands for. I felt reassured

since I had been apprehensive previously: what would Rabbi Aharon say upon finding the *Zukunft* on *Yom Kippur* Eve in the briefcase of a "national preacher" who had just delivered a sermon on the *Kol Nidrei* prayer in an Orthodox Synagogue? Who knows what impression this would make on such a pure hearted scholarly man?

And here was Rabbi Aharon, sitting and studying the great and complex issue of labor and capital zealously till he finished the entire article.

All would have ended well, but Satan had his way and after Marx came a foolish and impudent article by B. F.*, titled "What is the Day of Atonement". It was full with blasphemous words, brutally offensive to the feelings of all Jews loyal to their religion. When Rabbi Aharon started to read this article his face turned red, and he rose angrily from his chair, threw the *Zukunft* to the floor, and a great sigh emerged from his body as though a snake had bitten him. I was very upset to witness this scene. My sleep was disturbed and I found no rest all night long. I said to myself: "Would you have been here, you radical writers, so called socialist orators, who consider war against The Most High and the throwing of mud on religion to be 'the education of the people'. Had you seen, as I did, the mental state of this innocent, pure hearted scholar as he eagerly absorbed the wise words of Marx, and his pain and sorrow at the vituperation of that venomous article; had you seen and witnessed all this you would have grown in wisdom and known how to instruct the people with knowledge; you would have realized that economic science is not desecration of religion and of everything holy. Our prophets vehemently rebuked the oppressors and embezzlers in the name of God, fighting for the oppressed and down trodden with the holy

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* Benjamin Feigenbaum, cf. above Ch. 36 p.252

zeal of religion, and taking the case of the wretched at the city gate..."

This episode ended with a fine note. I woke up in the morning ready to hear the rebuke of Rabbi Aharon for the rotten merchandize he had found in my briefcase. But none of this happened. He greeted me cordially as he had on previous days. Indeed, this is true tolerance!

Baltimore and I were pleased with each other: the people of the city were glad to hear words delivered in their own language they had missed for so long, and I was glad to address an understanding and attentive audience. The direction set by my words led to action: the number of *Hovevei Zion* in Baltimore increased many fold; the *Talmud Torah* schools grew in strength; the national spirit was revived among the young people and the demand for Hebrew teachers rose.

I spent a pleasant evening with a select group of Baltimore residents. They expressed their gratitude to me with a lovely Hebrew plaque. I said a heart filled goodbye to them and traveled to Chicago.

Chapter 38

New, large, wild and primitive - that is how Chicago, the second largest city in America, capital of the West, appeared to me in the l898. Geographically Chicago is larger than New York but its population is smaller, numbering less than half of that of New York. The streets and parks are well planned. The rooms inside the houses are large and spacious, but on the outside the buildings lack grace and aesthetic taste. Everything is wild, bearing the stamp of a small town, except for Michigan Boulevard, the large and beautiful street along the Michigan River, which reminds one of Riverside Drive in New York. The other streets are not paved properly and are not lit at night. The suburbs are large and sparsely built. The newspapers report incidents of robbery and murder daily, like a savage town in Asia. Even the policemen fear for their lives when they stand on guard in the distant sections of the city. The reason for this savagery and lack of order is to be found in the early days of the great metropolis, as its rapid growth outdid the capacity to maintain order and public peace. Chicago had already become a railroad junction for all of America, East and West.

The economic situation of the tens of thousands of Jews in Chicago is quite good. Most of them came from Russia after the Pogroms of the l880s that followed the murder of Czar Alexander II by revolutionaries and the ascent of Alexander III, the foe of the Jews, to the throne. Minister Ignatiev issued the notorious May Laws at the time, which undermined the

situation of tens of thousands of Israel who had no choice but to pick up the wandering staff and go as far as America. Some of these wretched wanderers found a home in Chicago. Their aptitude for commerce and industry enabled them to improve their situation and within several years they established communities, large synagogues, *Talmud Torah* schools for their children and "lodges" for different "orders". I was very pleased with my exiled brethren, who had recently left my benighted homeland, Russia. It took them a short time to built their life anew in the great city: they have their Rabbis, cantors and other religious functionaries, they even have a Hebrew Literary Society led by the learned journalist Peretz Wiernik, formerly one of the editors of the *Courier*. Hebraists in Chicago – as pleasing as 'grapes in the wilderness!' –I used these words of prophet Hosea to express my astonishment in the first sermon I delivered at the synagogue of the Russian Jews.

The dean of the Chicago Rabbis was Rabbi A. Lesser. He was over sixty at the time and yet full of youth, clever, a very energetic communal worker and a very patient man. I spent a lot of time with him and he helped me plant the seed of the national idea on the virgin soil of new Chicago.

'I have labored and found.' I found many middle class homeowners with a knowledge of Torah, who adhered to the ancestral customs and followed tradition in their homes, in the education of their children, in the observance of Sabbath and holidays and in the establishment of charitable institutions. All this in new and wild Chicago! I still remember some by name – Schulman and Kaplan, fathers of the Zionist communal workers of those names, who founded the Zionist Order *Abirei Zion*; the Horwich brothers, one of whom was a Zionist orator and the other – a diligent communal worker; Mr. Nathan – a rich Jew, kind in heart and spirit, generous

supporter of every good and charitable cause and benefactor of widows and orphans. He was the founder of the Chicago orphanage, which was named The Nathan Orphanage after him. The fate of this benefactor was very tragic and is worth recording for generations to come:

His gentle, kindhearted wife was as generous as he was. They did not have children, but adopted a number of their relatives' children and brought them up as their own. They were both handsome people and had many good qualities. Their home was always open to the wretched and downtrodden, and they especially helped the elderly and the orphans, establishing a home for the latter and generously supporting the old age home of Chicago. And so they lived a modest and quiet life, loving and being loved by their fellow men. They raised and married off their adopted children. During the decades I visited Chicago frequently and always enquired about this lovely couple.

Ten years had elapsed without my visiting Chicago, and then, a few years ago, I was invited to the city to reinforce the federation of charitable institutions, I asked Z.B. Kamaiko, one of the communal workers in Chicago, who had been my friend since the days of our youth, to visit the various charitable institutions with me, so I should know what to say about them and what to emphasize.

We visited The Nathan Orphanage and found it satisfactory. Leaving the institution I recalled the charming couple that had established it.

"How are those two angels in human form that built this great institution?" I asked my friend.

"Don't you know what happened to them?" Kamiako answered with a question of his own and was silent.

"What happened to them?" I asked anxiously.

"It should not befall us, my friend. They suffered a terrible

and tragic end. Mr. Nathan died a few years ago and as for the miserable widow – you will soon see."

We entered the old age home. On the first floor in a small clean room I found the widow Mrs. Nathan. She seemed like Naomi turned *Mara* [Bitter]. She recognized me immediately, rose and asked me with a sad smile:

"How is my old friend?"

I did not answer. Tears chocked my throat.

She felt it, put her hand lightly on my shoulder, as she said the following wise and courageous words to me:

"I am surprised at you, Mr. Masliansky, a man like you who preaches to the people, strengthens its spirit and encourages it to embrace life, hope and struggle, sobbing suddenly. What happened? You have found me a widow in the old age home. I am happy here. I have my own room and I want for nothing. I am better off than my friends, the poor old ladies who find shelter in this house. Their present situation is a bitter one, and their past too is dark and gloomy with no ray of light. That is not my plight. True, I am a widow now, poor and lonely, but my past is rich and bright. Look at the pictures on the walls of my small room. This is the picture of my dear husband, may he rest in peace, and here is the picture of the Orphanage that we founded and built. Here are the large silver candlesticks; I still have them and I still light Sabbath candles in them. True, my good husband has passed away, our fortune was lost, evil people surrounded us with lies and deceit. But I have not lost my courage. I am alive, and finding shelter in an institution my husband and I have supported. Blessed be the Lord who has not withheld his steadfast kindness from me!"

We looked at each other in surprise, amazed by the immense spirit of this great and gentle woman.

Chapter 39

I had no personal acquaintance with the Reform Movement. I had heard about it but not seen it, so to speak. I read a lot about the Reform Movement in the nineteenth century including the biographies of its founders: Holdheim, Geiger, Einhorn etc. I strived to understand the struggle in the camp of Israel during the initial stage of the movement's growth, the arguments that were raised for and against it. I was aware of the struggle Rabbi Rephael Hirsch waged against it with all his might and soul. In the 1880's the great author Peretz Smolenskin came out against these 'masters of prayer,' as he named them, in his periodical *Ha-Shachar* with all his national fervor. I knew all this full well. But reading and hearing are as far from seeing, as theory is from practice. And we are not to judge a matter by hearsay alone.

In Chicago I had the opportunity to see Reform Judaism as it really was. I got to know its Rabbis, saw them at work and behind the pulpit, studied their 'Prayer Books', and listened to the music of the organ accompanied by a women's choir. I must truthfully admit that all these phenomena, complete with their external glamour, made a terrible impression on me. Grey temples with no devotees to pray in them; learned Rabbis with no true sense of the Torah; 'Prayer Books' without prayers; music without a Jewish tone – Jews devoid of Judaism. Zion and Jerusalem were eradicated from the prayers that were recited almost completely in English, while the 1% that miraculously survived in Hebrew within the skimpy prayer

book seemed weird and strange to the congregants, since most of them had no knowledge of Hebrew what so ever, and Hebrew letters seemed to them like Chinese or Japanese characters. The original verse of the *Shema* or *Kedushah* prayers was not recited by the congregation but came trilled from the mouths of the Christian singers accompanied by the organ. As though the skimpy size of the translated prayer book was not enough, the Rabbi had to announce before each and every prayer: turn to page so and so. A chill of 40 degrees below zero, a true Siberian chill, prevailed in the Temple during services. There was no warm feeling, no pouring out of the soul, no eye shining with a spark of prayer to a living God, no indication of spiritual elevation, not even in the prayers of the cantor; The service was quiet, cold, monotonous and moribund from beginning to end, frozen, cold, dead.

The reader can easily imagine my mood as I went, for the first time in my life to pray the **Sabbath prayers** in the synagogues **on Sunday**; the synagogue bore the name "Sinai", the name of the Holy Mount, the mountain God had chosen to dwell upon, and from which peak to bestow the Sabbath on the world. And the Sinai Synagogue is closed on the Sabbath Day...

How great the disgrace and immense the pain to see a faith four thousand years old committing suicide and selling its soul to endear itself to its wayward daughter so that she say 'how fair you are'; that very daughter who suckled from her breasts and finally bit her nipples to bloodshed, and the blood is still flowing...

Good Heavens! How distorted must a heart be to substitute the Sabbath for Sunday, only a fool would not understand that work precedes rest, a man tired of his labor is in need of rest. And so have we been commanded: 'Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath.'

Placing rest before work is madness indeed!

It is self evident that the change was but a spiteful action brought about by the wayward daughter: "You, mother, were commanded to rest on the Seventh Day, and so I, to bring about your fierce anger, shall rest on Sunday..." Till this day there are hundreds of thousands of Christians who cannot accept the strange idea of placing rest before labor and therefore observe the Sabbath day. And here, in Chicago, the Temple of 'Sinai' has replaced the Sabbath with Sunday!

These thoughts pierced my mind and burnt my heart as I witnessed 'the second Sabbath of the Diaspora' for the first time.

After the service at the Temple I had the honor of being asked to report to the Reform Rabbi, the great scholar Emil G. Hirsch. He was a young man at the time, handsome and strong, a great scholar and an excellent speaker. He was extremely knowledgeable in Judaic studies, proficient in Bible, a connoisseur of the Talmud and spoke fine and fluent Hebrew, which was the language we spoke to each other. The man had a sense of humor and appreciated a good joke. Yet all these fine qualities of his increased my feeling of animosity towards the Reform movement and its supporters even more. "How does he find the service in the Temple and its order, Sir," Hirsch asked me, "it seems to me that this is the first time he has visited a Reform Temple. Tell me the truth, the entire truth: what impression has all this made on you?"

"My dear Doctor," I answered, "you have asked a difficult question. To tell the truth is my duty as a human being. And yet I cannot do so from a moral point of view. I am your guest, Sir, and *derech eretz* [proper deportment] preceded the Torah. My impressions are still fresh, so I have not yet clarified them to myself fully. I am seeing this type of Judaism for the first time and cannot pass judgment on it. There is only one thing

I shall allow myself to say to you, Sir, esteemed Dr., and hope for your forgiveness."

"Say whatever is on your mind, speak and I shall listen," was the serious answer the Reform Rabbi gave me.

"Today, as I visited his Temple, I learned that I am a complete desecrator of the Sabbath while you, Sir, are a lawful observer. I work on the Sabbath, furthermore I work on the Sabbath more than I do on weekdays, while, you, Sir, close your Temple 'Sinai' on the Sabbath and open it only on Sunday."

A smile appeared on his lips; he understood my message...

I met him several times in the years to come; we addressed the same meetings and shared the same platform, so that I got to know him. He was a wonderful speaker, and as good a writer in his articles written for his English weekly *Reform Advocate*. And yet he had one drawback both orally and in writing: he was inconsistent, disloyal to himself and his views. He never produced two articles or made two speeches that resembled each other in their spirit and principal ideas. You could not recognize his different speeches as products of the same orator or his articles as products of one writer. One day he would deliver a stormy speech from the pulpit against the adherents of the Jewish national idea and the Zionists, pouring burning fire on them out of his very mouth; a week later he would praise the Zionist ideal and express his great enthusiasm at the beauty of the national sentiment as though he were a comrade of Herzl and Nordau.

There was a diligent journalist in Chicago whose goal it was to point out the contradictions between one Hirsch and another. He would attack Hirsch almost weekly by demonstrating his contradictions. It was the old time Zionist and fine journalist Mr. Leon Zolotkoff who did this. I used to enjoy reading his argumentative articles against Dr. Hirsch very much.

In Chicago I met Rabbi Baruch Arieh Felsenthal, Rabbi of the

Reform-Conservative congregation, and we soon befriended each other. He was a true scholar, one of the founders of Reform Judaism and religiously observant. He observed the Sabbath meticulously. He was one of the old generation of German Rabbis that were in America at the time, all of them great scholars who delivered their sermons in German. Dr. Benjamin Szold, Dr. Gustav Gottheil, Dr. Koehler – they were all vestiges of the old *Heder* educational system. Dr. Felsenthal spoke and wrote fine Hebrew. He supported poor religious scholars who were swept here by the flow of immigration. He wrote me many letters about the difficult condition of Wolf Schur, editor of *Ha-Pisgah*.

I got to know Prof. Getzil Selikovitch personally, and it was a great spiritual pleasure. I remembered his name most respectfully ever since he had published the impressions of his stay in Egypt as official interpreter for the British Army in *Ha-Melitz*. His articles were written in a novel Hebrew style that made a mark in Hebrew literary circles. He later published important articles in *Knesset Yisrael* edited by ShePHeR [Shaul Pinchas Rabbinowitz], and then disappeared from public eye. Suddenly I found him in Mid West of the United States, editing a Yiddish paper of all things. At the time I considered that a desecration of our holy tongue, and yet we became friends.

My friends in Chicago arranged a farewell celebration for me. The Hebrew Literary Society played a major part in it. At the end of the party they presented me with a fine Hebrew inscription signed by the President Peretz Wiernik and his deputy B. Horwich. They escorted me to the railway station with a blessing.

Chapter 40

From Chicago I went to Cleveland. The Jews of Cleveland gave me a cordial reception. Among them were Mr.Berman, the *shochet* [religious slaughterer], a clever and fine looking Jew, father in law of the famous physicians Burstein and Biskind; The affluent Mr. Brudno; Mr. Joshua Rocker, editor of the *Yidishe Velt*, a clever and accomplished man of Hungarian descent who was closely associated with the Lithuanian Jews; Mr. Laufman, the *Maskil* [adherent of Jewish Enlightenment] and several others greeted me when I arrived and kept me company constantly during the two months I spent in Cleveland.

On the first evening of my stay the Presidents of the different synagogues came to see me and asked that I speak to their congregations. Each one introduced himself to me as follows: Mr. So and So, President of the Russian Synagogue; Mr. So and So, President of the Lithuanian Synagogue, the Polish Synagogue, the Hungarian, the Dissenting Hungarian etc.

"Sirs!" I addressed them with a question I had also asked in London, England, "which one of you is President of the **Jewish** Synagogue? I am indeed surprised, your synagogues in Cleveland belong to various nationalities, but where is the synagogues of the Jews? The names of the synagogues reflect our sorry state, the separation and weakness, legacy of our long, dark exile. Scattered in different countries and amidst different peoples for hundreds of years, we were asphyxiated with their languages, customs and names, to the extent that even when

we left those dark and ignoble lands and came to America, the Land of Liberty, where we build our synagogues unhindered, yet still give them the names of the Lands of Darkness whence we have fled. Why should we give our temples foreign names? What have we, here in the Land of Liberty, to do with Lithuania, that small, poor and primitive land? What have we to do with Russia, the Land of pitch darkness? What have the minor Polish noblemen to do with our synagogues? Even the Magyars, to the best of my judgment, have not merited a remembrance and name in our synagogues. Have you ever heard, gentlemen, Presidents of Synagogues, of names such as: Russian-Turks, Turkish-Russians, Italian-French, French-Italians, English-Germans and German-English? Yet we, the ancient People of Israel, are crumbling to bits: Russian Jews, Polish Jews, Lithuanian, Hungarian, Turkish, Persian and Greek. And where are the Jews, the Children of Israel? Already in New York and Chicago I was disgusted to hear of large synagogues serving affluent communities that bore the name of small towns in Russia, like: 'The Kalwarie Synagogue', 'The Marijampole Synagogue'. Do you know what these names mean? Kalwarie is the name of the mountain [Calvary], upon which that man delivered his sermons, in which we have no share. What have we to do with this Mount that we should have a large synagogue named for it? 'Marijampole' means 'City of Mary', and this does not refer to the prophetess, sister of Moses and Aharon, but to the mother of that man, who is not to be counted among the People of Israel. Why should we, the Jews of America, name a large synagogue in Chicago 'The Marijampole Synagogue'?"

My guests, the Presidents of the Synagogues, listened to me. Some did not know what I was talking about, others looked at each other with surprise: "What does this strange Jew want of us? Why doesn't he like the names of our synagogues?" But

my friend Joshua Rocker, the Hungarian with the soul of a Lithuanian Jew, was my interpreter that night and explained my intention to them very well, so that even the President of the Dissenting Hungarian Synagogue started to grasp my ideas and national feelings.

They arranged the order of my sermons among themselves – in what synagogue I am to speak first and in which last. And so I spent two months in Cleveland and delivered twenty sermons in the different congregations.

The national idea gained a solid basis thanks to me. The *Talmud Torah* School grew in quantity and quality. The fire of dissent between the rabbis and the lay leaders, homeowners of the middle class, subsided.

On this last subject it is worth mentioning an interesting paradox that I heard of a Rabbi litigating from the pulpit with the middle class homeowners who disagreed with him. And this is what the Rabbi said in his sermon:

"Hear me now, Jews of Cleveland. You should know that I am the Rabbi of Cleveland and Cleveland is my congregation. If you wish to dwell in peace and tranquility – live here and be homeowners and leaders in Cleveland. And if you are not satisfied with me, you are entitled to leave Cleveland and go wherever your heart desires. I am not stopping or forcing anyone. You are free people in this Land of Liberty..."

* * *

It was a bright morning. The sun was shining on the white, virgin snow. The air was clear and cold. I was taking a walk with a friend from my hometown along Euclid Boulevard, a large beautiful street lined with great handsome mansions on both sides. And lo, a small boy of six ran towards us from one of the mansions, stopped us, greeted us with a good morning in English and pleaded in a pitiful voice that we allow him to

have some 'fun' – an untranslatable word – and throw two snow balls he had shaped with his soft little hands, at us. We allowed him to do so. A spark of glee kissed his little eyes, and he hurried to perform his mission. He then bowed graciously and said in a silvery pleasant voice "Thank You!"

O where has the innocence of childhood gone? Why has it forsaken the adults?

* * *

A scandal erupted in the Jewish Community of Cleveland. The entire city was in turmoil. At the Great Reform Temple, Rabbi N.*, a Cincinnati graduate, ordered that the Torah scrolls be removed from the Holy Ark and replaced by an English Bible. The scrolls were sentenced to exile in the cellar of the Temple. The Rabbi's order was fulfilled. And a legend was formed on the basis on this outrage. The *shamash* [sexton] of the Temple, an old man of eighty-four, was forced to carry this out under the Rabbi's order. He still remembered the temple when it was a synagogue of God-fearing people of innocent faith. It was he, now removing the Torah scrolls from the building, who had placed them there sixty years earlier. This horrible deed made a terrible impression on him. His honest heart, the heart of an old innocent man, could not take it. And so, as he placed the Torah scroll in the cellar, his heart burst inside him and he gave up his soul.

Not only the Orthodox Jew were outraged by this scandal. Many members of the Reform Congregation who attended the Rabbi's temple also could not bear the inequity and rebuked the Rabbi to his face. He held to his position steadfastly and answered them:

"I am your spiritual leader and you are my flock so you

* This incident is mentioned in Ch. 41 p. 276 where the Rabbi is referred to as Rabbi G., see below (translator's note.)

must follow me and abide by my word. We are living at the end of the nineteenth century and are tired of the old ways. We must go forward."

The Rabbi won. The holy Scroll of the Torah was put away in the cellar and an English Bible was placed inside the Ark.

I stirred the hearts of my audience with words of fire against this modern Jason for his despicable act and awakened feelings of religious and national sentiment in the hearts of hundreds of the Lovers of Zion.

My friends in Cleveland surprised me on my last evening in their town. Before I left they gave a banquet in my honor and presented me with a gold coin engraved artistically with a *Shofar* [ram's horn] on which the following words were inscribed: "Raise your voice like a ram's horn, Zvi Masliansky."

Chapter 41

In Cincinnati I found the two extreme groups in the camp of Israel. On the one hand there was the Orthodox God fearing congregation of Rabbi Shachna's synagogue. There were two fully qualified Rabbis, and a number of societies [*hevrot*] for the study of Talmud, *Mishnah*, Psalms and even the book of *Chayei Adam*. These groups would sit around long tables between *Minchah* and *Ma'aviv* [the afternoon and evening prayers] engrossed in the study of Torah just like their fellow Jews in Vilna or Berdichev. On the other extreme was the bastion of Reform Judaism, site of the founder of the movement in America, Dr. I. M. Wise, and of his institute Hebrew Union College, the seminary whose graduates serve as Rabbis in the Reform congregations of America till this day.

One of the figures at the Reform seminary was Dr. G. Deutsch, an accomplished historian, veteran supporter of the Hebrew language and great connoisseur of Hebrew literature, both old and new. Dr. Deutsch visited me in my hotel and invited me on behalf of Dr. Wise to deliver a Hebrew lecture to students and faculty of the seminary on Saturday after the afternoon prayer.

"But who will be able to understand me?" I asked Prof. Deutsch.

"We have a *minyan* [quorum of ten] of Hebrew speakers among the teachers," Prof. Deutsch answered, "and several among the students. A number of our students are young people who came here from Russia recently, some of them,

former students of the *Yeshivot* [religious academies] of Volozhin and Telz, know Hebrew and Talmud; they will understand you."

I accepted the invitation.

The Raisin brothers, both future Reform Rabbis, Hebrew writers and Ph.Ds, were studying at the college in Cincinnati at that time. They came to my hotel together with Dr. Y. L. Magnes and we went to the college together.

The three young students and Rabbis to be, brought me to the college. Dr. Wise and Dr. Deutsch received me on the staircase at the entrance. The old Dr. Wise greeted me; he was then 80 years of age, but agile and swift like a forty year old. His face was fresh, his eyes shining and full of life, his voice clear – he was, all and all, an amiable person. Prof. Deutsch had a patriarchal appearance with his upright stature, large head, broad forehead and long full beard. Both of them led me into the college.

As we ascended the stairs Dr. Wise said jokingly to me:

"He may now attribute this verse to himself 'I appointed you a prophet concerning the nations' [*goyim*, in Biblical Hebrew]..."

"Not so, Dr., Sir," I answered, "I am no prophet and they are no *goyim*. [gentiles, in post-biblical Hebrew]."

"If so," answered Dr. Deutsch, "I shall be the mediator and decree you attribute another verse to yourself: 'And an envoy is sent out among the nations.'[*goyim*]."

The hall was full: Professors, students and many of my local admirers. The afternoon prayer [*Minchah*] started with *Ashrei* [Psalms 84,5; 144,15; 145] recited alternately by the cantor and public. The entire crowd stood with their heads bare except for myself and Prof. Deutsch who covered his head with a skull cap in my honor, as he was about to chair my speech.

One of the senior students took the Torah scroll out of the

Ark and rolled it till he reached the weekly portion of *Va-Yeshev* [Genesis 37-40]. He started by reciting the blessing prior to the reading of the Torah, then read the first three verses in a dramatic tone, recited the second blessing, lifted the Torah scroll and placed it by the pillar till the end of the service.

Prof. Deutsch introduced me to the audience in fine Hebrew. He explained that I do not belong to the Reform Movement and do not agree with their ways and principles. I am a national Jew, part of the national-orthodox camp that advocates the new idea of *Hibbat Zion*. He told them that he has read much about me in the European Jewish press and heard me speak in Orthodox synagogues where he came to appreciate my talent and devotion. He therefore decided, with the consent of Dr. Wise, that my words are worthy of being heard by the Professors and students of the Hebrew Union College.

I delivered a Hebrew sermon about an hour long to my foreign brethren, foreign to me in their language and customs. I spoke slowly to make sure they understood me. I described to them the life of millions of our brethren overseas in the dark cruel land of Russia. I drew images of sadness, but also of sanctity, from the life of their colleagues, the students of the *Yeshivot* [religious academies] who are sacrificing their lives for the sake of Torah study, which they do for its merit only not for any future career, as no rich communities and glorious temples await them, as they do the seminary students in America. I made it clear that I have not come to debate issues of faith and religion with them, that I only ask this of them – that I be given the right to demand that they, as students at a Jewish seminary, increase their knowledge of Torah and of the Hebrew language that are the source of Judaism; that they fight as best they can against the ignorance

that is undermining our spiritual and moral life. I asked that they remember our custom, which has always been to read each verse of the *Parashah* [weekly portion of the Pentateuch] twice in Hebrew, '*shenaim Mikrah*' and once in the Aramaic [i.e. vernacular translation], '*echad Tirgum*'. I expressed my sorrow at seeing a college based on '*Tirgum*' only with almost no '*Mikrah*'.

'I clothed myself with strength' as I saw from their facial expressions that nearly all of them had understood my last words and I exclaimed:

"My dear brethren, children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and David, disciples of Isaiah, Hillel and Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai! Do you not sense and feel the pain and shame of this moment as I do? A preacher of Israel is addressing the students of a Jewish seminary in Hebrew and many do not understand his language, and are gazing at him with astonished eyes, as though he were speaking a dead language, Greek or Latin, his entire address being strange and amazing to them. Is it not right that the holy sound of our sacred tongue be heard from time to time in an institution such as this, devoted to the religion of Israel? Is it not appropriate that the young Rabbis who graduate this institution at least know the Hebrew language? When carrying out the reform in your camp you have followed [in the words of prophet Jeremiah] 'deserted Me', observe at least the second part of the verse 'keep My instruction [Torah]'. With the force of '*Mikrah*' you shall triumph over the ignorant, but with that of dry '*Tirgum*' you will not restore the soul of Israel, you will not revive its spirit."

I turned to the aged scholar, the founder of the Reform Movement, Dr. I. M. Wise, who was sitting next to me, and said:

"I will now take the liberty of saying a few words to the

honorable old sage, our teacher of Judaism. Your honor knows that in a nearby town, in this very State, in Cleveland Ohio, one of your students, Rabbi G.* has committed a terrible outrage, which not only shocked and hurt the hearts of my Orthodox brethren, but also angered and infuriated many honest hearted Reform Jews. His act was one of Hellenism. He removed the glory of our temple of faith, the scroll of the Torah, from the Holy Ark and took it down to the cellar, then placing an English Bible in the Ark instead."

With trembling hands and eyes filled with tears I held the scroll of the Torah which was standing on the table to my right, and cried out loud:

"'As she was being brought out' [quoting the weekly portion, Genesis 38, 25] in Cleveland by a Rabbi who is obviously your student, you, the old master in Cincinnati must confess [as Judah son of Jacob did in the case of Tamar, *ibid* verse 26] and say 'She is more in the right than I', for it is he, with his doctrine of extreme Reform, who has brought this about."

I saw two large tear drops in the kind eyes of the old scholar and said to him:

"Forgive me, my old friend, but these words come from my bleeding heart, I did not intend to insult him, God forbid."

Dr. Wise rose, shook my hand in friendship and with his glance thanked me without words. The service was over. The professors and students thanked me heartily.

As we walked out, Dr. Wise invited the Raisin brothers and me to visit him at his home. I accepted gladly.

I found a number of books on his table, among them the *Yad Ha-hazakah* by Maimonides, the *Kuzari* and *Mikraot Gedolot* [the traditional commentary of the Bible].

"I did not imagine, my young friend," Wise said to me,

* Rabbi Moses Gries (1868-1918) radical Reform Rabbi, disciple of Emil G. Hisrch of Chicago, see above Chapter 40 p.270 (translator's note.)

"that his words would touch me so deeply that I would invite him to my home. Take a look at the books you found lying on my table. They bear true witnesses that I have not yet been severed from Judaism and from its Torah."

"Heaven forbid," I answered, "for me to even conceive such a thought. It is just that the Cleveland outrage upset my spirit so."

"Yes, my friend, it was a terrible thing to do. As God is my witness, my heart was as grieved as yours when I heard about the deceitful action of my former student. But I am not to blame – this doctrine was given from the 'Sinai' of Chicago."

Wise suddenly got up, his eyes scattering sparks of fire and he called out to me in a prophetic voice:

"Be so kind as to walk towards the wall."

He charmed me with his dramatic voice. I obeyed and went towards the wall.

"Why are you standing, why do you not continue to walk?"

"I can't," I answered, "the wall is blocking my way."

"So is the way of my gullible students. They went far ahead and reached the wall. Many have banged their heads against it. But it being impossible to go forward, they shall definitely return. I do not know if I will have the merit of seeing this with my own eyes; I am old and gray. But I am sure that you, Sir, will be so fortunate, your eyes shall witness it..."

Chapter 42

Pittsburgh is the second largest city in the state of Pennsylvania. It is situated in the midst of an area of divine natural resources, with which the state of Pennsylvania has been blessed: 'the black diamond' – the coal and natural gas, that light the land, warm the houses and move the wheels of industry and rail roads.

The great sage, Rabbi Israel Lifschitz author of *Tiferet Yisrael* mentions the 'hills of Pittsburgh in the State of Pennsylvania' in his commentary on the *Mishnah*.

Traveling on the Pennsylvania trains by night is an interesting experience. They wind like twisting serpents on the giant mountains. One looks out of the carriage window and sees the deep valleys lit with the flames of natural gas burning between the mountains, shining like stars in the sky. Sometimes one imagines that the train is flying through the skies and the stars are shining below. It is a beautiful sight.

When you enter Pittsburgh, especially city center, it seems more like a large factory with endless chimneys emitting clouds of dark, black smoke that darken the sky and fill the air with soot. You breathe heavily and a few minutes later look at your hands, and they are covered with soot. But it is not the entire town and all its inhabitants that blacken from the smoke. On the mountain and hill tops around the city there are fine homes and lovely gardens as in all the pretty cities of America. In Pittsburgh one sees heaven and hell side by side. Standing on the mountaintops and looking down to the valley, hell is

revealed to you with its burning fire and rising smoke. And when you stand below, in the valley, and lift up your eyes to the mountains, your lips whisper almost of their own accord the words of King David, the favorite of the songs of Israel, 'I turn my eyes to the mountains' – you then see heaven in all its glory on the hills of Pittsburgh. Would the dwellers of Eden up high be so wise and erudite as to look down, see the hell beneath and take notice... and how good it would be for those who dwell below, the poor and destitute, rotting in the fire and squalor of hell, to lift their eyes upward and see the bounty, fine living and light way up high, and realize that it is for them to hope and aspire, for there alone is the secret of life.

I found a fine sort of middle class Jews, decent homeowners, in Pittsburgh in 1895. This group was comprised of scholars, *Maskilim* [adherents of Jewish Enlightenment], merchants and artisans, all imbued with the spirit of Israel. I found large and well kept synagogues where I addressed audiences of various groups. My words were accepted favorably. The *Hovevei Zion* association grew considerably, the *Talmud Torah* schools were set on stronger foundations and the hearts of the young people were drawn closer towards Hebrew and the history of Israel.

Who could imagine that my reward in this fine city would be heartbreak and sadness, all because I became a subject of controversy in the Jewish press?

One of the most zealous socialists, a leftist fool, started by throwing a stone aimed at me in the socialist paper *Abendblatt*, which soon developed into a storm in the Jewish press in three languages: Yiddish, Hebrew and German.

These were the poisonous words published in the *Abendblatt*.

"Masliansky or a Mischief Maker. – Report from Pittsburgh: Our town of Pittsburgh has been in turmoil for the last two months. Masliansky, the strong anvil pounding hammer, the

agile, the wise etc. etc. – preaches for his own sake, extorts the last pennies of the poor, destitute and wretched children of Israel and of the squalid daughters of Israel, and fills his pockets with gold and silver to his heart's content. He curses our socialist papers, abuses Karl Marx, reviles Lassalles and Engels, threatens the radicals, readers of the *Zukunft*, the *Abendblatt* and the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, with the judgment of hell and pours fire and brimstone on the socialist movement and its followers. Oh that we be saved soon from hypocrites and preachers of darkness like Masliansky and his clan."

I read these despicable lies, written in Hebrew letters in a Jewish newspapers and my heart was grieved. I had been preaching from the pulpit for fifteen years at the time, and had never heard anything but words of praise and encouragement from the Jewish press. And suddenly I have been reviled with gross lies in a newspaper for thousands of trusting innocent readers to see.

I consulted with my friends and wrote a letter to the editor of the *Abendblatt*. I emphasized that I have never in my life fought against the socialist idea and its advocates. I am the disciple of the prophets of Israel and its visionaries: of Amos, Isaiah and Micah who, in my opinion, have been the very first great fighters for justice and honesty, who always 'came to the aid of the wronged.'

A week later my letter was printed in the *Abendblatt* with the following comment:

"We are sorry that our Pittsburgh correspondent had misinformed us. We are glad to print Mr. Masliansky's statement. The knowledge that an editor is but a human, not a divine, being, would make him understand that an editor too can err, like any man of flesh and blood. We are happy with your faithful words, Mr. Masliansky."

I was saved from one fire only to fall into two large flames.

I protected myself from my socialist enemy and fell into the claws of two of my friends, may God save me from them!

The editors of the two newspapers published by my friend Rabbi Katriel Sarasohn were my bosom friends. I am referring to Gershon Rosenzweig, editor of *Ha-Ivri*, and Yonah Paley, editor of the *Tagblatt*. But there is no friendship in the press. The statement I made in my short letter to the *Abendblatt* gave them a chance to stir a major controversy on the subject and to cause me great sorrow unintentionally and unwillingly.

The witty Hebrew writer came out in *Ha-Ivri* with the following question [in the words of Joshua]:

"'Are You One of Us or of Our Enemies?' In our local socialist newspaper the *Abendblatt*, I have seen an open letter by the national preacher Mr. Masliansky, in which he praises the socialist idea and points out that he agrees with the socialists in ideas but not in beliefs. Since I for one believe that nationalism and socialism should be separated and cannot be upheld jointly, I hereby ask, and the readers of *Ha-Ivri* are my witnesses, that Mr. Masliansky give us a straight answer to my question: 'Are you one of us or' a socialist? Or perhaps he had found an honest way, one unknown to me, to compromise between these two ideas!"

The great journalist Paley came out in a sarcastic editorial in the *Tagblatt*:

"There are two people who would like to appease all factions. They are President McKinley and Reverend Masliansky. The only difference between them is that McKinley is known for his silence and Masliansky for his discourse. We have always known that Masliansky is an observant Jew, advocate of national ideas and member of *Hovevei Zion* We learnt that from his very mouth. This excellent preacher wanders from town to town preaching for the ideas of religion, nationalism and Zionism. Now we learn that Masliansky is also an

accomplished socialist. He has written this to the socialists with his own hand and in a pleading tone! Is he both a socialist and a nationalist? Is he a believer in Karl Marx and the *Shulchan Aruch* at the same time? Is he both a follower of revolutionary propaganda and a preacher for Zion and the life after death? How can one patch these two separate things together?"

The arrow my two friends pointed at me hit their target. The Orthodox started to grumble and I immediately felt the effect. I wrote a spirited article for *Ha-Ivri* and clarified the matter truthfully, and two weeks later the press gave me a certificate of *Kashruth* [ritual cleanliness] again. *Ha-Ivri* printed my answer. My learned friend Prof. Deutsch of Cincinnati also came out in my defense in two articles, one in German in *Devorah* and the other in Hebrew in *Ha-Ivri*. He strongly criticized both editors who were tempted to blemish their beloved friend by a journalistic caprice.

The *Tagblatt* printed my answer with the following comment:

"We find Mr. Masliansky's answer satisfactory. His letter to *Ha-Ivri* proves that he has no part in the socialist camp. He preaches for the prophetic idea of saving the exploited from the hand of his exploiter and imagines that the agitators on Rutgers St. do the same. He does not know that their love of the workers is only aimed at upsetting morals, banning Him who resides in Heaven, turning one Jew against the other and bringing a bloody revolution that would end in terrible anarchy into the world. No, no prophet of Israel has preached for this type of socialism. And Rabbi Masliansky has no share in it. We are glad that Mr. Masliansky has openly declared his opinion and we know that he is a loyal follower of the 'standard of the division of Judah'."

The People of Pittsburgh who had heard my sermons and respected me made a considerable effort to ease my sorrow and

sadness during this strange controversy in the press. After the two months of my spiritual work in Pittsburgh they arranged a very fine celebration in my honor and presented me with a golden coin engraved artistically, a silver bowl with two golden apples in it and the following verse [Proverbs 25,11] inscribed on the top: 'Like golden apples in silver showpieces is a phrase well turned.' This was the idea of my friend, the Hebrew teacher Mr. Moshe Rubin.

I returned to New York.

Chapter 43

After five difficult years on the road in Russia and in the lands of Europe, after the persecutions of the evil Russian police, the arrests and nervous strain they entailed, I decided it was time to find a restful setting for myself and my family who were still in Russia; to find a permanent position, let the wandering staff out of my hand and live a normal life. I had toured and seen all the large congregations in the United States, some of which wanted to keep me as Rabbi and preacher. Yet in the depth of my heart I felt that my place was in New York; for it was there, in modern Alexandria, that I would find sufficient opportunity for my national work, be of use to my people and provide for my family.

But the question remained: where? how? In what setup?

I visited some of the large synagogues on weekdays to get acquainted with the work done by their spiritual leaders, and my soul was disgusted. I just wrote that I visited the synagogues, but that is not the entire truth. A real visit to the synagogues on weekdays was impossible, for they were closed during the six work days, only the cellars, underground, the so called *Batei Midrashot* [study houses] functioned: there you may find a few *minyanim* [prayer quorums of ten men] of mourners, observers of *Jahrzeits* [memorial days for their dearly departed] and people just saying *Kaddish* [the mourner's prayer] for a fee, hired to recite the prayer for deceased who were not their own kin; all these people were old, miserable beings supported by their children. It was to this audience that

the Rabbi or the preacher would deliver his daily sermon...

No! – I said to myself. This shall not be my vocation, I was not destined for this. I have not come into this world to deliver dead sermons to a crowd of ghosts. My spirit is full of life and it is my duty to speak about life to live audiences, people who favor life and cling to it...

One morning I happened to be visiting the home of the president of one of the large synagogues. The president, Mr. P., was seated in the dining room, clad in his dressing gown and drinking his coffee with obvious delight. The Rabbi of the synagogue sat opposite him and pleaded:

"I hope that you, Sir, Mr. President, recognize and value my difficult task. I must address an audience daily. On Saturdays and Sundays I deliver sermons for a large crowd. On other weekdays I teach a class in *Ein Ya'acov* at the study house.

"My wages are only twenty dollars a week. I have a wife and six children to support and this meager salary is not enough for my livelihood. Therefore I ask you, Mr. President, Sir, to kindly suggest to the meeting of the synagogues trustees about to convene tonight that five dollars be added to my salary, and my family shall beseech heaven on your behalf."

The president sipped his coffee contently and smiled. He then rose and entered the next room where a plasterer was tending to the walls. He asked the workman to come to our room and instead of answering the Rabbi opened conversation with the plasterer:

"Tell me young man, how many hours a day do you work?"

"Eight hours" – the plasterer answered.

"And what is your weekly salary?" the president asked complacently.

"Twelve dollars a week." the workman answered.

The president turned to the Rabbi and said: "Pay attention,

our Rabbi, this man works eight hours a day and his salary is only twelve dollars a week, but he is satisfied. And our Rabbi works one or two hours a day for a salary of twenty dollars a week and is dissatisfied with it."

The lord president gazed at me to see what impression his clever answer to the Rabbi had made.

The Rabbi lowered his glance to the floor, ashamed and confounded, and did not answer.

Sorrow and anger, shame and pain stirred my blood inside me, as I saw how low my people have sunk in the new free world, how the dignity of the Torah has descended to a point where a large congregation of hundreds of members was led by such a man, a vulgar benighted man, who dared to compare the sacred service of our Rabbi to a simple craft, to draw a parallel between a Rabbi and a plasterer and add insult to injury by taking pride in his wisdom! Yet my anger was not directed against the communal worker, who was a survivor of the Jewish children kidnapped and raised in the army of Czar Nikolai I, and therefore limited in his understanding, but rather against the 'basket of reptiles on his back', i.e. his congregants who had made him their leader, a leader who suits his generation well...

I left the president with a sick heart, full of shame and disgrace. I wandered the streets of the city deep in thought and finally decided not to take a position in any of New York's synagogues, even if they offer me all the gold and silver of the world.

Walking along East Broadway I reached Jefferson Street and instinctively stood and looked at the large building of The Hebrew Institute now called The Educational Alliance. I felt a kind of premonition as my heart prophesied: here in this building you will perform your spiritual work for decades to come...!

As I stood and gazed at the Institute building Dr. Adolf Radin, the Rabbi in the People's Synagogue of the Institute walked towards me and greeted me:

"You, Sir, do not know me, but I read a lot about you and also had the pleasure of hearing your sermon at the *Beth Ha-Midrash Ha-Gadol*. My name is Dr. Adolf Radin, former preacher in the Great Synagogue of Lodz, and now Rabbi of the People's Synagogue of the Institute. We have established an association here named the Russian American Hebrew Association and in its name I am honored to invite you, Sir, to deliver a speech here."

I had heard of Dr. Radin as a fine scholar and preacher when he was still in Lodz. I gladly accepted his invitation, which was to be the foundation of my position as permanent speaker at The Educational Alliance.

Dr. Radin was one of a kind. He was extremely generous and kindhearted, not a day passed without his performing a charitable act on behalf of one person or another. He saved many immigrants when they first arrived in the country, some by financial assistance, others by supplying them with work or a position. He was ready to go, write, speak and act on behalf of his brethren arriving from overseas at any time or hour. He had but one fault: He was spiritually a *Maskil* [disciple of Jewish Enlightenment] of the Mendelsohnian school, who believed in Reform and was fanatically devoted to the German language, so much so that even here, in America, he preached to Russian Jews in German, and his listeners could not understand him and could not appreciate his talent as a speaker. He was also appointed by the authorities as Rabbi for the prisons; He was like a merciful father to the prisoners, serving as intermediary between them and their families and doing all in his power to alleviate their bitter lives.

Once in a public meeting in Cooper Union where

government officials were present he cried aloud and said: "It is not the immigrants who are disrupting civic morals, but rather the wayward and defiant sons of the rich, who are idle and live on their inheritance; it is they who disrupt the morals of the immigrants." In those days the American press had not yet been poisoned with the venom of Chauvinism and the bane of anti-Semitism so that his words were quoted all over the press.

We got to know each other and became great friends. We shared the same platform for fourteen years and there was nothing but love and fraternity between us. In later years I was most satisfied to see a change in his spirit. After the pogrom of Kishinev [in 1903] he gradually changed his views. Slowly but surely he drifted further away from the Reform movement and came closer to national views, so much so that he traveled to one of the Zionist Congresses. There he was inspired by Dr. Herzl and Dr. Nordau and became a complete Zionist. He founded Zionist associations and made enthusiastic speeches on behalf of Zionism till his death in 1909. His funeral was attended by thousands of people who admired and respected him.

I felt drawn to The Hebrew Institute. I rented the hall a number of times and delivered sermons for an entrance fee. However, the idea that I may be appointed a regular speaker for an annual salary seemed inconceivable and unrealistic. The President and directors were totally American and shunned the Yiddish language. The announcements of lectures, meetings and plays to be held at the Institute that were posted on the bulletin boards never included one word of Yiddish. How could I hope to be appointed a regular speaker in the Yiddish language? And yet time brings about what reason cannot; it changes everything. Time tears down ancient fortresses and builds new ones. It alters ideas and changes opinions. It brings

forth new people, brave enough to create new things. A man like that was appointed director of The Hebrew Institute that changed its name to The Educational Alliance.

Chapter 44

Dr. David Blaustein was one of those most talented children of our dispersion, one of the children of the poor from whom it has been predicted that Torah shall go forth. He was appointed the new director of The Educational Alliance and was totally devoted to the institution. A man of national spirit, he was born in Lida near Vilna and studied Talmud at a *Yeshivah* till the age of eighteen. He then went to Germany to study history and Philosophy with Dr. Feilcenfeld. As a native of Russia he was denied the right of residence in Germany and in 1886 he arrived in America and enrolled at Harvard University to complete his studies. He found no satisfaction, however, in science and dead books. The life of his immigrant brethren attracted him and he plunged into it hoping to help these miserable people in their ambition to become American and yet remain loyal to their people and traditions. In 1896 he was appointed professor of Semitic Languages at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

While studying at Harvard he met Mr. Jesse Straus, son of Isidor Straus, the founder and president of The Educational Alliance. Straus Junior introduced Blaustein to his parents who were pleased with the young man. In 1898 Blaustein was appointed director of The Education Alliance where he found a wide scope to implement his views. Under his direction the institution became a center for the Jews of Russia, young and old, and a bridge between uptown and downtown, or as I put it [quoting the Day of Atonement prayer service] uniting 'those

who dwell on earth' with 'they that dwell in the heavens.'

We got acquainted in Boston, and when Blaustein came to New York he invited me to give a two months series of lectures on Friday nights. To those lectures he would invite the sponsors of the Institute, President Isidor Straus and the Directors: Prof. Seligman, Jacob Schiff, Louis Marshall, Samuel Greenbaum and other German Jews from uptown. Not all of them understood me, and those who did, did not understand it all. What they did understand, however, sufficed for them to see how useful such lectures were for the Jewish public, and what they could not understand was complemented by observation. They saw that the hall filled an hour before the lecture; they saw the people assembled on both adjacent streets, East Broadway and Jefferson, struggling to enter the hall that was full to capacity, so much so that the police had to be brought to maintain order on each occasion; they saw a spellbound audience of thousands standing, eyes and ears alert, ready to listen, learn and understand; they witnessed the rapid changes in the mood of the public, one moment standing sad and gloomy on the verge of tears, and the next moment its faces gleaming with joy. They saw and felt the pleasant glances of those addressing me. And again, they saw that the hall had been empty, 'its roads in mourning', during the lectures given in English. All this proved to them that a Jewish audience should only be addressed in its own language.

Mr. Schiff once said with satisfaction: "It is amazing, I hardly understand Yiddish, but I understand Masliansky perfectly when I listen to his words and look at his audience."

Dr. Blaustein recognized the tendency of the sponsors of The Educational Alliance. The press too was on his side. To make sure, however, he suggested to one of my loyal friends, Reverend Philip Yachus, a Jewish scholar, faithful communal worker and first class speaker, that a petition to the Directors

of the Institute be signed by hundreds of my public requesting I be nominated a regular speaker in the Yiddish language at the Alliance. My friend Yachus did not remain idle. He started the project energetically and within two weeks handed a petition signed by hundreds of people to the Directors of the Institute. This petition sealed my fate to be bonded with The Educational Alliance for decades to come and till this very day. Dr. Blaustein sent a telegram to my residence congratulating me in the name of the President and Directors upon my nomination as regular speaker in Yiddish at their Institute.

The President of the Alliance's Committee on Religion and Culture, Mr. Louis Marshall, invited me to his home one evening to discuss the program of my speeches at the Alliance. Mr. Marshall was a young man at the time and already famous not only in New York but all over the United States. In the general world he was known as a brilliant lawyer, a specialist on the constitutional law whose words gained the respect of the greatest judges of the land. In the Jewish world – he was known as a faithful Jew, advocate of the rights of the people of Israel and a first rate communal worker.

Mr. Marshall received me cordially in his library. We spent two hours discussing the situation of the Jews in various countries. He showed special interest in what I told him about the terrible situation of the Jews in dark Russia. I saw a great man – more than that – a great Jew before me; a man with a warm heart and shrewd mind, full of knowledge of the history of our people and its literature. He did not know much Hebrew but read Yiddish fluently, and was interested in everything written and spoken in that language. He himself spoke and wrote Yiddish when necessary. I found this great American Jew to be of solid character, a man with the mind of a genius and a good, sensitive and poetic heart.

I presented my program to Marshall briefly: It is the sacred

duty of The Educational Alliance to perform a double task: As American citizens we must bring our immigrant brethren under the wings of America, that is to say we should calm their nerves, agitated by the great pressure they have endured in the lands of darkness, shake the dust of exile off them so that they regard themselves as free citizens in the land of liberty and accept the blessings of freedom to live a tranquil life, a life beautiful and pure, as befits free citizens. As Jews we are to devote all our strength to protect their Jewish soul and their traditions for which they have fought and sacrificed themselves for thousands of years in their lands of exile. A Jew will never be a loyal American if he discards his Judaism. Their souls, moral conduct and sense of justice do not need readjusting to the spirit of America, for they are all based on the supreme moral principles of the Mosaic code, of the Torah. The souls of the children of Vilna, Berdichev and Bialystok are in no need of instruction from those of New York and San Francisco. The immigrants do not want in ethics but slightly in aesthetics, manners and politeness, as there was no one to teach them those qualities in their lands of origin. We are to Americanize the bodies of the fathers and judaize the souls of the sons, following the destiny of Elijah to 'reconcile fathers with sons and sons with their fathers', to unite the two generations.

Mr. Marshall expressed his satisfaction with my program. I bid him farewell with the following words: "to avoid any misunderstanding between us I would like to emphasize this clause: The directorship of the Allliance is entitled to make comments about the issues I should discuss, however, it may never be entitled to order me not to discuss certain issues."

Mr. Marshall understood my intention. We parted as friends and he congratulated me on my new job. I have been working according to this program ever since. I have never been disturbed from conducting propaganda in favor of Zionism,

Jewish nationalism or tradition.

The day after my nomination the press came out and congratulated both the Alliance and myself; my position has been secure and solid ever since.

I have aided the development of all the large Jewish institutions in New York on behalf of The Educational Alliance: the various hospitals, hostels, old age homes, *Yeshivot* [religious academies], *Talmud Torah* schools, synagogues, nurseries, charitable foundations etc. I also supported *Adath Yisrael* congregation as part of my endeavors. And yet as they developed and grew so did they become more American and less accepting of the Yiddish language; their annual meetings are now convened by the former 'aldermen' and the future 'assemblymen'.

'May the Creator of the heartening, comforting words' forgive them all.

Chapter 45

The common people believe that the written law preceded the oral law, but this is a misconception. The children of Israel had their traditions even before the Torah was revealed on Mount Sinai; these traditions were handed down from one generation to another, from Abraham to Moses. The same is true of the laws of the *Mishnah*, some of which were well known to the people since the days of Shema'aya and Avtalion [end of the first century BCE], others were added in following generations, their number increasing till Rabbi Judah the Patriarch put them down in writing [in the codex of the *Mishnah*, ca. 200 CE].

After twenty years of 'oral work' I decided it was time to engage in 'written work', i.e. to publish a newspaper whose readers would be numbered in thousands rather than address crowds of hundreds.

I decided and took action. In 1902 I started the publication of a large newspaper in Yiddish and English named *Die Yidishe Velt*. I was aided by my friend Dr. Blaustein who served as intermediary between me and my downtown partners: Israel Wolf, Mr. Brody and my son in law Pinchas Turberg on the one hand, and the uptown Jewish leaders Louis Marshall, Frederick Stein and Cyrus Sulzberger on the other. Together we formed a corporation named Lebanon Printing Company.

We did not want for funds, and immediately bought the *Abendblatt* building on 9 Rutgers St., complete with editorial offices and a printing press. We asked several of the best writers

and journalists to join us. Mr. Bucanski, alias Ben Porath, former editor of the Herald and *Folksadvokat* was nominated editor. His assistants were A. Tennenbaum, Philip Krantz, the poet Morris Rosenfeld, M. Katz, A. Frumkin, the Hebrew poet M. M. Dolitzki, M. D. Hermalin, Ziony and Z. Kornblit. Other writers who participated with feuilletons and songs on a weekly basis were: L. Zolotkoff, alias Zakof Gadol and the philosopher poet Yehoash of Denver. The English section was edited by the famous scholar Joseph Jacobs with Jacob de Haas, former secretary of the Zionist Organization, and J. J. Brill, now editor of the English section of the *Tageblatt*.

Mr. Joseph Jacobs was the first to carry out a scientific census of the number of Jews in the United States, which he published in the *Yidishe Velt*. He proved that the number of Jews in America at the time was only six hundred thousand. His lead articles gained him a name in the English press, where his views were accepted.

The *Yidishe Velt* made a great name as a decent, interesting literary paper edited in propriety and good taste. It was the first newspaper that really and truly advocated the national idea during the transition period from *Hibbat Zion* to Zionism. It was the first to devote a special free section to publicize donations to the Jewish National Fund, and published the first translation of Herzl's *Altneuland* as well.

The two great story tellers of the generation published romances and stories in the *Yidishe Velt*: N.M. Shaikevich – alias ShM"R – and M. Seifert. Short stories by the best writers overseas like Bershadsky also appeared. My son in law Pinchas Turberg was an important bibliographical force, an invaluable asset for a daily paper, he was well versed in all the fields of Hebrew and Yiddish literature and blessed with a sharp critical sense.

I can say proudly that the *Yidishe Velt* improved the status

of Jewish writers by giving a decent salary and cultivating a relationship of peace and fraternity between writer and publisher. It was indeed a marvel – the editorial board consisted of people of different, sometimes extreme views, some were loyal nationalists, others, radicals of the extreme left, former contributors to the socialist *Abendblatt*. They were miles apart in their worldviews and ideas, and yet, the atmosphere prevailing in the editorial room was one friendship that united them all as they went about performing their tasks faithfully.

I once overheard a conversation between two members of the editorial board, which could be considered typical. I was sitting in my office in the early evening after work. All the editors had already gone home except for the two leftists, K. and F. who were sitting in the other room and talking about me unaware of my being in the office.

"Tell me Mr. F.," Mr. K. asked, "what issues did we use to have with Mr. M.? Why did we heap dirt on him when we worked in the *Abendblatt*? We have been working with him for two years now and find no fault in him. He is stormy and tumultuous on the platform but here in the editorial board with us he is moderate, easy to deal with, modest and kind hearted. I haven't heard him say one disgraceful word about anybody..."

"Indeed," F. answered, "the factions and parties are the source of this evil, the gap between fundamental ideas and the prejudices are both so strong and extremism so wild that each faction member considers only those who accept his views as human beings, while the rest, who do not belong to his faction have no share in this category. Had they gotten to know each other the prejudices and foolish exaggerations would have vanished to the improvement of our lives and the prevention of abuses."

Their conversation was sincere and held in the [Day of

Atonement prayer] tone of 'verily, we have sinned.'

The *Yidishe Velt* was obviously in competition with the other, previously established, Jewish newspapers, that did not relish seeing its success. Every transaction entails competition, in every trade man competes with his fellow man and struggles against him. Yet this is an internal war, one that outsiders cannot sense. The competition between newspapers is a different matter. A fight between two newspapers bursts out into the street and is waged before thousands of people. The journalists do not lack for ammunition to strike at the enemy and to defend themselves. The writers and editors sharpen their pens and go to war. These ink heroes wait for an appropriate time to shoot their sometimes venom coated arrows at the enemy camp. For when else would they have a chance to go to battle and storm fortresses at the sight of thousands of people? The publishers might have controlled themselves, but 'to start a quarrel is to open a sluice'; it is hard to stop a running river when it overflows. The war becomes fiercer every day. The number of readers increases during wartime. The readers of one newspaper start to read the other as well to learn the arguments of their rival. Unfortunately gloating over the insult and injury of one's fellowman is part of human nature. And who can insult better than one newspaper against the other?

I, a rookie publisher, who had been careful for decades to respect my public in my oral work, felt great sorrow when fate transferred me to written work where I had to face the venom coated pens of others. Twelve o'clock was always a difficult hour for me, at that time I would read the final proofs of the paper about to be sent to print, and see the tons of disrespect, curses and abuses poured on the heads of my old friends, with whom I always had an amicable relationship. Often I erased entire sections, made changes here and there while hearing

a voice urging me: "It is late! The machine is idle!" I begged the few men around me for mercy, pleading they be cautious and polite in their words and phrases. But I always received the same answer: They would show me the papers my rivals had published the day before and these were always full of disrespect and abuse towards me. I bore my suffering in silence.

One time I returned from a trip to Chicago and found that a terrible scandal had erupted. "The Poet Volcano" was outraged and spat fire and brimstone from his mouth on the head of one of my loyal friends, publisher of a daily newspaper. I got very angry. I sat in my office 'alone and stunned' till late in the evening.

At ten o'clock I was still sitting there alone and suddenly the door opened, and – lo and behold! There was my archenemy, my greatest hater, Mr. Jacob Saphirstein, publisher of the *Abendpost*. He stood there, a pleasant smile on his face, looking at me and shaking his head. I was surprised and could not believe my eyes – was I really awake or was it a dream.

"Kindly sit down, Mr. Saphirstein," I said. I had not the courage to look him in the face, especially after the vicious attack on him in that day's edition of *Yidishe Velt,* "but please believe me that I have just returned from Chicago."

He let me finish speaking and then hugged me and addressed me with his usual swift speech: "I can see that you are still the greenhorn you were when you disembarked from the ship - full of regrets over nonsense. You should learn from me, the veteran of newspaper publishers. I enjoyed the shower my *Abendpost* gave you and was ready to receive my share today from the *Yidishe Velt*. To my way of thinking this entire obscene debate is as 'let the young men come forward and sport before us'. Let the writers sport. Such a sporting laugh brings life. The day is over and so are its quarrels. A pleasant

pure evening has arrived. Let us walk out a bit and enjoy the evening breeze and clear our dumb minds."

And I immediately left the building arm in arm with my 'terrible foe'. I learnt a lot from this practical and clever man of commerce. I learnt that there is little blessing in innocence. Man must see life through other eyes...

Saphirstein was indeed an interesting type. He was full of vigor, energy and the lust for life. On the surface he seemed irritable and strict. But those who knew him well found him to be of a very pleasant character. He was as interested in the plight of his friends as he was in his own, and it was for a good reason that all the people he worked with loved and respected him as a father and wept and mourned his untimely death. His memory still lives among his friends and relatives.

The *Yidishe Velt* existed for two and half years. It did not complete its third. 'They that dwell in heavens' and 'those who dwell on earth' could not reach an agreement on the overall policy of the paper. I must admit that I too share in the guilt of the paper's death due to my meager talent in increasing its income over its expenses.

I lost thousands of dollars and considerable physical health over the paper. I quit written labor and went back to my oral work.

Chapter 46

"Athens of America" – Boston Massachusetts – has been engraved in my memory ever since my Russian days, when I was 'a dear reader' of the papers *Ha-Melitz* and *Ha-Zefirah*, a loyal follower of the flowery letters in the section "From Foreign Lands". Whenever Boston was mentioned its praise was added, namely that she was "The Athens of America"; not that of the immigrants – Italian, Jews and Poles who settled in Boston in large numbers – but of the old time 'Yankees', descendants of the English Puritan exiles who escaped from England in troublesome times, crossed the Atlantic Ocean and built the states of New England. Boston is the leading city and is named Athens, after the ancient Greek capital, in American literature.

Boston is the oldest American city. It is the cradle of the American liberation movement that strived to free the country from British yoke. The historic houses are still standing – here the colonists, devoted to their cause, gathered for meetings destined to liberate themselves from the English rulers. The cry "Freedom or Death!" still echoes in the historic space of Faneuil Hall, as it does in other arenas where the dramatic scenes of the early revolution took place.

The old city of Boston, with its ancient houses and narrow winding streets, bears the scent of old age. A stranger could not find his way there, as the streets wind in circles, holding on to each other, as though their end is rooted in their beginning, like a symbol of eternity, of infinity.

I experienced this personally. One time I set out to deliver a speech in the synagogue at Baldwin Place. My hotel was not far from the synagogue. About an hour before the scheduled time I left the hotel to take a walk. I headed west not knowing where the street leads. I thought I would enjoy a pleasant half hour walk, and then retrace my steps and arrive at the synagogue on time. I was engaged in deep thought about my speech and walked for a full hour. When I realized that I was alarmed. I am an hour's distance from the synagogue and the public is waiting. Punctuality is one of my main principles. I hailed a carriage there being no motorcars in the land at the time.

"Where to?" the Jewish coach driver asked me.

"Baldwin Place Synagogue," I answered.

"It seems you are a greenhorn," smiled the driver, "you remind me of a man standing in a river and asking for some water. You are standing right in front of the synagogue and asking me to bring you there."

I liked the coachman's fable and asked him:

"Is this possible, I started walking away from the synagogue an hour ago, and here I am standing in front of it again?"

"Don't ask or be so surprised," the driver answered, "the old time architects who built old city of Boston had twisted minds and designed twisting streets. If you, sir, walk another hour along this street you'll find yourself back at this spot. The street goes round and round."

Boston takes pride in Harvard College, the aristocratic university, alma mater of most of the great men of America, including some men of Israel like Louis D. Brandeis and his friends. Many of the latter were children of immigrants, brilliant *Yeshivah* students from overseas, who after a great deal of religious studies became great luminaries in the fields of science. In those days, thirty years ago, America was not

contaminated by the squalid Anti-Semitism that overshadows the light of freedom nowadays even in the brilliant halls of science like those of Harvard College, whose leaders are not even ashamed to expose their anti-Semitic feeling in public. In those years there was no discrimination between Jew and non-Jew in that great institution. Fraternity and friendship reigned among all the students regardless of race and religion. A group of Jewish students honored me with an invitation to visit the College, and their gentile friends and professors received me cordially as well. The professor of Semitic Languages spoke to me in pure Hebrew.

The Jewish neighborhood is situated in the streets of Salem, Hanover and others nearby. It is a special Jewish ghetto reminiscent of those in Amsterdam and Vilna, i.e. a truly Jewish neighborhood full of Jewish life. There are large synagogues, fine Rabbis, various *Hevrot* [societies] for the study of different ubjects: Talmud, *Mishnah* and Psalms. Nearly all businesses are closed on the Sabbath. In the great synagogues at Baldwin Place there are a number of *Minyanim* [prayer quorums] praying simultaneously in different parts of the building. I also found traditional *Hadarim* [elementary schoolrooms] complete with old-fashioned teachers for young children, like those you would find overseas. To sum – there was a real Jewish atmosphere, more so than in New York.

I delivered more than twenty speeches in Boston. The public showed interest in all fields of national work. The Zionist associations, the *Talmud Torah* schools, the communal institutions such as the old age home, the orphanage and the hostel – all sent delegations to thank me for encouraging their sponsors with my speeches. I forgot that I was in America, I imagined myself in one of the precious cities of my homeland, in Bialystok, Minsk or Brisk.

The friends I made in Boston took a fair share in my work:

Rabbi Shachor, a clever man, full of Jewish shrewdness; Mr. S. Freedsohn, alias *Shafan Ha-Sofer*; the diligent communal worker Mr. Zalman Margaliot. The latter became Rabbi in Cleveland, where he filled an important position, was a brilliant speaker and well liked by the people of his city and State. Margaliot made many contributions during his short lifetime and would have had a great future if not for his untimely death. May his memory be blessed. Another one of my friends was A. S. Waldstein, a student at Harvard College and a fine Hebrew writer. These men and many others were my loyal assistants who accompanied me everywhere. Their help was not limited to Boston, as they traveled with me to the nearby towns that had sizeable communities like Worcester, and Providence.

I found a close friend in that great, respectable, generous man and scholar Mr. Baruch Isaac Reinhartz. He was worthy of his name – a man pure of heart and soul; his home was open to Jewish scholars. He was a generous man, always ready to support any cause upon the slightest chance of trouble. An extremely learned man he was well versed in modern and ancient Hebrew literature. Reinhartz was one of those famous wealthy Jews who was blessed with both greatness and Torah. In Boston he was one of his kind.

The *Maskilim* [adherents of modern Jewish learning] in Boston joined the students and established an association by the name of *Kerem Yisrael* [The Vineyard of Israel], which was a great asset to the city. All its members had a good knowledge of Jewish culture, they would gather for lectures about various historical topics, and discuss issues concerning the people of Israel. They also supported their poor members and institutions in need. They managed to attract young people and 'plant' them in their vineyard, which served as a bridge between the generations. Mr. Reinhartz was President of the

association and was indeed worthy of being the vinedresser of the "vineyard of Israel", with his upright posture, his magnificent lion head and his grown, Herzl style beard.

I spent two months in Boston, and they seemed but a few days to me and to my respectful audience. It was time to say farewell. I was invited to deliver my last speech in the great synagogue, as was customary. After the speech I was led into the great dining hall, and was much amazed to see set tables with many seated guests. All the dignitaries of the city were gathered, headed by Rabbi of Boston, Rabbi Moshe Zevulon Margaliot. This man, with his tender face full of Jewish charm, is now Rabbi in New York and serves as Head of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis in the United States and Canada. The assembled received me with respect and were quick to reveal their secret to me – namely, that this entire banquet was held in my honor.

Chapter 47

Philadelphia, the city of "Fraternal love" in ancient Greek is known in our history from the days of King Agrippa. The Romans gave the city of Rabbat B'nei Ammon in Trans-Jordan the name Philadelphia.* I have now been in the United States for two years. I passed through Philadelphia a number of times and heard the conductor announce its name, but felt no desire to descend in the city with my spiritual merchandise for at that time the city had not gained the good reputation it has nowadays. The Jews were few and their institutions poor in quantity and in quality. The Jewish community was small and meager in the spiritual sense.

I happened to learn that there is a synagogue for the Jews of Russia in Philadelphia and that the Rabbi is young in years and accomplished in wisdom as one of the oldest sages of genius. He has not been in Philadelphia long, since he came there to replace his father in law, Rabbi Eliezer Kleinberg, former Rabbi of Vilna, who had occupied the position in recent years. I was told that this young Rabbi is not only a great Torah scholar but also an enlightened and wise man, who has a profound outlook on life, and is extremely knowledgeable; a man who understands everything and takes part in everything. Indeed, the kind of Rabbi I have longed for. I have known such Rabbis, wise and enlightened, but left them behind in Russia...

* It was actually Ptolemy II Philadelpus (283-246 BCE), King of Hellenistic Egypt, who reestablished the ancient city of Rabbat B'nei Ammon as a Hellenistic city (Polis) and gave it his name (translator's note.)

Upon hearing this I immediately traveled to Philadelphia. The qualities I found in the young Rabbi surpassed everything I had heard. As soon as we got acquainted we forged a bond of faithful love, which still exists between us and between our households till this day.

Philadelphia is quite the opposite of Boston. The streets are as straight as a chessboard, creating squares the length and the width of the city. As difficult it is for the stranger to find his way in twisting, winding streets and alleys of Boston, so will he find his way with ease in Philadelphia and will not get lost even on the first day of his visit. When you know the number of a house you are bound to find it without difficulty and you need not ask for directions. The houses are built in a new and modern style. The municipal building is large and no less impressive than the great magnificent buildings of Paris or Berlin. There are only a few noisy streets that are full of life, like the streets of a metropolis, but the rest of the city is tranquil and quiet as if it were asleep. Hence the saying: "sleeping Philadelphia." This adds to the city's charm. You can be in the tumult of a big city, like in New York, if you so wish, but if you prefer rest, you just need to walk a few squares off Broad Street and you will find complete tranquility like that of a small town.

Accompanied by my friend, the young Rabbi Levinthal, who was my constant companion during my entire visit to Philadelphia, I went to visit the Sephardic Rabbi Sabato Morais. Before me stood a respectable looking old man, completely righteous and devoted wholeheartedly to traditional Judaism in its pure Sephardic form. His ideal was a Rabbnical Seminary in New York, which he had founded.

I had special satisfaction when I entered the courthouse with my friend. My accompanist did not identify the judge, as though he only wanted to show me an American judge on the

bench advancing the cause of justice. I looked at the judge who was seated on an elevated chair, at his large and shining black eyes, at his round head covered with black curly hair, at the pleasant charm of his darkish countenance, the relaxed smile on his lips, his piercing glance directed at the man standing before him about to answer his questions – and the scene captured my heart. I asked Rabbi Levinthal in a whisper:

"Tell me please, is the judge not a Jew, is he not one of our brethren?"

"I expected this question," Rabbi Levinthal answered with a smile, "I said to myself: let us see if you Sir, a recent arrival from dark Russia where a Jew may not be a mailman or street cleaner – would recognize a Jew on the seat of justice. Yes, Sir, you have recognized him. The judge is indeed a Jew, and an outstanding Jew at that, a traditional scholar who is also well versed in modern Jewish studies; a man interested in communal causes, a student of *Gemara* [Talmud] who writes Hebrew and has a large library. He supports Jewish writers, poor scholars, poets and authors who await his help. I am sure that you have heard of him in Europe -his name is Mayer Sulzberger."

"Yes, Sir, I have heard and read about this judge. What a wonderful impression it makes seeing a Jewish judge for the first time in my life. I would like to say the blessing of '*She-hechianu*' and replace its final clause, where we bless the Lord for reviving and sustaining us till 'this time,' with one blessing Him for sustaining and bringing us alive 'to this place'. Blessed be this land of freedom and equality!"

When the court proceedings ended the Rabbi introduced me to Judge Sulzberger. We accompanied him to his home where we discussed traditional and modern Jewish topics. Judge Sulzberger later became one of my close friends. We corresponded for many years, especially during the period

when he generously supported the national poet Naphtali Hertz Imber.

In Philadelphia I found my friend, the writer and Hebrew educator Mr. Hillel Malachovsky, son in law of the famous writer I. J. Weissberg of Kiev.

On of my most memorable hours in Philadelphia was spent at the historic building of Independence Hall, a magnificent structure in the center of the city. It was there that the first thirteen colonies, that freed themselves from English yoke with might and valor, declared their independence. The Liberty Bell is still standing in this historical site, the bell that announced to the world the outcome of the war of liberation and the victory of the heroes led by their commander George Washington. In this hall the sacred American document declaring the freedom of the people was first read; the declaration that was signed in the very hand of the founders of the greatest Republic in the world – the United States of America. The Declaration of Independence in its original form is hanging in the Hall till this day and read reverently by thousands of visitors.

I approached the Liberty Bell. I regarded it with respect and read the translation of the Biblical verse: 'You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants' [Leviticus 25,10]. This holy writ, a short verse from our ancient Holy Scripture, engraved on the new Liberty Bell not yet a hundred years old, evoked the feeling of national pride in me, the sacred feeling of 'Thou has chosen us'; as I saw that the people of America, the youngest of all nations, seeking a motto that would mark their liberty for all eternity, did not find an expressive saying in the Muslim Koran, nor in the Christian New Testament, but in our ancient Holy Torah. May this be remembered by our future generations in America.

I can say with satisfaction that I helped all the institutions established in the last thirty years in Philadelphia. The hostel,

the orphanage, the old age home, the *Talmud Torah* schools, the Sinai hospital, the synagogues, the sanitarium for tuberculosis patients, the national and Zionist associations such as the Society for Hebrew Literature – I aided the foundation and development of all these institutions together with Rabbi Levinthal and the communal worker Mr. Ya'acov Margaliyot, till they reached the position they have today.

Chapter 48

Canada is like the younger sister of the United States. It too extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Canada is under British rule as one of the British colonies but it is an independent state with its own government and parliament. Part of Canada used to be ruled by the French. A long war between France and Britain was waged over Canada that finally ended in English victory. Many of the generals who participated in the 1724 siege of Montreal were Sephardic Jews, like Emanuel de Cordova, Hananel Garcia and Yitzhak Miranda. Jews started to settle in Montreal after the British victory. The early settlers whose names are listed include Lazarus, Davies, Uriel, Orisko, Smauel Jacobis, Shimon Levi, Avraham Franks, Fernandez de Fonseca, Joseph Bindona, Levi Solomon and many others.

The first Jewish congregation in Montreal, *She'erit Yisrael*, was founded in 1768. The first settles were Spanish and Portuguese Jews who followed the Sephardic tradition in their daily life.

The Jews of Canada had no civil rights till 1831. On March 5th of that year the King of England signed the resolution of the Senate granting the Jews rights equal to those given to all other nationalities living in Canada.

After the pogroms in Russia in 1881 many Jews fled to Canada. They settled in the large cities: Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg, and brought Jewish Russian culture with them. A few hundred settled on the land with the aid of

the Baron Hirsch Foundation.

When I visited Montreal in 1898 there were 6,000 Jews living in the city. They were divided into different congregations according to their lands of origin: The Sephardic community *She'erit Yisrael*, founded in 1768, as previously mentioned; the congregation of Russian Jews, *B'nei Yisrael*, founded in 1858; The Rumanian Jewish congregation *Beth David* – 1888; The Galician Jewish congregation *Sha'arei Tefillah* – 1892. The *Hevrah Kadishah* [burial society] was established in 1895; also established in that year was a society dedicated to the study of the Talmud [*Beth Ha-Midrash Ha-Gadol Hevre Shass*], as well as *Ahavat Achim* society and a society dedicated to the study of Psalms [*Hevre Tehilim*]; there was also the *Heichal Emanuel*, founded in 1882. And so, when I arrived in Montreal I found the 6,000 immigrants divided into ten congregations with ten synagogues.

Montreal is a French name, its German equivalent is Koenigsberg, and in Hebrew this is similar to the name of our ancient city – *Har Melech* or *Tur Malka* in Aramaic, i.e. Royal Mount in English. The names of the streets are in French as well, each named for a Catholic 'saint'. There is also a Notre Dame in Montreal. The French language may be heard everywhere: at meetings, at street corners, in the post office and in all government institutions, since many of the residents are descendants of the early French settlers who came to Canada before the English. They speak Old French that differs from the modern language spoken in France today.

I have not felt the spirit of Catholicism so intensely as I did in Montreal ever since my stay in France and Belgium. Catholic priests walk in their uniforms on every street, there are religious processions with sacred images, groups of Jesuits, barefoot, their heads uncovered, walk through the streets singing, with incense burners and chanting bells preceding

them. The French do not assimilate with the English, do not adopt their language, their religion or their manner of dress. There are two nations residing in one land. In the United States there is no distinction between Catholics and Protestants in daily life. The division exists only inside the churches; outside their churches they are all Americans.

Montreal is a beautiful city, with magnificent streets, houses and gardens. The lovely well-cultivated mountain in its midst adds a special charm to it. Like a handsome king, so does the mountain look down at the lower parts of the city with its magnificent houses, broad well-paved streets, lush gardens full of proud, old and tall trees and fragrant flowers saturated by streams of silvery sunlit water flowing from fountains. This splendid picture that you see when standing on the mountain suits the name of the city well – "Montreal", Mountain of the King...

I have been in the United States for only two and a half years, and it is amazing how I have become attached to the country with bonds of love, as though I were a native born American, or perhaps even more so. A native born American does not feel the bliss of freedom for he never experienced slavery and oppression, never been under the burden of evil laws issued by the wicked kingdom in dark Russia. My case is different, I have known the taste of total exile; I have been expelled from my adoptive motherland – Russsia – '*Matushka*' – and have become attached to the young, free and powerful United States with all the chords of my afflicted soul.

I started missing the United States as soon as I crossed the Canadian border. Canada too is known to be a land of freedom with no limitations demanding an [internal] passport. And yet when I saw the first Canadian flag waving on one of the government buildings, I unconsciously felt a twitch of longing for the flag of stars and stripes. I am well aware that this is an

exaggerated sentimental feeling, for what are Canada or the United States to me? But this is a matter of the heart, not of logic and intellect.

I became outraged when I entered the post office to buy stamps and the clerk refused to take American money. Furthermore, he spoke to me harshly:

"Do you not know, Sir, that we do not belong to the United States. You are in Canada now!"

This irritated me, but later I was amused when I remembered that the same thing had happened to me in Koenigsberg, Germany, where the railroad clerk would not take Russian money from me. At that time I was neither angry nor irritated; on the contrary my heart rejoiced...

As for my national work, I found rocky soil in 1898 Montreal, soil unworthy of plowing and sowing. The majority of the Jews were simple people, the type that have no ideals of any kind, no awareness of communal or national needs. "A man must live as well as he can, and that is all," was their life's ideal. The upper stratum, the Sephardim of *She'erit Yisrael* congregation and Ashkenazim of *Sha'ar Shamayim* congregation, were all staunch British patriots, and were too afraid to even conceive of the idea of Jewish nationalism, so as not to tamper, Heaven Forbid, with their British patriotism. Miserable creatures! How could they know that a few decades later Britain itself would become partner to Zionism and the Balfour Declaration would become a principle of British policy.

There were few select people in Montreal who understood and appreciated the light shed by the great luminary Dr. Herzl. One of them was the young Rabbi A. M. Ashinsky. Even at this early stage I found him to be a loyal and devoted Zionist, full of sacred love for his people, his land, his religion and his language. He was an excellent speaker in both Yiddish and English, a diligent communal worker in service of all public

causes. He was well loved by both the older and the younger generations - the former respected him for his knowledge of ancient literature, and the latter for his understanding of English literature and for his tolerance. He served both generations faithfully: he instructed the older generation in Talmud within the framework of the society dedicated to the purpose [*Hevre Shass*] like the great rabbis overseas would do; as for the young – he would deliver English speeches about the national movement and Jewish History to them.

Second only to him was Mr. Lazarus Cohen, President of *Sha'arei Shamaim* congregation. He was a rich merchant from Russia, a fine gentlemanlike middle class homeowner with a sensitive soul. He was one of the first supporters of the Zionist Movement in Montreal, who participated in the *Shivat Zion* association of New York together with the famous communal worker Adam Rosenberg.

Rabbi A. M. Ashinsky and Mr. Cohen managed to attract an important force to the Zionist Movement in the person of Mr. C. De Sola, one of the leaders of the Sepahrdic community who was to become President of the Zionist Federation of Canada for many years. These three people laid the foundation for the Zionist Movement not only in Montreal but also in the other Canadian cities of Toronto, Winnipeg and Hamilton.

Chapter 49

In the year 1908 [sic*] my doctors advised me to go to Europe, to the baths of Ems, to cure my throat, which muscles revolted from over work. On June 17th I boarded the Dutch ship Potsdam. The band was playing. The burning rays of the sun flooded the ship and its hundreds of passengers in a sea of light, as they stood there, hats off, and bid farewell to those escorting them, waving their hats and top hats. The woman bid goodbye in their own way: with an artificial smile on their lips and signs of tears in their eyes. The ship moved. A mixture of sounds was in the air: the whistle of the ship, the blessings of the passengers and their escorts, "Goodbye," "Go in Peace," uttered by different people in a variety of languages, in a mixture of voices of men and women, old and young – all this inspired a special mood upon you, a mood of happiness and longing. It is the sudden severance of thousands and myriads of spiritual cords that connect peoples' souls in love and longing.

An hour has passed. The ship is making its way through the waves and the passengers are settling down in their cabins each keeping to himself. Tranquility was restored to my soul as I compared this voyage from America to Europe with my

* The Hebrew original gives the year as 1898 but the indication on the next page that the voyage from Europe to America had taken place thirteen years earlier, as well as the historical background described in chapter 53, point to a date later than July 1908 (David Wolffsohn's visit to Russia.) (translator's note.)

voyage across this very sea thirteen years ago from Europe to America. Back then I was an immigrant, a tree uprooted from its soil where it had been planted and where it had grown for forty consecutive years. I was forcefully uprooted 'from my native land, from my father's house,' from my family, from my culture and literature by a storm of wrath, by winds of tyranny, by men of blood and deceit, evil servants of the libel heeding Czar. They throw me into the bottom of a ship sailing abroad a great sea, a ship that was foreign to me in every way, its captain, its sailors, its passengers, its language, customs and food were all strange and foreign. For ten days I sat among them, 'lonely and stunned,' 'like a dumb man who cannot speak up,' 'like one who does not hear,' without knowing where, to whom and for what purpose I am traveling – yes, that was me on board the French ship La Bourgania headed from Europe to America. Thirteen years have passed and here I am going from America to Europe on board the Dutch ship Potsdam. But Great God, how advantageous my current trip is

In comparison with that of the past – they differ from each other like day and night, light and darkness, like freedom and servitude. I am now traveling of my own will and decision, nobody has forced me, I am a free citizen, harbored and protected by the young nation of the great and strong republic of the United States. And I am no longer traveling as a mute, I have mastered the language of the world, the rich English language, not unknown to the Dutch captain and his sailors. I am traveling with some of my brethren, men of my people, who, just like me, are free citizens – we all consider ourselves completely free, speak as we will, and we all know where we are going, to whom and for what purpose. I compared my two trips on the sea in my mind and my lips whispered: "how accursed is tyranny, how blessed is freedom!"

Next morning a rumor spread on the ship that one of the

passengers had died suddenly during the night. He was thirty-five years old and was buried in a cold and damp grave in the middle of the sea. It was as thought an electric current had sent shock waves among the passengers. The women were most frightened and wanted to know the identity of the deceased and the cause of his death. I addressed the captain who informed me that the unfortunate passenger was a young Dutchman. He had been terminally ill before boarding the ship and his friends tried to dissuade him from traveling but he did not listen to them. He was in a hurry to see his wife and children after several years of separation. He boarded the ship full of hope and energy, expecting to reach his home in peace. However, the sea air had an adverse effect on him, his ailing heart failed and he was caught in the palm of death.

Our sages of old have taught us that everything on earth can also be found at sea. And so there are funerals at sea as well. And yet a funeral on land does not leave an impression for we live with the land during our entire lives. The funeral of the dead preformed at sea casts fear and horror.

Nighttime. All the passengers are asleep. The captain gives the signal and the ship halts in the heart of the sea. Everything is ready in the hospital cabin. The ship doctor, the captain and his deputy enter the hospital. The doctor officially confirms the death and gives permission for the burial. The sailors wrap the dead body in a cloth, place it on a thick board and tie it to the board with ropes. They place a heavy piece of iron at the head of the board and carry the body to the end of the ship. The captain, doctor and deputies remove their hats and follow the deceased. They lower the corpse into the sea very quietly. For a few moments the waves carry it in their bosoms and soon it dives to the bottom of the sea. The captain gives the signal, the ship continues its course, only the number of passengers has decreased by one...

On the fourth day of my trip a young Israelite named Abraham Levin pleased my national sentiments. This youngster, born in Riga, sanctified the name of Israel in the small world of the ship, inhabited by people of different nationalities, who had various opinions about the people of Israel, most of them, obviously, tending toward anti-Semitism.

Mr. Levin, a young intelligent man was not wealthy. He worked as a deputy director in a New York factory where he earned a modest living. A letter from his native town, Riga, informed him that his old mother was sick on her deathbed. She knew her end was near and expressed her wish to see her only son before her death. A loyal son, Abraham Levin completed the preparations for the trip in a few days, borrowed money for his expenses and was traveling with us to fulfill his mother's wish. The trip seems long to him, he is in a hurry, various thoughts trouble him, robbing him of his sleep and so he wanders along the deck of the second class at midnight. At two o'clock in the morning while all the passengers are asleep in their cabins, Mr. Levin is walking alone on the deck. Suddenly he sees a wallet on the floor. He picks it up, opens it and finds $2,000 inside. He takes the wallet to his cabin, waits till the morning and goes up to the captain to hand over the find. The captain regards him with respect and writes his name down.

Mr. Levin bids goodbye to the captain and is about to go down stairs when suddenly the door to the captain's cabin opens and a farmer from California pushes in and tells the captain with great anxiety about the disaster that has befallen him. He has lost all his money, $2,000. The captain asks the farmer several questions and the answers prove that he is the owner of the find.

"Here is your property," the captain tells the farmer, "and

you should give thanks to this young man for his integrity," and he points at Mr. Levin.

The Christian farmer from California embraces the Jewish youth, begging him in tears to take as much of his money as he wishes. Yet Mr. Levin would not touch the money.

"Are you rich?" the captain asks Levin.

"No" answers Levin and tells the captain who he is, what he is doing and where he is headed.

"Why shouldn't you take a few dollars?" the captain asks him a second time, "it could certainly come in useful at this point.

"I do not want money I did not earn," Levin answers "this man has lost his money, I found it and it is my duty to restore the lost possession to its owner. I have done my duty and deserve no thanks."

"Yes indeed," the captain said to the people around him, "had Shakespeare seen such a spectacle between a Jew and a Christian, would he not have produced a different version of Shylock?"

All the passengers respected Mr. Levin whose integrity bestowed honor on his people.

Chapter 50

The morning is clear and bright. The quiet tranquil sea reflects the blue sky. The ship sails slowly on the small waves of the sea. The passengers are sitting comfortably on the three decks of the ship. The poorest passengers of the third class regard those of the second class with envious eyes, while they regard the first class passengers in the same way. The sounds of the ship orchestra are heard from the first class as it plays various national anthems. The first to be played was the American anthem, followed by the applause of the 'Yankees'. Then came the Dutch anthem, since the ship was property of a Dutch company. The third anthem played was the forceful anthem of Germany, greeted by the applause of the German passengers. So it was when the French, English and Italian anthems were played. Even the Russian anthem found people to cheer it among the five Russian passengers on board.

At that time I felt like prophet Jonah did when, laying in the hold of the ship, he was asked: 'What is your country, and of what people are you?' he said to them: 'I am a Hebrew, I worship the Lord, the God of Heaven, who made both sea and land.' That is to say: "I have no country, my people is not my own, I am a citizen of the world not of my own volition, and only the God of Heaven, the Creator, the Owner of the universe is the pivot of my aspirations and to Him I am devoted. I have been wandering the world for two thousand years, a cosmopolite by coercion, I abound in every country and not one can I call my own. I live among many nations but I am not one, I speak all

languages but my own language I have forgotten, I contribute to all literatures but I have abandoned the four thousand year old literature that is my own, I hear all national anthems and I have forgotten my own..."

And so I sat in the hold of the vessel, in a corner, national grief tearing and infuriating my heart. I wished for a man who would listen to the anguish of my soul, someone in whose ears I could unload the burden of my heart, perhaps speaking would bring relief – I searched for such a man and did not find him.

Suddenly a young, lively and agile man approached me. He had black burning eyes and a black bird trimmed in French style which added charm to his graceful Jewish face, while his nose, an eagle's nose, indicated more than anything else that he was of the seed of Israel.

"If I am not mistaken" – he started speaking to me in English – "you are the Reverent Masliansky?"

"I am indeed, Sir," I answered , "and what is your name?"

"My name is Loeb, the painter. I heard you deliver a Zionist speech, Sir, at Copper Union during the reception in honor of Joseph Cowen, the London Zionist. I am acquainted with Israel Zangwill and have been a Zionist for years."

I felt relieved and my mood improved. I found in him a friend who shared my ideas. We engaged in conversation, and the two Zionists sat in the ship's hold like two 'pigeons in their cotes' pouring their hearts out to one another. We made friends and spent the entire time on board together.

* * *

On board ship in the middle of the ocean, where man casts off the worries and troubles of the land and becomes free of the tumult of life and the bustle of the big city, his character and qualities change as well. He befriends his fellow passengers

and feels like a child, meek, helpless and dependent on others. All the passengers in all the classes, rich and poor, Jew and gentile, believers and complete heretics, are equal in this small yet large home floating on the water called "ship". This situation has an effect on human psychology so that people become patient and tolerant and may well listen placidly to opinions and ideas they would not abide on land.

This impression struck me as I took my walk on the top deck of the ship. I saw a number of Catholic priests standing with a bunch of youngsters as one of the group amused them all, bringing them to the point of hysterical laughter with his jokes and anecdotes. He was making fun of everything and first and foremost of Catholicism. Everybody laughed and the priests smiled peacefully even though his arrows were aimed at them – he shot off scientific proof mixed with spicy jokes, stinging anecdotes and pointed folk proverbs. I stood there amazed at his power of speech and what is more, at his vast knowledge and proficiency of German literature. Goethe, Schiller, Schopenhauer, Hiene, Boerne and Nietzsche were at his service, and he quoted one saying of theirs' after another. He was no stranger to French and English literature as well and he based his arguments on the words of Shakespeare, Darwin, Spencer and Bockel. He spoke perfect rich German and it was obvious to me that he was a freethinking, Christian born, German.

I was totally surprised when my ship companion Mr. Loeb came over to me, arm in arm with the German and introduced him to me as Bernard Mintz. This heretic who ridiculed religion and discovered his God and religion in the book *Kraft und Stoff* by Buechner, turned out to be a descendent of the Rabbi MaHaRaM Mintz, one of great scholars of the end of the 15th century whose responsa occupy an important place in Rabbinic literature.

When we became better acquainted he told me that he still has manuscripts hand written by his great forebear. His own father too was Orthodox and raised him according to Jewish religion. His elementary education was in a *heder* and he can still remember what he studied as a child. But once he was free of his father's supervision he drew away from Judaism and became estranged to it. He is a German, body and soul – a university graduate, an army veteran and now a merchant in New York; he lives on the West Side and has no contacts with other Jews. When I asked him if he knew about our National Movement, the Zionist idea or of Modern Hebrew literature – he eyed me like a stranger. The only poet he knew of was Yehudah Ha-Levi and not directly, from the source, but through the poetry of Heine. It is to his credit that he was aware that Heine was mistaken in attributing the poem *Lechah Dodi,* recited on Sabbath Eve all over the Diaspora, to Yehudah Ha-Levi, while its author was Rabbi Shlomo Ha-Levi who lived many years later. That was the sum of his Jewish knowledge.

I discussed this amazing character with Mr. Loeb and we both reached the same conclusion, namely, that only a people that had been in exile for thousands of years can produce such knowledgeable and talented sons and not benefit from them, for only children of a poor and destitute people leave their own camp and give their talents to strangers. That is the meaning of the biblical warning in the book of Deuteronomy: 'Your sons and daughters shall be delivered to another people, while you look on, and your eyes shall strain for them constantly, but you shall be helpless'.

Chapter 51

All of a sudden the sight of the sea completely changes. Yesterday and till noon today the sky was blue, the sun was shining in all its splendor, the sea as smooth as a mirror, and now all of a sudden – Good Lord, how sad the sight. The sun is gone, its glow has disappeared, the sky has darkened and a misty blackness enveloped the Potsdam. Furious waves, great billows, rage around her on all sides shaking her to and fro as though she were a little play ball. All the passengers have gone down to their cabins, their hearts burdened with sadness.

In the evening I mastered my courage and went up to the deck. There was deep darkness all around. I felt my way like a blind man and ascended to the top deck, place of the captain and crew. I sat in a corner, my soul plunging into the dark abyss. Suddenly I heard a voice from the top of the mast crying out slowly in lingering tones in English: "All is Well."

This meant that everything was in order now. The call arose my interest, and at the first chance I had I asked one of the deputies for its origin and significance. He told me that every night one of the sailors climbs to the top of the mast and stands on guard on a small porch up there observing the sea. He watches and listens, following the course of the ship in the deep sea to make sure there are no collisions with other ships and calls out every half hour "All is Well."

This imaginary herald had its influence on my state of mind and brought forth various thoughts and ideas: our small world is as a furious tumultuous sea, its waves beating with

wrath. Each of us is sailing on the sea in his own peculiar ship. How fine it would be if we watched the distance to avoid any impediment and harm during our life's course, and from time to time called out: "All is Well."

* * *

It is a fine beautiful summer morning on the sea again. Harmony between the sky above and the waters below has been restored. The sun sends its rays generously and open handedly, its silvery sparks caress the quiet waves and cast a dreamy sleep on the sea... the tumultuous furious waves of yesterday have disappeared, retreated to the far corners, hid themselves at the bottom of the ocean. Now, in the light of the sun, they are ashamed, even confounded, of their fury and mischievous behavior yesterday.

The Potsdam sails slowly, a quiet wind blows modestly, the passengers are all happy and lighthearted, inhaling the fresh pleasant sea air of this bright summer day.

How great and exalted are you, the sun, source of light, how great your power to revive, to restore the soul of the universe! How appropriate are the words of one of our prophets who described you saying: 'a sun of victory shall rise to bring healing,' indeed your wings-rays bring balm and healing.

* * *

For the first time in my life I saw a sunset over the ocean in all its majesty and splendor. I stood at the edge of the ship, on the upper deck, next to the captain, my eyes westward towards the setting sun. I saw the great evening sun, the sun of fire, queen of the day, treasure of life and light, setting slowly, descending and immersing itself in the waters of the horizon, diving into the abyss, a moment – its last rays shined and then disappeared... the sky became red as fire, flames reflected

in the edge of the sea on the horizon, as though the sky was ashamed and the sea confounded for the parting of the radiant sun. A few more minutes passed and a pale moon rose. Slowly and modestly it set out to replace the great sun...

I stood motionless and spell bound as I watched this wonderful act of creation and my lips uttered the words of David, the master poet of Israel:

'Others go down to the sea in ships...
They have seen the works of the Lord
And His wonders in the deep.'

* * *

Land! Land! Land! – the cry resounds from every corner of the ship. All the passengers in their different classes rejoiced and were merry to see the English shore on one side and the French shore on the other. The lighthouses, fishing boats, groups of sea gulls hovering above and around the ship, all announced the proximity of land. A different spirit now prevails on board. Wherever you look you see happy delighted faces and festive expressions. The German Jewish jester, Bernhard Mintz, is especially in high spirits, more so than during the entire trip. His jokes have increased in sharpness, and his jests are even wittier. He is back to his favorite topic - attacking the Catholic Church, joking about the two keys, the key of Heaven in the hands of Peter and that of the Earth in the hands of the Pope in the Vatican. The wretched priests stand calmly in the midst of the cheering crowd, listening to the dishonor poured on their sanctuary with supposed indifference, and do not answer a word.

I then understood the practical talent imbued in the Catholic soul. They are brought up from early childhood to see, hear and remain silent, for noise and tumult are of no avail. As a minority they are quiet, modest and humble, and even when

they are in power they speak little and do much. This has been their conduct all through the middle ages. Thousands of people were burnt at the stake, limbs were removed from the living, as they did much and spoke little. We the children of Israel do not act that way. We do not control ourselves and know when silence is due. We always cry out loudly even when time or place show it is in vain – and we know not how to do things. Our strength is by the word of mouth only and that is our weakness. As our Father Isaac said when describing our character: 'The voice is the voice of Jacob, yet the hands are the hands of Esau.' Jacob with his voice and Esau with his hands...

The Potsdam reached the shore of France at Boulonge. The passengers bound for France bid goodbye to their fellow travelers. Longing seized the passengers who remained on board; they miss their new friends with whom they entered a covenant of friendship just yesterday. Human beings with all their drawbacks and weaknesses are social creatures who yearn for society and friendship, and when they associate with one another they become attached and find it hard to part. Yet these delicate feelings find place in their hearts only when they leave the tumult of daily life and are carried in the bosom of mother nature; then they become soft hearted and delicate, peaceful and good natured like a babe suckling at his mother's breasts.

We see the coast of Holland from a distance. A few hours later the ship sails regally among the green and beautiful shores of Holland, so pleasing to all the observing passengers. The small white houses standing on the lagoons of little Holland have a special charm and spell.

A young Dutch woman who had lived in the United States for years, cried out in hysterical happiness upon seeing her homeland: "Oh, Holland, how I love you, dear land of my

birth!" and overwhelmed by excitement she started to sob.

The patriotic outburst of the Dutch woman made a great impression on me. My eyes met those of my friend, the painter Loeb, we embraced and kissed each other with an unspoken question on both our lips:

"Where is our homeland?"

Is this a coincidence? I sailed on the Potsdam, came to the city of Rotterdam, stayed in Hotel Vandam, and am now going to see the city of Amsterdam. I have become a Dutchman unintentionally...

Chapter 52

I took the German train to Cologne on the river Rhine. The Germans are proud of this river of theirs and for a good reason. Its shores are beautiful, the high mountains on both its sides are covered with dense forests and fertile vineyards, all so gorgeous to the passenger's eye. The Rhine reminded me of the Hudson as it flows through the mountains from New York to Albany. And yet, the mountains of Germany, cultivated by skillful hands, demonstrate not only their natural glory but also the energy of the German people.

From Cologne I traveled to Ems. This healing center is located in a small German town - it numbered only one thousand inhabitants at the time - and yet it is full of charm and beauty. Leaving the railway station and taking but one step on the soil of Ems you are already amazed by the beauty of the surrounding landscape. The houses are not tall and yet they are built in peculiar taste and resemble works of art. The streets are not particularly wide, but are perfectly clean. Large trees grow on both sides of the street with various flowers, roses and lilies, planted between them. The city lies in a valley among mountains covered with green forests. The river Ems, which flows into the Rhine, passes through the town. The sanitarium is in the center of the town, where thousands of people suffering from ailments of the throat and nose come to drink the wonderful mineral water. Every day sees the arrival of different guests from various countries. The lists of guests include counts, princes and people of rank, among

them Baron Rosen, the Russian envoy to the United States, the Baroness Alphonse de Rothschild, our kinswoman, with her family. As you stroll through the broad boulevards in the garden you hear many different languages spoken like at the tower of Babel. And yet peace and quiet reigns among these Babylonians. They are all careful to treat each other with respect and beg forgiveness in French for any mishap, while the other party answers "you are forgiven" in their native language. The patients are polite and amicable to each other and it seems as though there is an international, perhaps cosmopolitan, bond uniting them. There is no animosity between races, no class differences, no pedigree, only love and brotherhood, peace and friendship. Baron Rosen, the Russian nobleman, is standing and cleansing his Russian nose next to a Jewish cantor from a small town who is rubbing his soar throat. This is true of all the recuperating guests. When shall all humanity reach such a degree? When will human beings be so good and pleasant to each other, the strong will not harm the weak, and every man would recognize the other's equal right to live on this earth? Oh, when will our eyes witness peace among races, nations and classes like that prevailing among the people recovering in Ems? When will the End of Days that our prophets have foreseen arrive? Oh, when?

I spent four weeks in Ems and all that time I followed the words of Ezekiel 'I sat there stunned among them.' I sat in silence as the doctor ordered and did not utter a word. Turning a professional talker into a 'mute' is no trivial matter. I observed the doctor's commandment of 'thou shall not' and I think that keeping still was more beneficial to me than the water.

I tend to believe that the goddess of singing dwells in Ems. Most of the patients were singers, actors, artists, speakers, preachers, Catholic bishops, Protestant pastors, great

diplomatic orators, rabbis and cantors. All these people whose opinions and worldviews differed like east from west, became colleagues in silence. All were united by one aspiration and one goal – to cure and improve their tool of expression and continue their spiritual work. The mineral waters in their innocence did not discriminate between them and cured the throat of the ardent anti-Semite as readily as they did that of the liberal orator. Indeed, nature knows no jealousy and hatred. How happy people would have been had they learnt its ways.

* * *

I spotted a robust and courageous looking man walking upright along the boulevards, his hair arranged in curls down to his neck. Who is this happy man, courted by the richest and most beautiful women all seeking his company? I asked and inquired and learned that he is my kinsman, a descendent of our father Jacob, the famous Russian tenor Tartakov. There have been many world famous Russian singers of Jewish descent, yet who knew their origin? And what is worse – they themselves have concealed their Judaism. But here too, nature intervenes and reveals their secret through eagle shaped noses and curly hair...

* * *

The Americans staying at the Hotel de France, myself included, agreed to rise on the morning of the 4th of July and celebrate the American Independence Day. All of us, American citizens, rose happy and lighthearted, fastened small American flags to our lapels and went to the sanatorium. There we were surprised to see large American flags with their stars and strips waving on the great hotels. Soon the sound of the American anthem played by the official band was heard. We

applauded in satisfaction. Furthermore, American songs were played all day long and even Yankee Doodle was not excluded. Our happiness, however, was not complete when we heard the audience, musicians from various countries, saying that American music is still soft, primitive and underdeveloped. I must admit that as an American I found this opinion irritating but was obliged to acquiesce at their judgment for two reasons: first of all I am not a musician and secondly I was under the doctor's order to keep my mouth sealed, and there is no protest without speech...

* * *

My friends and I visited the town of Koblenz. It is not a very large town, the number of its residents is fifty five thousand, but it is a lovely town known for its citadel and the magnificent monument for the Emperor Wilhelm I located on the confluence of the rivers Rhine and Mosel. The ancient palace of the kings, built in Koblenz at the beginning of the 16th century, served in its time as the counts' castle. The Shah of Persia and Alexander II, Emperor of Russia, were entertained as guests in this palace. Its style is very simple on the outside, but the fabulous halls inside with their expensive furniture fascinate the visitor's eye. Each hall is coated in the same manner as its furniture, and each is designed in the style of a certain country and furnished to suit the taste of its people. There is a Russian hall, a Turkish hall, French, Italian, Chinese, Japanese halls etc. In the Turkish halls there are expensive plaques decorated with verses from the Koran in Arabic that were engraved by the Turkish Sultan in his own hand. In the Russian hall there are two small golden tables with chessboards and golden pieces, some of them signed by Alexander II himself. Large portraits of the medieval kings and princes of Germany are displayed on the walls, eyeing the

visitor with a majestic glance as though they were alive till this very day. And now? The last King of Germany is in Holland, exiled from his land and honor...*

* Wilhelm II, the last German Emperor abdicated on Nov 9th 1919, following the defeat in World War I and escaped to Holland. The final sentence of this chapter was obviously written after the events it describes. (translator's note.)

Chapter 53

My time of healing at Ems has come to an end. I have recuperated in body and spirit. I missed America and my spiritual activity on behalf of American Jewry. On my way back I spent a few days in Cologne again. I visited the Central Zionist Bureau and the editorial offices of its organs *Die Welt* and *Ha-Olam*. I was cordially received by Mr. Berger, the editor of *Die Welt,* Dr. Jacob Klatchkin, director of the Jewish National Fund, and Dr. Orenstein of The Hague, Holland, and introduced to the entire staff of the Zionist Bureau.

I met the famous artist Pilichowski of Paris at the Bureau. He is an admirer of Jewish art and totally devoted to Judaism. At the end of a long conversation the artist asked me:

"Would you, Sir, like to see Dr. Herzl's room? We have transferred the room, the study of the Leader of Zionism, in the exact form it had during his lifetime, including its furniture and books, and it is here in the Bureau."

He opened a large door, and how amazed I was to see a life size portrait of Herzl, in full stature, an exact likeness of him as he ascended to the Congress platform. The portrait is an artistic achievement and presents a live image of Herzl, his handsome looks, the looks of a king, with his black penetrating eyes and his magnificent head, the head of a prince from ancient times. The portrait was painted by Pilichowski, as an historical monument, at the request of the Zionist Congress.

A feeling of deep grief seized me when I looked at the desk and chair occupied by this greatest Israelite of the nineteenth

century, the author of *Der Judenstaat* and *Altneuland*, the visionary who dreamt the dream of his reviving nation.

I then went down to the offices of the Jewish National Fund, where I was shown the Golden Book - a work of art in Jewish style and taste. I looked through it and found the names of several renowned Zionists inscribed for eternity.

Dr. Bodenheimer, Head of the Jewish National Fund, is totally devoted to the Zionist idea and to the Fund. We had a long conversation in which he kept bringing forth one idea after another, all aimed at increasing the income of the Fund. It was good to observe the devotion of the German Zionists to the Zionist idea.

* * *

On the morning of July 28th David Wolffsohn, the President of the Zionist Organization and successor of Dr. Herzl, returned from his trip to Russia. His aim was to meet Prime Minister Stolypin and ask him to cease the persecution of the Zionists. At noon I visited Wolffsohn in his office and spent about an hour with him. We discussed the Zionist Movement in general and that in America in particular. Wolffsohn made a favorable impression on me with his noble face and his appearance typical of an important and respectable citizen. He was well educated, amiable and an excellent speaker in German and Hebrew – to sum, a Russian Jew imbued with German culture, clever, practical and self respecting.

A particularly interesting part of the conversation dealt with his secretary at the time, Nahum Sokolow, who had been out of Cologne for a number of weeks. I sat at one of the Bureau's desks and took a pen in my hand to write something in my notepad.

"This pen that you are holding," Wolffsohn told me "can tell you a lot about the work that Mr. Sokolow burdens him with

daily. At seven in the morning he writes an editorial in German for one of the local papers that he edits. At eight he drinks a glass of milk, takes a short walk, seats himself at his desk again and writes an article in English for *The Jewish Chronicle* or another paper. He then writes an article in Polish, his mother tongue, for a Polish paper. At twelve o'clock he has a quick lunch, rests for half an hour and turns to editing the organs of the World Zionist Organization, *Ha-Olam* in Hebrew and *Die Welt* in German, till six in the evening. After dinner he retires to do his own literary work in a variety of languages and literatures."

This is how Wolffsohn described the daily work of Mr. Nahum Sokolow.

In the evening David Wolffsohn received me in his fine apartment, where I found Dr. Klatchkin, Dr. Orenstein and the painter Pilichowski. David Wolffsohn was the chief conversationalist in our small party of devoted Zionists. He charmed us with his conversation for five whole hours. When he started describing Dr. Herzl's activities during the travels on which he accompanied him there were tears in our eyes. The description was so charming and touching that it would have penetrated even the souls of neutral, impartial, people demonstrating to them the great loss the people of Israel had suffered with the death of Dr. Herzl.

Wolffsohn then conveyed some details of his journey to Russia and his talks with Stolypin to us. He spoke to the Russian Prime Minister openly and when Stolypin asked him whether he could vouch for the Zionist Movement that it has no socialists or anarchists among its ranks, Wolffsohn responded as follows: "Can you vouch for your officials that there are no anarchists among them?" "No" answered Stolypin." If so", Wolffsohn added, "how can the Minister expect me to vouch for tens of thousands of people that are not dependent on me,

and claim that each and every one of them shares my views and ideas?"

When Wolffsohn mentioned the six million Jews living in Russia to Stolypin the latter commented:

"The estimate of six million for the Jews of Russia is not correct; Kindly announce on my behalf that in our country there are more than seven million Jews."

The other ministers also received Wolffsohn cordially and he was sure that they would remain loyal to their promise and cease persecuting the Zionists.

It was three o'clock in the morning when dear David Wolffsohn resumed telling episodes and stories from the life of Herzl. We were especially enthusiastic about one which, to use the language of the Hasidim, brought us to spiritual elevation.

"When we, Herzl of blessed memory and myself, were traveling to the Land of Israel," Wolffsohn started relating the story in a dramatic tone, "we sailed from Port Sa'id at night. We all knew that we were due to arrive in Jaffa in the morning. Like the rest of the passengers I went down to my cabin and fell asleep. Herzl remained above on the deck. I slept soundly, when suddenly at three o'clock in the morning, I heard a voice calling:

'David, David! Are you asleep?' a hand was stroking my face, 'David, would you not like to see our mother Zion? Wake up, dawn has risen over the towers of Jaffa, they are shining at us from afar.'

I rose on my bed and was amazed. Herzl stood before me, handsomely dressed as though he was about to greet a king. With a shining face and burning eyes he said to me:

'Rise David, dress and let us go to greet our mother.'

I got dressed. We went up to the top deck and saw the tower tops of Jaffa glittering toward us from far. We embraced and

kissed each other and our lips whispered: 'Our homeland, our mother Zion.'"

* * *

The next day I traveled back to Holland, to Roterdam. I stayed at the Windam hotel and boarded the ship Amsterdam en route back to America.

To the Land of Israel

I. Farewell

Tuesday, May 3rd, 5681 [1921]

In an hour from now the Aquitania will sail from New York harbor. This floating palace will absorb all of us, passengers of various nationalities, and carry us on the great and turbulent seas to the other shore. Then the passengers will separate, each going his own way perhaps never to meet again, never to be under one administration, that of the sea captain, again.

My wife and I are standing on the deck. Our farewell was both difficult and wonderful. Twenty-seven of our descendants – children and grandchildren – came to escort us on our journey to the Land of Israel, as did many friends. A kiss, a hand shake, a tear shed, a pleasant smile, a hug, a look without words – all join together to form one melody, one message: "Bon Voyage, go thee in peace!" And this sound resounds so pleasant and yet so painful in your ears and you feel that not only your own loved ones but all the thousands of people on the pier, all the myriads pouring out of the streets, all of New York are calling out to you: "Bon Voyage, go thee in peace!"

A special mood prevails around us. The atmosphere is full of love, longing and sadness. Friends and relatives surround each passenger. There is hugging and kissing everywhere. Warm blessings in different languages rise up and you imagine that you can understand them all...

A special feeling came upon me as I ascended the Aquitania. I imagined myself carried suddenly to another world, a strange

and small and yet beautiful, pleasant and charming world. I was sure that not only I but all the other passengers had the same feeling. Oh! Would all the people of the world be like the passengers of the Aquitania, how good and pleasant would life in this world be! The world leaders would not have gathered for Conferences, Germany would not have been penalized, Poland would not persecute the Jews, the American Senators would not occupy themselves with shutting the gates of the country, and as for the Jews – who could be wise enough and know what the Jews would have done in such a setting. Good Lord, I thought to myself, why can human beings not understand that their entire life span in this world in the dimension of time, is akin to sailing a ship in the dimension of space. We bid goodbye to each other every day, but none of us knows who the travelers are and who their companions....

I am drawn to one of the parting scenes. What a great and wonderful moment! An old man of over 90, who emigrated from Russia to America thirty-four years ago, is now going to the Land of Israel to die and be buried in the Holy Land. His sons and grandsons came to bid goodbye to their father and grandfather. There are tears in their eyes. They are now seeing their beloved father for the last time. But the old man does not weep or shed a tear. He is happy. For him it is a festive day. He is going to the land of his fathers to die there. Was this not his life long hope and dream? Now he is old, he has had the merit of seeing his offspring - children and grandchildren, to the fourth generation. He loves them all, yearns to see them, to be near them. And yet he senses that his days are numbered. He hears the voice of our mother Rachel calling out to him: "come to me, my son, and expire in my bosom..." and he says farewell to his children and ascends to the Land of Israel to die in the bosom of his mother, the mother of Israel, she who 'weeps for her children' who are gone and awaits their return

to their country... and the old man consoles them:

"Why are you weeping? I am traveling to die in the Land of Israel."

But the children, like children, are standing on the hard pier of New York harbor for more than an hour now. They see their old father on the verge of his journey, as he is about to leave, and their hearts cry secretly and send tears to their eyes. They hug and kiss their father yet another time.

Can they possibly share the old man's feelings?

The final minute has come. The ship sounds its siren. Soon the ropes will be untied and bridges connecting the ship to the pier withdrawn. Those accompanying the passengers on board hurry. A final kiss, a final hug, a last blessing. What a great, what a sacred moment!

The Aquitania is now free from its shackles. The contact between her and the pier has ended. The last ropes have been loosened. The last bridge brought down. She stands alone, a separate world, a world on its own. Yet thousands of chords connect the people on board with the people on the pier. Each can still feel the taste of the warm farewell kisses of their loved ones. Thousands of hearts beat as one and no removed bridges can separate them... Here are our twenty-seven children and grandchildren. Is there a force in the world to separate us? I look at my wife's face as she stands beside me in silence regarding her children with a mother's eyes. Her countenance is sad. The separation between parents and children is very hard indeed!

A siren sounds and a buzz, and 'the palace' stirs from its place. It seems to move with difficulty, as though it is sighing... I guess all beings leave their place of rest with difficulty... and yet the ship moves slowly, regal and strong. It is confident of its way and proud of its special world. Thousands of handkerchiefs and top hats are waving in the air. Cries in a

variety of languages fill the air, mix with one another and are absorbed in the general tumult.

At the last moment I look at my friends and relatives. Here are my children; here is a group of Zionists waving American flags and the flags of Zion; here are the representatives of various institutions: hospitals, *Talmud Torah* schools, orphanages and kindergartens. All have come to bid me farewell. My heart is full of gratitude to them. Blessed is he who has many friends, and how pleasant it is when they all gather around you as you leave for a long journey, a journey to the Land of Israel.

"Shalom! Farewell Masliansky and Mrs. Masliansky! Cheers!" – I hear the excited cries of the group of Zionists waving their American and Jewish flags. Then I hear the voices of my children and my friends wishing us all the best. I bid them all farewell from the depth of my heart and soul. We send our wishes to each other through the air. Top hats and handkerchiefs waving in the air take the place of words that become dimmer and dimmer. Soon only figures, not faces, are visible. Hands are raised, handkerchiefs waved, top hats – everything is mixed, blends together. The Aquitania sails regally on the wide Hudson River, towards the great ocean.

I strain my eyes and look at the pier, but I can see nothing. The great and beautiful city of New York is spreading before my eyes, reminding me that she too is a relative of mine and I should bid her goodbye too as I take my leave.

"Goodbye, New York! Farewell!"

We are all standing on the deck and a feeling of fatigue overcomes us; we feel the excitement and the nervous strain. Gradually the passengers retire each to his special quarters. We too are tired and spent and so retire to what will be our private corner for the few days we are to spend in this small world called the Aquitania.

II. On Board the Aquitania

Wednesday, May 4th.
We slept soundly on our first night on board. Our minds were full of farewell impressions and intoxicated by sea air, occupied by dreams and visions of the pier and of the sea; the farewell greetings of our escorting company resounding in our ears. Yet the murmur of the sea overcame us and enwrapped us eventually in a pleasant cloak of sleep.

Morning. We went up to the deck. Other passengers were already seated on their chairs. The endless light blue sky was over us, beneath us the light blue sea, its waves pounding and merging with the endless sky. The mighty ship makes its way among the noisy stormy waves, as they, jumping, dance and interweave wreaths of silver with faded green spots around them. And so the Aquitania sails confidently and proudly like a princess on the endless sea.

A child of about five is jumping and playing on the deck. My wife takes him by the hand and asks:

"Where are you traveling to, child?"

"To the Land of Israel," he answers, and his deep dark eyes, the eyes of a child of Israel, gaze with wonder at the endless mass of sky and sea leading him to the Holy Land.

But about an hour later the sky was covered with clouds announcing that a heavy rain was about to fall. The passengers hurried off the deck.

* * *

Thursday, May 5th.

A ship at sea is a small world. All the social ways of life on dry land are reflected in this small world in miniature. We have a complete government apparatus ruling over the 'people' composed of different classes. The captain is our ruler, his deputies and the sailors form the army. Discipline reigns on board. Passengers of all classes respect the government for its power and rule. The first class is the aristocracy of the ship who look down at the rest of the passengers as the descendants of God at human beings. The second class is the middle class. They look up to the first class and down at the third class. The third class form the proletariat, they look up to the two other classes with envy and hate. It is a small world with all the eternal questions of the world at large. And yet the people are no strangers to one another. The passengers have a feeling of kinship and brotherhood despite the differences between the classes. They sense that they share the same fate: they are all in the hands of the sky, the sea, and the captain.

* * *

Friday, May 6th

Our small world – the great Aquitania – has suddenly come back to life. After two rainy days the sun has come out in all its glory. The sky has cleared and is a pure light blue in color. The sea has also calmed down and is adding to the light blue tint. When I looked through the clear air to the horizon, where sky and water unite, it seemed as though the Aquitania was being carried between two light blue bowls covering one another, as though nature has given its creator a festive gift…

The sun rejuvenated all of the passengers on board the ship. Everybody, young and old, from the centenarian to the small red cheeked children, came out of their separate corners and mounted the deck to greet their beloved guest, the warm and

brilliant sun with its two blue skies, one above and one below, and to breath the fresh air.

I visited the third class today together with Mr. Cohen, the delegate for the city of Slonim. The visit made a depressing impression on us. People are exhausting their strength traveling in crowdedness and congestion, all this for a few dollars. In the third class we saw many passengers who should have been in the second and first classes. On the other hand in those two classes there are many vulgar people, drunkards and hoodlums who really belong in the fourth class.

The eternal question arises: why have the elevated been cast down and downtrodden elevated?

* * *

Sunday, May 8th

Lately a plague has befallen our people to our shame and sorrow. I am referring to the plague of dice playing which lies heavily on our brethren the children of Israel wherever they gather – in cities and houses, in trains and in ships sailing the seas.

The game burst in flames on board the Aquitania as well. In the first evening groups were formed and seated themselves around the game tables totally enslaved to the game-devil. I thought at first that the players were of the various nations on board. But when I heard their coarse jokes and saw their faces I realized that most of the players were our brethren, the people of Israel, who were but a minority on the ship. The first two days passed with no incident. It was hard to tell who was winning and who was losing. Luck shifted from one to the other. On the third and fourth day, however, word spread that the game is not of the usual kind and is not like other games. There are wolves and sheep around the tables, shearers and sheared. The players from New York especially stood out,

great blood thirsty lions that attacked the sheep and cut off their wool together with the skin and flesh. They defamed the name of Israel most when they caught a California farmer in their net. The man had an American Express checkbook for $1,000. Within six hours he signed all his checks over to the players. All the passengers present were full of anger and wrath at these cruel people and as for us, the Jews, our blood was boiling with shame.

There was a group of Hungarian Jews on board. They were affluent people traveling to their homeland to assist their relatives impoverished by the war. Some were going to bring their relatives to America, as they had no means of livelihood left in Hungary. It was amazing to see how estranged all these passengers were, how they refrained completely from showing in any way that they were Jewish, children of a people persecuted for its faith in their old country, as in Poland, in the Ukraine and in other countries. They spoke only Hungarian to each other, sang Hungarian songs and were prouder in their 'Magyar' identity more than the Magyars themselves. Looking at those Jews I said to myself: "How hard it is to forget the song of flattery once it is absorbed in one's flesh and blood. Even the rivers of blood that came over their brethren in Hungary have not washed this song from their lips. Who knows, maybe when they arrive in their old country and see with their own eyes what infamous Hungarian anti-Semitism has done to their own flesh and blood, maybe then they will be ashamed and confounded of their 'Magyar' identity. Our brethren are like that: they only believe what they see with their own eyes."

* * *

Monday, May 9th

A child suddenly cries with a joyous voice: "A bird! A bird!"

And it is as though his cry sends an electric current through the passengers. All rise to their feet in jubilation: "A bird! A bird!" That was the first bird we have seen after six days of sky and sea. The feeling that overcame us echoed that of Noah in his time as the dove came to him with an olive branch in its beak.

From then on we saw birds often. They glided around the ship as angels, as though they were sheltering the ship with their wings.

A serious mood prevailed in the ship that last night. Everyone felt the proximity of the shore and was engrossed in deep thought. Even the card players put an end to the devil's game and assumed a human form.

III. In France

Tuesday, May 10th

At seven a.m. the Aquitania docked in Cherbourg, France. The ship anchored away from the shore since the port of Cherbourg was not large enough for a ship of its size. The passengers were taken down in small boats that were to lead them to the shore.

Confusion and tumult reigned as the passengers went from the boats to the shore. There was no step suitable for the descent and the passengers were forced to jump over the boat. Women and children were carried over. Everywhere along the shore one could hear shouting and screaming. Women frightened almost to hysteria, and their screams as they were lifted added no grace to the excitement of the disembarking process. We, the Americans, unintentionally remembered the order reigning in America, in the ports, docks and railroads complete with the overseers call "Watch your step!" – and a feeling rose in our hearts and called: "Blessed art thee, America!"

The train took us from Cherbourg to Paris. Fields and views rushed passed our eyes, calming us down in their dreamlike appearance, well in European tradition.

* * *

Wednesday, May 11th

We have arrived in Paris.

The name Paris has always stood for beauty, aesthetics and

charm. We, the children of Israel, knew of Paris since our childhood through the novel *The Mysteries of Paris* by Eugene Sue, translated to Hebrew by Kalman Schulman. Whoever has read Mandelstamm's book *Paris*, full of the praise of the city and its residents, bears great admiration for the French capital and its splendid culture. However, we Americans felt a kind of disappointment when we came to Paris. Our eyes did not witness what our minds had imagined. Perhaps our expectations were too great. True, the city was beautiful and clean, its boulevards magnificent and rich. And yet, to my way of thinking, they were not more beautiful than 5th Avenue or Riverside Drive in New York. As for the convenience we have become accustomed to in New York, Paris was a complete let down.

I joined Mr. Shapira, the representative of HIAS in Paris for a visit to the local Zionist Office. There I found my friend Dr. L. Motzkin and spent several hours in an interesting conversation with him. We especially discussed the situation of the Zionist Movement and the forthcoming Congress in Carlsbad.

* * *

Thursday, May 12th

I observed the work of HIAS in Paris and must admit that I was very satisfied with it. The Paris representative, Mr. Shapira, is full of energy and devoted to his work. He is an intelligent man and his conduct towards the immigrants is like that of an older brother. He shows them the way, teaches them, consoles and encourages them, thus alleviating the sorrows of their wandering.

Before leaving Paris I visited the Zionist Office again. There I had the opportunity to meet the famous lawyer Gruzenberg; we discussed the situation of the Jews in Russia for several

hours. This great man made a deep impression on me. I have never seen a person so full of energy and fire. When he spoke about the situation of our brethren in Russia sparks of fire and sorrow emanated from his mouth, till both of us had tears in our eyes. In our conversation the name of the tortured Mendel Beilis came up; Gruzenberg had defended him during the days of judgment in Kiev when the servants of Czar Nikolai staged the infamous blood libel. The name of Israel was at stake. Gruzenberg felt at the time that the eyes of all Israel, of all of progressive humanity, were upon him. He rallied all his strength to vanquish the dark devil [The Black Hundreds] involved in the blood libel. The trial led him to think about the fate of the people of Israel and drew him closer to the national idea.

Two of my youthful friends visited me in the hotel today: Mr. Yitzhak Neidich of Pinsk and Mr. Hillel Zlatopolsky of Kiev. Both are loyal sons to their people, complete Zionists since the days of *Hibbat Zion*, the days of Pinsker and Lilienblum. We discussed topics dear to our hearts for many hours: Zionism, the building of the Land and *Keren Ha-Yesod* [The Foundation Fund], a concept these two people had first developed.

My wife remarked that during the two days we spent in Paris we did not see any small children.

"Where are they," I asked Mr. Shapira, "where are the little Frenchmen?"

He explained to us that the low birth rate in France does indeed endanger the survival of the nation, and to this one must add the war that has devastated the younger generation. In general, he explained, the French do not tend to take the young children outside due to the dangerous busy streets. Somehow when you come from New York, which resounds with the voices of children, it is amazing to find the sheer opposite in Paris.

The trip from Paris to Marseilles was very pleasant. The landscape is more beautiful than that between Cherbourg and Paris. Mountains and valleys alternate and one's eye is saturated with beauty. We marveled at the fact that there were no domestic animals to be seen along the way – neither a cow, nor a horse, a bull or a sheep. The villages are large and desolate. The farmers' faces express sorrow and poverty. They stand in front of their small houses like 'orphans, fatherless' with none to care for them. The traces of the war are evident in every corner of France.

The city of Marseilles makes a charming impression in its originality. It is an ancient city with a historic past. The gardens of the city, its boulevards and many monuments tell the history of France for centuries back as far as the middle ages. The white, tall mountains on the seashore stand around the city like ancient guards, guarding the queen of southern France.

Tomorrow we board the Sphinx; with this ship we are to sail to the Land of Israel.

The heart beats with excitement!

IV. From Marseilles to Alexandria

Friday night, May 13th

We are sailing in the ship leading us to the beloved Land of our Forefathers... The Sphinx sails with majestic pride on the quiet Mediterranean amusing itself with its small waves like a mother with her children. On both sides we see land - the shores of France and Italy–Sicily. Above the shore are lofty mountains, their peaks reaching the sky, their summit covered with snow glittering in the sunlight and they seem to be welcoming its caressing rays with a smile. Then the sun sets over the edge of the sea and the tops of the mountains are kindled and ablaze like huge cinders, cinders 'all aflame, aflame yet not consumed...'

The Mediterranean is calmer than the Atlantic. It waters are deep, blue, pleasant and soft. You can feel that you are drawing nearer to the East, to the land of the rising sun. The sky is getting bluer, becoming clearer and rays of splendor flood the horizon...

Powerful emotions make your heart beat ever faster as you come closer and closer to the Land of your Fathers, to your land, the land you had longed for all the days of your life, the focal point of your most pleasant dreams...

* * *

Sunday, May 15th

The passengers are grouped according to their nationality, each group finds its own place on board. The majority are

French, who consider themselves masters of the ship. After all they are everywhere on the ship and walk proudly through all its departments. Is it not their ship, is the Captain not one of them, is the French language, their pleasantly resounding language, not to be heard in every corner of the ship? Among the passengers there is quite a large number of Arabs and Syrians. They keep to themselves, amusing themselves and conversing in their own language. As the ship draws close to the East they feel ever happier. They instinctively feel the proximity of the East, their nostrils widen as they feel the scent of the East, of their land, of their home...

In the second and third classes there are dozens of Jewish youngsters, including a group of pioneers. There is a spirit of complete fraternity among then. They are moderate, serious, with an expression of special grace, the grace of Israel, evident on their faces. They draw the attention of the Christians and Muslims who regard them with respect. The expression on the pioneers' faces shows that they know and feel their trip is not a common one, it is not a secular trip, but rather a noble voyage, a festive trip, a trip of holiness – they are flying 'like doves to their ancestral cotes'. I learn from talking to them that these heroic pioneers are trying to forget the difficult and bitter past, the suffering they endured during the war years, the rivers of blood that flooded over their brothers and sisters; they also try not to think of the future difficulties and trials awaiting them in the ancient new land; the prospect of hard labor with stones and 'bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field' does not deter them. They have but one idea, one goal: to build a fountain of life for us in the Land of Israel, to construct roads and pave streets, to dig ditches, build houses, sow fields and plant vineyards; to build the National Homeland, a faithful home for the dispersed Jewish people. These Children of Zion know that their mother is far from affluent, she too has suffered

the pains of exile like her children, she too has been trodden upon by plunderers, and she is waiting, lonely and bereaved, for her children to come to her and cure her affliction. And they are coming, the pioneers, first of her children. They are shaking the dust off their wandering feet, the dust of the two millennia long exile, and taking their position on the Land, ready to seize a hoe and hammer and devote themselves to its building.

* * *

Wednesday, May 18th

We made a new discovery on the ship today, a fact unknown to us during the entire journey. We discovered a fourth passenger class. What we saw made a terrible impression on all of us. In the bottom of the ship, under the third class, people, poor passengers, are kept densely together in dark holes. They are buried alive and sentenced to turning in their graves. Humiliated and despondent they lie in their dark holes with no air to breath. Their meals are served in a big caldron and each draws his share with his bowl. After the meal they must clean their bowl and spoon and take them to their hole till the next meal. And one calls this living!

The Sphinx is approaching the East. We feel its proximity in the ever brighter skies, in the sea becoming ever bluer, stretching out like an azure carpet, in the sunlight and its smiling rays growing larger and larger and in the horizon becoming endlessly broader - A new world and 'a new heaven.'

* * *

Thursday, May 19th

Alexandria, this beautiful and ancient city, is visible to us from afar, with its high narrow towers of mosques and churches

built in eastern style. Above them looms Napoleon's fortress situated on a hill in the center of town and the Sultan's palace standing on the shore. All the passengers, from first to forth class, came up to the deck to watch the ship approaching the shore of the first eastern city. Alexandria made a special impression on us, the Jewish passengers; we could not but think that we are now on the border of the land that is historically second to us only to the Land of Israel. It is no small matter to mention the name of Egypt – *Mitzraim* – to an Israelite! We mention Egypt daily in our prayers. When we learnt the *Chomash* [Pentateuch] in the *heder* as children we followed our beloved Joseph down to Egypt. Together with him we were led by the Midianites and prostrated ourselves at the tomb of our mother Rachel. There we lay and cried in the ears of his mother, weeping bitterly for her children. With him we went down to Egypt. We were tortured with him when he was tortured, in the home of Potiphar and in prison, till we had the merit of seeing him become Viceroy to the King of Egypt and the provider of food to all the people. We went with him to greet his old father Jacob and his eleven brothers as they came from Canaan. We stood with him by his father's deathbed and heard the will of his father - to be carried from Egypt and buried in the tomb of his ancestors in the Cave of *Machpelah* that is in Hebron. We followed the deceased with all the house of Jacob, then returned from Canaan and dwelt in the Land of Goshen. There we slaved at 'mortar and bricks' for two hundred and ten years till Moses, who was born in Egypt, came and delivered us from there 'with signs and marvels and with an outstretched arm' to lead us to the Land of our Fathers. And now we are brought yet another time to the shores of Egypt by ship, and it seems as though my journey has lasted three thousand years...

V. From Alexandria to Jaffa

Friday, May 20th

We are in Alexandria, Egypt. The city makes a charming impression. Looking at the city from the ship my imagination soars to ancient times. I see Alexandria of the Second Temple period before my eyes, the city second only to Jerusalem. Alexandria was the largest Jewish community ever in the entire history of our people, till the emergence of New York. Here in Alexandria stood the Temple of Onias,* that existed for more than 200 years. Our sages explicitly admitted the sanctity of the sacrifices in the Alexandria Temple in the *Mishnah*. 'From me Jerusalem, the Holy City, to thee, my sister Alexandria in Egypt' were the words Rabbi Simeon ben Shatah wrote to [the exiled] Rabbi Judah ben Tabbai [after the death of King Alexander Janneus in 76 BCE]. The Hellenistic Jews lived in Alexandria, led by the Jewish philosopher Philo and created Neo-platonic Philosophy. The Greek translation of the Bible, the Septuagint, was prepared in Alexandria, this translation revealed the light of our Torah to the people of the world and united the two great ancient cultures, the culture of Israel and the culture of Greece, the culture of ethics and the culture of aesthetics.

I stood on the deck in deep thought about the great role Alexandria had played in the history of our people, when the horrifying news came to me that the Jewish passengers

* The Temple was actually in Leontopolis in the southeastern delta (translator's note).

headed for Jaffa may not dock in Alexandria nor disembark and leave the ship even for a short while. A thunderbolt from the blue Egyptian skies would have alarmed us, the Jewish passengers, less than this announcement. I went down to my cabin. All the Jewish passengers gathered together like a flock of sheep, frightened and mournful, and came to the first class to see me, including the centenarian. They sought me hoping that I would stand up for our rights and cancel this evil decree. But I too was helpless, the decree applied to me as well. And yet I encouraged and consoled them, and tried to calm down their agitated restless spirits. The representative of the Zionist Bureau appeared like a savior angle. He took our passports and promised us to see the American Consul and plead with him to remove all obstructions barring our way to Jaffa. His promise calmed the passengers to some extent. Nevertheless he told me privately that he had all but lost hope as far as entering the Land was concerned. The Government of Palestine has locked the gates of the country before the pioneers following the Jaffa riots of May 1st. As he spoke he produced an issue of *Ha-Poel Ha-Tzair* from his pocket with a detailed description of the major disaster in Jaffa, including the list of the thirty-one victims among them the great Hebrew writer J. H. Brenner. Most of the martyrs were pioneers, recent arrivals in the Land, some who have not even had the chance to shake the dust of exile off their clothes. How terrible is death when it comes on the threshold of dreams about to be fulfilled, death committed by murderers undermining our hopes and rights. Holy Pioneers! The entire issue of *Ha-Poel Ha-Tzair* was devoted to the great Hebrew writer J. H. Brenner, who never ceased calling our people to seize a spade and a sickle, to plant the vineyard of Israel in our ancestral land. And this brave fighter has fallen in the hands of evil men. Every line written about him is like a stream of tears. He could easily

have saved himself from the murderers, but he did not want to leave his old father in law and his friends. May his memory be blessed.

* * *

As we stood on the deck a great noise from the city of Alexandria reached our ears. We directed our binoculars and saw soldiers and cannons on the rooftops. The streets were full of demonstrators. Firemen were spraying them with water from their trucks. Such a spectacle makes a special impression from far. The riots lasted till the evening. At night we heard the sounds of guns and pistols. I was told that such riots are common in Alexandria. The Arabs rise up against the British Government from time to time. The last uprising lasted till commander Allenby gave an order from Cairo to fire at the rebels. About two hundred of them were killed within a half hour and the uprising subsided.

* * *

Sunday, May 22nd

We woke up from our sleep to find ourselves in the Suez Canal near Port Sa'id. The Canal is a wonderful human achievement that connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea, India with Europe. Engineer de Lesseps has rightfully gained an everlasting name for himself in human history.

The last stop; the ship moves. The hearts of the Jewish passengers are beating fast. Tomorrow morning we shall see our mother Zion. Tomorrow we will be in Jaffa, provided London does not come up with more obstacles. The last night on board was a sleepless one. Dreams and delusions filled my mind. The awareness that I am about to ascend from Egypt to the Land of Israel enflamed my imagination and besides the memories of my school years in the *heder*, the angel of dreams

also created a miniature 'Exodus' that last night.

* * *

Monday, May 23rd

A bright sun was rising towards us at the edge of the horizon sending its charming, laughing rays across the great and calm light blue sea, and it seemed as though the awakening sun was courting the Mediterranean still in deep slumber and sending its rays for a morning dip.

The ship sailed swiftly towards the sun. A golden strip appeared before us. I exerted my eyes and saw the sand of the beach of Jaffa. In a few moments the city would reveal itself to us in all its glory, bathing in a sea of sunrays like an ancient queen.

Standing on the deck and looking at Jaffa gradually unfolding before my eyes, I recalled an episode that David Wolffsohn had told me when I visited him in Cologne. When Wolffsohn traveled to the Land of Israel with Herzl the ship reached the Jaffa coast before dawn. Wolffsohn was asleep in his cabin when suddenly he heard Herzl's charming voice: "David, are you asleep?" Wolffsohn opened his eyes and saw Herzl standing before him all dressed up as though about to be received by a king. "Don't you wish to see our mother Zion?" Herzl asked him, "Rise and see the light flickering at us from our city of Jaffa." Wolffsohn rose, dressed and went up to the deck. He stood next to Herzl leaning on the railing and saw two large teardrops shining in Herzl's eyes and falling down his handsome beard. Now as I looked at Jaffa, the child of our mother, I could see Herzl standing on the deck of ship, with tears shining in his eyes... He was so close to me that I imagined him standing on our ship and escorting us on our way to Zion... I looked around and felt tears in my eyes.

We were standing at foothills of our mother Zion.

VI. Jaffa

Monday, May 23rd

The Sphinx sounded its siren and the echo came back from the great wide horizon and the light. A boat carrying officials of the Government of Palestine sailed from the shore towards the large ship anchored about a mile from the coast. The officials started checking the documents of the passengers about to disembark in Jaffa. There were about twenty people in our group. All of us were preparing for the official ceremony. To my surprise one of the officials, a Jew, came to me, addressed me by name and introduced himself as Rodnick from Yekaterinoslav. He had been living in The Land of Israel for decades and is now deputy of Mr. Sheinkin, the Head of the *Aliyah* [immigration] Committee.

Our entire group surrounded me, from the centenarian coming to die in the Land, to the small children, sons of the fathers who have come to build the Land; they looked into my eyes and awaited their fate trembling like speechless sheep. The sons are returning to their Land and upon arrival stand trembling on its threshold. Why? What is the reason? Who is to blame?

Our fear was short lived. I sat at the table next to the officials and in a short time all our documents were checked and the entrance permit given to all the passengers. Now the signs of fear are erased from all faces, and I can see tears of joy in every eye. The group gathers around me, each of them thanking and congratulating me. But my heart is heavy. The

children of Israel rejoice upon receiving a permit to enter the Land of Israel... Yet maybe I am not justified in these feelings? The children of Israel are rejoicing for the merit to tread on the holy soil of the Land of Israel.

However, it turned out that our fears were not in vain. The devilish impediment came from another quarter we had not expected. Suddenly we learnt that the Arab boat owners who carry the passengers from ship to shore have conspired not to take the Jewish passengers. These were the last pangs of the May riots in Jaffa. This rumor struck us like thunder. Our situation was deplorable. All the passengers, Christians and Moslems, have already been brought to shore while the twenty Jews remained on the ship like outcasts. What is this? We cannot believe our ears. We are standing with bowed heads and faces flushed with shame; the other passengers, those headed for Beirut, are staring at us.

Mr. Rodnick, the representative of the Immigration Committee, promises us that a special boat will arrive from Jaffa to take us. We are standing and waiting. We waited five hours. Five hours I shall never forget! They seem like five years to me, five years of torture and insult. The impatience I feel and the impatience surrounding me tear my heart. The little children are wailing, the women sobbing, the centenarian is sighing and moaning, the pioneers stand around me, their bundles in their hands, enwrapped in deep silence. My patience is about to expire...

Finally the government boat is seen from afar – our spirits are revived. We know that it has come to take us down to shore. The officer of the boat gives his men an order and a few minutes later we are all seated with our belongings in the boat carrying us to the shore. We disembarked with feelings of gratitude to the Zionist endeavor. The doctor gives us a smallpox injection and we are on our way to Tel Aviv, to the

Genossar Hotel owned by Mr. Ben Nahum.

Immediately upon my arrival at the Hotel my old friends came to greet me: Bezalel Yaffe, Z. D. Levontin, A. Z. Rabinowitz, Dr. Matmon-Cohen, Dr. A. S. Waldstein, Dr. Haim Harari, M. Kritshevsky and Mordechai ben Hillel Ha-Cohen.* Good Lord! What joy! My friends poured a sea of memories of thirty years on me, each recalling my visit to his native town in Russia and my activities there. The memories flew like a fresh spring and our hearts grew fuller and fuller. It was as a balm to my heart, my heart wounded from the descent to the shore.

I will not forget the impression of my first night in the Land of Israel as long as I live. I am seated on the Hotel veranda in the moonlight, facing the seashore and breathing the soft and pure air; I see myself as one carried to a land of wonder, a legendary land. A printed page lies before me. I look at it. I am reading... reading to the moonlight... Is it night? Above my head I see the skies, the moon and the stars. Yes. Night. Night in the Land of Israel. I breath the air, the night... The words of Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Levi are resounding in my ear:

'Life of souls the air of your Land'.

After a short walk with my friend Dr. Levin-Epstein on Herzl Street and Rothschild Boulevard, I took to my bed tired and spent. I slept soundly – my first night in the Land of Israel.

* * *

Tuesday, May 24th

Today I visited the Hebrew Gymnasium [high school] Herzliya. I was cordially received by Dr. Bugrachov, who was replacing Dr. Mosensohn, and by the entire teaching staff. For the first

* The latter was the great uncle of the future slain Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin (translator's note.)

time in my life I truly sensed the complete revival of Hebrew as a spoken language. The Sephardic pronunciation adds a special charm to the language that sounds like fine music.

Generally speaking the Gymnasium made a favorable impression on me. The building is beautiful, magnificent. The teachers are specialists each in his subject. The students behave cordially and are disciplined. And yet the questions Ahad Ha'am has raised in his articles *Emeth me-Eretz Yisrael* [Truth from the Land of Israel] have not been solved and his criticism is as acute as ever. One feels a lack of holiness in the Gymnasium, the holy spirit of the prophets is missing. The holiness of the Bible is still not to be found. And where sanctity is missing there is secularism. Not every Jew, even if he is Jewish only by nationality, can tolerate this; a religious Jew certainly cannot. Some of the pupils complained to me about the secular atmosphere prevalent in the Gymnasium. Its directors must pay attention to the matter and give it consideration.

* * *

Wednesday, May 25th

I spent the evening in the home of Z.D. Levontin, director of the Anglo-Palestine Bank, together with Mordechai ben Hillel Ha-Cohen and Dr. Nofech. Our host still follows the ways of the old fashioned middle class homeowners and treats his guests most cordially. Sitting comfortably with a glass of Russian tea, he expressed his views about the Zionist movement today. He was very critical of the course of Zionism. As a veteran *Hovev Zion* from the 1880's with a nullifying ultra-conservative point of view he expressed his disapproval of the vision of our new leaders and his scorn for the pioneers, whose ways of life, celebrations and songs he criticized. If it were up to him he would return to *Hibbat Zion*. The guests

did not agree with their host. The aging Cohen and the young Nofech contradicted him. They spoke with courage and consciousness, but Levontin would not change his mind.

* * *

Thursday, May 26th

Today is the *Lag ba-Omer*, the Thirty Third Day of the *Omer,* the great national holiday adopted in The Land of Israel in the last few decades, especially in the agricultural settlements. The Ultra-Orthodox celebrate the fiesta of Rabbi Simeon Bar Yohai with much grandeur and splendor. In Rehovoth the national holiday is yearly celebrated. This year, however, all celebrations were cancelled following the Jaffa riots and the mourning for the martyrs whose blood has not yet congealed. The whole country is in mourning and sorrow. Even the Gymnasium has not celebrated the tree festival as becomes it.

The censorship on the newspapers is a sorrowful sight. The empty columns on the pages of the newspapers make a distressing impression.

VII. Petach Tikva

Friday, May 27th

Mr. Gissin, the famous lawyer from Mohilev, has invited me to visit Petach Tikva, a two hours distance by wagon from Jaffa. The route is magnificent, we pass Sarona, the German Colony that, like all the other colonies, was deserted during the war. The German owners returned after the war and now the colony is flourishing. Vineyards and orange groves surround it and herds of cattle and sheep are grazing in its meadows. A feeling of sadness creeps into your heart unintentionally: our patrimony is in the hand of strangers. Knowledgeable people complain about the negligence of our leaders: during the years of crisis the colony was about to be sold, yet our leaders missed the chance.

We arrived in Petach Tikva at sunset, and were led to the Yarkon Hotel owned by the Gissin family. The Hotel made a favorable impression on us, being surrounded by trees and greenery.

The three brothers of the Gissin family have all been veteran Zionists for decades. One is the head Settlement Council. The second, the Hotel owner, has recently suffered a terrible disaster. His eldest son, Absalom, the beloved of the entire settlement and a man loyal to his people and his country, was first of the four men killed in the riots on the 27th day of the month of *Nissan*, when an Arab mob attacked Petach Tikva aiming at its destruction. Absalom led the brave men who came forth to defend their homeland against the Arab

murderers. He was leading his men when a bullet from the Arab camp hit and killed him.

The father of this hero was full of tranquility and peace of mind when he told me about the death of his son. I was surprised to see how proud he was of his son, who fell in battle for his people and his country. The old lady, Absalom's grandmother, was also so glorious in her silent grief. No. There is no sorrow or grief in her countenance. It seems as though her old wrinkled face bears an expression of pride and glory; happiness, and gratitude to God in Heaven seem to emanate from it. The account of Absalom's death brought tears to my eyes. The old lady sensed this and rebuked me:

"No, my friend, we must not cry but rejoice. Blessed is the Lord who merited me at my old age to see with my own eyes how one of my children has sacrificed himself for our Land. And if the Land of Israel will ask my family for more sacrifices, we are ready to give and give again till the last drop of our blood."

I will never forget the holy spark that burnt in her eyes at that moment. I looked at the face of this proud old woman and said to myself: "a quality such as this can only be found in the daughter of a people that has produced women like Miriam and Deborah for thousands of years now."

The entire settlement of Petach Tikva is proud of its victory over the Arabs. The camp of Israel suffered four dead and twelve wounded, the Arabs lost hundreds and the attacking thousands retreated in dismay. The miracle of 'few against the many' of the Maccabees, of the Hasmonean Period, has repeated itself.

* * *

Sunday, May 29th

Petach Tikva has a population of four thousand. It is the oldest

settlement. In its cemetery one of the greatest *Hovevei Zion*, Rabbi Mordechai Gimpel Yaffe of Rozhinoi, had found eternal rest. There is a Grand Synagogue in the settlement. Yesterday, Sabbath, after the reading of the Torah [weekly portion of the Pentateuch], as I ascended the pulpit to deliver my sermon I imagined myself standing on the platform of a synagogue in Vilna or Bialystok in olden times. The atmosphere is completely Jewish, saturated with the sanctity of the Sabbath, till you can feel the 'enlarged soul' with all your senses. The audience was not seated, they rather stood as is customary in the Diaspora.

The Rabbi of the settlement, Rabbi Zitron, is an excellent man. He is the son in law of Rabbi Joseph Rosen of Dvinsk, known as the 'Rohatshovy'. Though his father in law is a staunch adversary of Zionism, Rabbi Zitron is devoted to the movement with all his heart and soul and he is one of the most active members of the Mizrachi [national religious] Movement in The Land of Israel.

Mr. Pinchas Maher, one of the veterans, took me on a tour of the length and breadth of the settlement. The heart filled with happiness at the sight of the House of Israel, the soil of Israel and the totally Jewish atmosphere. The holiness of the Sabbath is everywhere, a supreme and complete spirit of tranquility glides over the houses and streets, the granaries and barns, over the ox and the donkey. All are resting, immersed in the tranquility of the Sabbath.

On the question of language there is a difference between fathers and sons. The fathers speak Yiddish while the sons speak Hebrew and no Yiddish word crosses their lips. They force the older people to speak Hebrew to them. The sons are insistent feeling that the future is theirs.

Here is a nice episode. The old Mrs. Gissin was holding her great granddaughter, a child of about three by the name

of Geula. The old lady spoke Yiddish and the little girl said: "Speak Hebrew." When the old lady told her she does not speak Hebrew, the child got angry and said to the old lady: "Look, grandma, your teeth are all broken from the hard language you speak. Talk Hebrew like me so your teeth will be whole like mine."

There is no evil without some good. After the Arab attack on Petach Tikva not one Arab worker is left in the settlement. The Pioneers have taken their place. The settlers swore never to hire Arab workers again.

* * *

Monday, May 30th

I found Mr. Grazovsky, in law of the High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel, to be an excellent man. He has many diverse talents on the highest level. A former student of the Volozhin *Yeshivah* [religious academy], he has a sharp mind and a wonderful memory. He came to The Land of Israel decades ago and started as a common worker. Later he became a teacher, wrote textbooks, teaching Hebrew through Hebrew only [without translation], which have been accepted all over the Diaspora. He also compiled a number of dictionaries. Now he is in finance and serves as deputy director of Anglo Palestine Bank. I met him at the home of the American Zionist, Wilson, and had the pleasure of spending a number of hours with him. We discussed various subjects and I immediately saw that he is a sensible man. Mr. Grazovsky is not happy with the leadership of the Zionist Commission and criticizes it severely. He also opposes the new movement that would like to build the Land according to socialist principles. He uses facts to prove that all the socialist groups have been unsuccessful and that, the country can be built by capitalists only.

VIII. Rishon Le'Zion, Rehovoth, Mikveh Israel

Tuesday, May 31st

Yesterday I visited Rishon Le'Zion the most glorious among the Baron Rothschild's settlements. Rishon Le'Zion is indeed a handsome settlement, and one may add – a rich one. A hundred farmers live comfortably and one hundred more earn their livelihood there.

My friend Mr. Gluskin, the renowned director of the winery, led us through all three floors and showed us all the machines, explaining their role in the production of the wine, from the processing of the grapes, to the work of the wine-press, the transfer of the pulp, rolling as if through tunnels in many different pipes from the top of the third floor till the very bottom of the cold cellar and going up again till it is placed in the large barrels as the fine *Carmel Mizrahi* wine, source of livelihood to hundreds of farmers and source of joy to thousands of Israelites all over the Diaspora. As you stand in the large winery and marvel at its qualities your heart is filled with feelings of gratitude to the Baron, you pour blessings on the 'Well Known Benefactor' and cry out loud "may he live for many years to come!"

I could not refuse the old timers' request and agreed to speak at *Beth Ha'am* [The Public Hall] that evening. The chairman was Meir Meirovicz, one of the veterans of the *BILU* movement. The man is old and distinguished, respected by the entire *Yishuv* [Settlement] in The Land of Israel. The Public Hall was full to the brim. When I started speaking I

saw the listeners smiling due to my *Ashkenzi* pronunciation. Gradually the smiles subsided and everybody paid serious attention to my words, farmers, laborers and pioneers alike. I mentioned the question of "Hebrew [Jewish] Labor" and said that we must never return to the days of King Saul when 'all the Israelites had to go down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, their mattocks, axes and colters sharpened.' We must rely on our own resources. In those days the Philistines were the technically advanced group and we the backward one. The situation now is quite the reverse. We are the bearers of European culture and the Arabs dwell in darkness.

* * *

From Rishon we traveled to Rehovoth.

The people of this settlement are proud that they have built it with their own capital and labor, with no outside help. Its founders were merchants from Warsaw who joined to form an association named *Menuchah ve-Nachalah* [place of rest and patrimony] and came to the Land of Israel during the early stages of *Hibbat Zion* to form this wonderful settlement.

I had a very pleasant meeting in Rehovoth. Here I met the friend of my youth Aharon Eisenberg. We have not seen each other for thirty-five years. We hugged each other and could not part for many moments. We stood without uttering a word, only our eyes were full of tears. In our youthful days we were brothers in spirit, children of one and the same holy idea. Memories of our youth flowed over us, memories of the period of *Hibbat Zion*, of the Kattowitz meeting. Young Eisenberg, studious, full of the love of Zion, came to the Land of Israel to hew its stones and suffer the holy trials and tortures of the early pioneering years. And that generation stands before me now in form of an aging man, tall and broad shouldered, his head large and handsome like that of a lion; he has a clever

expression in his eyes and is full of energy and awareness. Eisenberg is the leader of the New *Yishuv* [Zionist Settlement]. He is chairman of the *Netaim* association, has been head of the Rehovoth Council for several years. He is a participant in all the conventions of the Zionist Organization and major leaders consult him, since he is extremely knowledgeable in all matters concerning the New *Yishuv* [Zionist Settlement]. We spent several hours together and they seemed as moments to us.

The people of Rehovoth are of the highest level. Almost all of them have a fine traditional Jewish education and knowledge of *Haskalah* [modern Jewish learning, Enlightenment], they are learned, and there are writers and thinkers among them. I met several elders of *Hibbat Zion* there, Mr. Harlap who owns the Hotel, Mr. Padvah from Brisk d'Lita [Brest Litowsk], Mr. Bloomberg of Dvinsk – all veterans of the movement.

The farmers of Rehovoth take pride in their victory over the Arabs during the riots. The older generation rightfully name their sons "The New Maccabees." The heroes of Rehovoth have fulfilled the Biblical verse 'a single one of you would put a thousand to flight' – dozens of heroes from the settlement caused thousands of Arabs to flee. The new generation in The Land of Israel is growing to be strong, brave and proud, fully aware that they are standing on their own land. Seeing the brave native generation your heart fills with faith and hope that the day is not far when our home in the Land of Israel will be steadfast and our people will dwell in safety.

* * *

Sunday, June 5th

Yesterday I spoke at the Synagogue in Tel Aviv, following the request of my friends and of the synagogue managers. I spoke Hebrew. This was a day after the publication of the

High Commissioner's declaration, which was considered an interpretation of the Balfour Declaration. Spirits were low. Addressing an audience at such a time is no easy matter. Feelings are mixed. The public does not know what the consequences of the Samuel Declaration will be. Some are optimistic and see no harm in the Declaration. They think all the fine words directed to the Arabs are nothing but a British political maneuver and the Balfour Declaration remains unaltered. On the other hand there are pessimists who consider the Declaration favorable to the Arabs and hostile to the Jews. They fear the future and are discouraged. My own feelings are mixed. I would like to hope for the best. I believe that the High Commissioner's intentions are favorable to us. And yet reality seems to indicate otherwise...

* * *

Today we visited Mikveh Israel. The farm made a favorable impression on us. The orderly way of tilling the land, the healthy and fresh faces of the students, the beauty of the boulevards and houses, the sound of the Hebrew language spoken by Jewish farmers – all this revived our souls and added courage.

We stood most respectfully at the grave of the founder of Mikveh Israel, who died in 1882. Thirty-eight years have passed since his death and his grave and monument stand today as they did then under the shadow of thick trees and fragrant flowers. Above it shines the name Charles Netter, founder of the first Agricultural School in The Land of Israel.

IX. Jerusalem

We are going to Jerusalem.

In Jaffa, when we were seated in the train about to lead us to Jerusalem I imagined that I am on my way to the Land of Israel once again; No, I am going to the Land of Israel for the first time... For what is the Land of Israel if not Jerusalem?

We are traveling. The train is ascending the Judean Hills, twisting and climbing. I feel my spirit soaring... it is 'leaping over the mountains,' by-passing the train and here it is in Jerusalem, although my body is still on the train. Is not the soul of every man of Israel, wherever he may be, in Jerusalem...

The Judean Hills are magical. I have seen many mountains in my life but what are they to me compared to the Judean Hills? The mountains of the Lord! Wonders of the Lord! Only here, in the Judean Hills, do you see the wonders of the chosen people, the people to whom God had revealed himself, and they, in turn, have revealed Him to the entire world through the Bible. You look at the Judean Hills and clearly see the divine spirit enveloping them. You recognize every stone and every cave from the thousands of legends told of them. You are ascending ever higher and the bounty of light, emanating from a world full of suns is shining over your head...

And here we are at the gates of Jerusalem, how pleasant it is to read the name of the Jerusalem station and of its suburbs in Hebrew.

Here is Mount Zion, the Tower of David – I hear the

Jerusalemite standing next to me cry out. My eyes swell, the source of tears has opened and I cannot contain myself... I have wandered for two thousand years and here I am in my mother's home, in my parents' bosom...

* * *

Tuesday, June 7th

In the morning we climbed to the roof of the Amdursky Hotel and Jerusalem appeared before us in all its glory. Here is the Temple Mount, Mount Scopus, the Mount of Olives, the minarets of the mosques and towers of the churches, all bathing in sparks of sunlight – all, all merge to create a magical image, an image the eye can behold nowhere but in Jerusalem.

We went to the Western Wall together with rabbi Michal Tikochinsky, the Head of the *Yesivah* [Religious Academy]. Narrow croocked allies, roofed above, full of filth and dirt, bustling with people and beasts, lead to the Western Wall. Strange feelings overcome you as you walk this way and suddenly are standing in front of a tall ancient wall, built of large old stones and people tell you: This is the Western Wall, remnant of our Temple, memorial of the grandeur of the people of Israel in ancient times.

I stand with my head bowed, and there are tears and tears again...

Mixed thoughts and feelings arise in me. Oh, the Western Wall, ancient Holy Wall, bleak and miserable! Are you not the symbol of my ancient people, bleak and miserable too?! The sorrow, suffering and poverty of the people of Israel during its two thousand year of wandering stare at me from your large darkened awesome stones; the deep and great sorrow of exile, mixed with tears and blood have been petrified in the Western Wall. Sighs break out from the depth of your heart and you sense that these sighs are two thousand years old, sighs that

come to the surface only at the sight of the Western Wall. Different voices of men and women from many countries gathered here, in front of the slanted Wall, rise in confusion each uttering the same prayer: a prayer for the redemption and elevation of Israel...

As I stood in front of the Wall and witnessed these scenes of sadness I recalled the words of the great thinker, Ahad Ha-am, when he stood on this holy ground:

"I came to Jerusalem on Passover eve to pour my plea and my anger before the 'wood and stone', remnants of our beloved treasurers of old. My first stop was, naturally, the 'Wall'. There I found many of our brethren, residents of Jerusalem, standing and praying in very loud voices; their poverty stricken faces, their strange gestures and peculiar clothes were all well suited to the look of the awesome Wall. And I stood there looking both at them and at the Wall, and one thought filled my mind entirely: These stones bear witness to the destruction of our country, and these people – to the destruction of our nation; which of the two destructions is the greater one? Over which of them should we mourn more deeply? When a country is destroyed and the people are still full of vim and vigor - men like Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah will come forth and the people will then follow then, return and rebuild the land. But when a nation is destroyed, who will come forth for it, and 'from where will its help come?'

And had the inspiration of Yehudah Ha-Levi come upon me at that time, so that I could have lamented as he did over the ruin of the daughter of my people, yet I would have started my lamentation not with 'Zion' but rather with 'Israel'."

We toured all the gates of the Temple Mount from all four directions. We saw all the buildings including the Mosque of Omar, built on the site of the Holy of Holies. The heart aches so 'when they say to you': "You may view the ancient inheritance

from a distance, but you shall not enter it". We returned from there sad and grieving.*

Seeing the houses of worship and the magnificent palaces of the various nations in Jerusalem I remembered the hymn in the *Selichot* [prayer preceding the Day of Atonement], 'I call to God my mind, I moan, when I see all the cities built on their mounds and the city of the Lord humiliated to the depth of *sheol* [abysm]'. All the nations have their magnificent palaces in Jerusalem, built on lofty mountains, and the heritage of Israel is in ruins, despised and desolated. Oh, how difficult it is to see the fulfillment of the Biblical verse: 'our heritage has passed to aliens.'

I made three more visits today: I visited Rabbi Kook, the Bezalel institute, and the Zionist Commission, the only person I found there was Dr. Ider.

* * *

I will never forget the time I spent with Rabbi Kook, that man of genius, in his home. Indeed, I will remember it as long as I live. 'I have been a young man and grown old,' I have met many Rabbis, great rabbis of the old generation in Russia, progressive rabbis in Western Europe - not one has made such a deep impression on me as did the noble holy personality of Rabbi Kook. His marvelous looks, his dreaming eyes full of sanctity and of the sorrow of the nation; his enthusiasm inspiring words on various profound matters, words uttered in pure fluent Hebrew and laden with content drawn from the Talmud, from Jewish Philosophy and mysticism, words that

* Masliansky did visit the Temple Mount during his second stay in Jerusalem in 1935. He was accompanied by reform Rabbi Max Raisin who commented on how atypical such behavior was of Orthodox Jews. For earlier contact between Masliansky and Raisin see above, Ch. 41. We thank Joel Weinberg for this information (translator's note.)

are poetic and full of vision and of sweet loveable imagination, words saturated with the sorrow of exile and the gladness of redemption. This is so enchanting you imagine yourself listening to one of the prophets of Jerusalem in ancient times; you cannot utter a word, only your ears are open to hear more and more of these living words of God flowing like a river from the mouth of this great man of spirit who is sitting in front of you and charming you with his holy gaze.

A magnificent and beautiful scene took place when the Rabbi's father entered during our conversation. The Rabbi stood up and would not sit till his father sat at his right hand. So did he fulfill the commandment 'honor thy father.'

And yet Rabbi Kook has a quick mind. His ideas rush through his great brain, racing and by passing each other, so at the end of his discourse you are unable to sum his thoughts and figure out the point, as he himself cannot control his thoughts and formalize them. Unintentionally you recall the idea of the migration of souls from the *Kabbalah* [Jewish mysticism] and you see before you the soul of the genius, scholar and mystic Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato, embodied in the great Rabbi Kook. A soul such as that, capable of producing *Mesilat Yesharim* among other books, can indeed be revived in a multifaceted genius like Rabbi Kook. Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato was too great to be understood by his generation, so too is Rabbi Kook who is misunderstood by his contemporaries in Jerusalem.

When we parted he gave me a memento of his book *Lights from the Darkness* with a dedication written in his very hand.

Rabbi Kook is active in public affairs and participates in the work of nearly all the institutions in Jerusalem. He shows a burning holy interest in them and supports them with all the fervor of his great soul.

Rabbi Kook should indeed serve as example to all the Rabbis of our generation.

X. The Tomb of the Patriarchs [Me'arat Ha-Machpelah]

Thursday, June 9th

Today we traveled to Hebron with Rabbi N. Silverstone of Washington. A good paved road leads from Jerusalem to Hebron and the ride is comfortable and pleasant. We passed many historical sites. Here are Solomon's Pools, repaired once again by the government and used now as a water reservoir for Jerusalem.

After a two hour ride we arrived at the Tomb of the Patriarchs [*Me'arat Ha-Machpelah*]. I recalled the words of Rudolf, son of Franz Joseph, heir to the throne of Austria, who wrote the following words about the Tomb of the Patriarchs in his book *Mein orientalische Reise*:

"...Upon arrival in Hebron I immediately went to the Tomb of the Patriarchs. I felt that I am standing at the graves of the sacred forefathers of Israel. I knelt down on my knees, a stream of tears flowed from my eyes and I cried tearfully from the bottom of my heart: 'Holy Father, Abraham, Ephron the Hittite has named you Elect of God thousands of years ago, he wanted to give you a free burial site to bury your wife Sarah but you declined; raise your eyes and see what has been done to your descendants dispersed and separated in all lands, subjected to murderers about to kill and annihilate them, living in disgrace and torment. The smallest parcel of land is not given your children, not even for a price in gold and silver. Their situation among the nations of the world is terrible. Holy

Father, Abraham, I swear that I shall stand by your miserable children when I ascend the throne."

These were the words of a prince from among the nations when he stood at the Tomb of the Patriarchs. What then could be added by a descendent of our father Abraham who has crossed the seas, traveled thousands of miles to pour his heart out by the tombs of his forefathers and is not allowed to approach them? Arab savages, filthy and half naked stand on the third step* with sticks in their hands and block the way to your thousand-year old Inheritance. How deep is the blow to the heart, how great the insult!!

With a heavy heart we went to see the tomb of Abner son of Ner near the Tomb of the Patriarchs. From there we headed back and traveled to Bethlehem, stopping at Rachel's Tomb on the way. The *Shamash* [sexton] opened the door for us and we entered. Suddenly we stood still. The words of Jeremiah were illuminated by the dark light of the oil candles: 'A cry is heard in Ramah... Rachel weeping for her children.' Our eyes were filled with tears.

Never have I wept the way I did in the bosom of our mother.

* * *

Friday, June 10th

Oh, the bells! Their chime drives me insane.

Never in any of the cities of Russia have I heard the sound of bells as here in Jerusalem. This terrible ring hovers over Jerusalem day and night, disturbing your rest by day and your sleep by night. The first time I heard the chime of church bells in Jerusalem I shuddered. It was a terrible sound and cast great fear upon me till I imagined the Middle Ages were back and the bells calling the Christians to assemble around an auto da

* It was actually the seventh step (translator's note.)

fe and watch the burning of Jewish heretics... Ah, the bells! For hundreds of years they called for the persecution of our people, the shedding of our blood, the burning of our fathers and the bashing of our children's skulls – is it surprising, then, that Jewish blood is agitated at the sound of these bells? ... Who is to blame if a Jew cannot hear the sound of bells with equanimity? Let the Christians come and answer this question. As a child I used to hear the bells chime and I remember my heart always trembled at their echo, even before I knew the history of our people. I carried the history of our suffering in my blood and it arose unconsciously.

Living in America for many years now I have forgotten this terrible fear. In America the sound of bells is hardly heard, and when heard it does not cast fear, the tall and lofty houses block the sound, and it expires in its confined space. But when I came to Jerusalem, where church bells reign supreme, this mysterious fear seized me again and the chime of bells has been disturbing me from the very first instance...

Night. You are lying in bed yearning for rest. You know that you are in Jerusalem, the Holy City, glorious crown of Israel, the city where David dwelt; the city that produced prophets and visionaries, sages of the *Mishnah* and the Talmud, famous heroes from Joab the son of Zeruiah to Shimon Bar Kokhba; the city where both our temples stood for close to a thousand years; the city where the holy Psalms were written and sung – and today you hear the chimes of the various sects of Christianity, the wayward daughter of the religion of Israel who suckled her mother's breasts and bit her nipples to bleeding!... each and every chime stabs your heart and brings forth terrible, frightening thoughts...

* * *

Tuesday, June 14th

I was invited to the great *Yeshivah* [Religious Academy] of *Mea Shearim* [A Hundredfold], for Saturday, eve of the *Shavuot* holiday. After the reading of the weekly portion of the Torah I addressed the large crowd of thousands who filled the *Yeshivah* to the brim. Many stood outside for lack of room inside. I spoke Hebrew for more than an hour. Yet the public demanded that I speak in Yiddish as well. Hebrew, Hebrew! So the youngsters cried out with all their might, and the young have the upper hand in the Land of Israel, their words are heeded. With their stubbornness they are reviving the Hebrew language everywhere, bless them! Yet at that particular moment I could not do as they wished. I followed the will of the old, after calming down the young.

I spoke of the need for unity in Jerusalem and of the plague of dissention that has spread through the holy community much to its detriment. Even among religious circles a contained hatred between the House of Kook and the House of Sonnenfeld prevails: The latter do not consider the saintly and erudite Rabbi Kook to be God fearing and the fire of dissention is kindled and burns.

XI. At the Synagogue of Hurvat Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Hasid

Tuesday, June 14th

I will remember the festival of *Shavuot* 1921 as long as I live. A great honor and pleasure was bestowed upon me – to speak at the largest of Jerusalem's synagogues, *Hurvat Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Hasid*, with the High Commissioner, Eliezer son of Menachem, Sir Herbert Samuel, attending.

True, the heart of Israel does indeed rejoice to see the supreme official in the Land of Israel attending services in the synagogue with his brethren from morning till noon, praying with the public for the revival of our people and our land. And when the cantor reached the prayer of *Kedushah* and recited in a tearful voice the two thousand year old question: 'O when wilt thou reign in Zion?' I saw a gloomy look on the Commissioner's handsome face and an expression reflecting this painful question in all its acuteness in his eyes. It seemed as though the Jaffa riots and the shedding of the blood of Israel made a grave impression on the Commissioner and he was taking part in the grief of his people.

The High Commissioner sat under a canopy of honor between the Holy Ark and the *Bimah* [platform] with the Chief Rabbis at his sides, Rabbi Kook to the his right and Rabbi Ya'acov Meir to his left. This reminded me of the days of old, the days of the Exilarch, leader of the Jews of Babylonia, and his sages. It was such a beautiful, marvelous scene!

After the reading of the weekly portion of the Torah the

great Rabbi Kook ascended and stood in front of the Holy Ark and delivered a profound sermon on current issues. I ascended after him and directed my words to the Commissioner. I spoke Hebrew and Rabbi Meir translated my words into French. My sermon was a plea to the Commissioner from the people. I clarified that he is not only the Commissioner of the small Land of Israel with its six hundred thousand Arabs and one hundred thousand Jews, but also of all the people of Israel who number fourteen million and are scattered and dispersed in all corners of the world. "High Commissioner of Judah", I cried from the bottom of my heart, "you know well that Heaven has made you the protector of the wandering people of Israel; you feel that thousands and thousands of eyes, the eyes of your brethren all over, are looking up to you and waiting for your help, for you are first Commissioner of Judah since Roman times two thousand years ago. We know full well that your office carries much weight and responsibility, but even so you must always feel the pulse of your tortured people, your ears must always hear the words of the Lord to Joshua son of Nun: 'Be strong and resolute...for the Lord your God is with you'; let the image of Nehemiah, leader of Israel, stand before you always, for his situation was comparable to yours given to the pressure of 'the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin'. The fates of Joshua and Nehemiah were similar to yours, and we do hope that you too shall fulfill your mission as they did and restore the People of Israel to the Land of Israel. Long live the People of Israel! Long live the Land of Israel! Long live the High Commissioner of Israel!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" applauded the thousands assembled. Young and old, orthodox and free thinkers, all had tears of joy in their eyes. That was a sacred moment, full of elevation, a moment never yet seen at the *Hurva of Rabbi Judah the Pious*.

When I descended from the platform the High Commissioner rose from his seat under the canopy of honor, and shook my hands with both of his. Moved to tears he thanked me in front of the audience and said to me in English:

"You are the master of speech, you have the talent and the gift, your words have affected both me and the public to tears. May you be of assistance to us! Help me increase patience among our people. Patience, patience, that is what we need at a time like this."

The cantor, Bardaky, recited the *Mussaf* prayer from the bottom of his heart with great intention; it is hard to describe the mood of the people assembled when the prayer 'Because of our sins we were exiled from the Holy Land' was recited.

After services the Commissioner went to Hotel Amdursky with the Rabbis, David Yellin and the leaders of the community, to celebrate the *Kiddush* of the day. At the table the Rabbis and Mr. Yellin delivered their speeches. The Commissioner answered in English and Dr. Ellyash translated into Hebrew. The High Commissioner said as follows:

"The speaker from America, Mr. Masliansky, has compared me to Joshua son of Nun. Is it not amazing that last night my wife, who is now studying the Holy Bible in its original Hebrew, also drew my attention to this verse in the book of Joshua and she too encouraged my spirit with these very words. And yet, Gentlemen, please try to understand the difference between Joshua and me. Joshua fought with the sword and God Almighty came to his aid. I cannot do so. My sword lies sealed in the Houses of Parliament in London, and the League of Nations too has the right of ownership over it. We shall not conquer our land by sword at this time, but rather by knowledge, understanding and wisdom, and above all – patience. With these tools we shall build our National Home promised us by the British Government and by Balfour. Had

there been six hundred thousand Israelites and one hundred thousand Arabs now, things would have been different. But the reverse is true. They, the majority, come forth with arguments and claims they consider just, and they should be heeded with patience. And this quality is, in my opinion, lacking among our people."

A police guard of honor saluted the Commissioner when he left the Hotel. He then walked to his palace on Mount Scopus.

I devoted much thought to the elevating moment at the *Hurva*, and pondered over the words said by the Commissioner during the *Kiddush* at the Hotel. I have been full of doubts and hesitations the last few days, and yet the tears in the Commissioner's eyes at the Synagogue and his words at the *Kiddush*, which came from the bottom of his heart, proved to me that he is a loyal son to our people and a true believer in our future. He calls "patience, patience", seeing this as the only possible holding point in this difficult hour. The responsibility of his post obliges him to do so. I am very sorry that at this time he does not find the necessary patience among our people. He would like us to put ourselves in his place and see the difficulties of the situation. Indeed, it is our duty to do so. But he too must understand that when the majority of Israel have been shedding blood for seven years now; when tens of thousands of our people are weltering on every path and road, going barefoot to the land of our hope and finding its gates closed upon arrival; when the blood of our brethren is being shed in broad daylight by savage Arabs, as it was during the Jaffa riots – When the Commissioner will heed to all this he will learn and understand that at such an hour one cannot restrain the people, or set their patience to suit one's will in a way that might appropriately serve the cause.

Indeed, patience is necessary, but we also need to adhere

to our views with tenacity and preserve our spirit, and even more important - we must deal with the Arab murderers with a strong hand...

XII. The Institutions of Jerusalem

Wednesday, June 15th

I visited more than twenty institutions in Jerusalem, including the large *Yeshivot* [religious academies]: *Etz Haim* [Tree of Life], *Torat Haim* [The Torah of Life], *Mea Shearim* [A Hundredfold] and *Sha'arei Shamaim* [Gates of Heaven]. The last *Yeshivah* is unique, and I think there is none like it anywhere in the world. The studies there focus on mysticism according to the teachings of the ARI [Rabbi Yitzhak Luria Ashkenazi]. The *Yeshivah* has a very peculiar appearance: a small narrow courtyard, a creature of imagination, contains the entire *Yeshiva* and includes all its departments. The synagogue is here, as is the ritual bath where the students immerse themselves daily, and here in deep and narrow caves devoid of air and light are their sleeping quarters. And yet the students are always in a happy and generous mood, their faces are illuminated by the light of their inner faith that they are drawing bounty from the source - from the teachings of the Holy ARI. It is their tradition that the ARI was born in this tiny courtyard and used to immerse in the ritual bath here.

Rabbi Silverstone and I were invited for the weekday *Minchah* [afternoon prayer] at the *Yeshivah*. Good Lord! What patience and forbearance! The *Shmoneh Esreh* [eighteen benedictions] prayer, recited individually, lasted for about an hour. They prolong it by pronouncing each word till they get to all the mystical intentions and combinations included in it according to the teachings of the ARI. After the individual

prayer their teacher of mysticism Rabbi Shimon himself served as cantor for the public repetition. Here we could see the meaning of a prayer made with true intention. He dwelt for many minutes on each mentioning of the name of God and his Kingdom, and when he uttered the Name he seemed like a hero conquering a fortress.

That is the way of life the sages of *Kabbalah* [the mystics] live. They dwell in caves, live underground while their spirit ascends to the gates of heaven. Their bodies are indeed thin and bony, their faces the color of yellow parchment, their backs are bent and muscles weak, they have the appearance of old men, yet their eyes are burning with an uncanny fire not to be seen in other people. Miserable travelers to Heaven! Their only share on earth is the ritual bath of the ARI...

All the institutions we visited made a good impression on us. The hospitals, *Yeshivot*, *Talmud Torah* schools, old age homes, and the institutions for the blind, the mentally ill and the terminally ill, all are necessary and sacred institutions. Indeed, all of them are holy but the three Orphanages are the holy of holies. At The Diskin Orphanage the children are instructed in both religious and general subjects including various crafts. The orphanage for girls teaches handicrafts including amazing embroidery. Then there is the Zion Orphanage where I saw a wonderful sight: a miniature 'Ingathering of the Exiles.' The pupils come from all corners of the globe: from Russia, Poland, Austria, Romania, there are *Ashkenazim* and *Sephardim* among them. Some are foundlings, miserable creatures picked up in the streets of Jerusalem during the terrible war years. The founder of this institute is the famous communal worker Rabbi Avraham Yohanan Blumenthal who gave his entire life to it. The orphanage is situated in the lovely Bucharian Quarter and is called *Beth Hefetz*. It is as large and splendid as a palace and the orphans are healthy, clean, fresh

and happy. They sang lovely songs in Hebrew in the *Sephardic* pronunciation; the language brings them together though their parents speak in different tongues.

We visited the American Hadassah. Its hospital – formerly the Rothschild hospital – amazed us with its methods. The activity of Hadassah is excellent and extremely useful. We found hundreds of people there waiting for medical treatment. The doctors and nurses treat the sick with love and devotion. Hadassah has branches in Safed, Tiberias, Jaffa, and in the Settlements. Miss Henrietta Szold of America, a woman of most generous spirit, heads the organization. She watches over the institution like a heavenly angel, working day and night with idealism and devotion. Szold is the glory of American women and her work at Hadassah shall be inscribed in golden letters in the history of the Zionist movement.

American Jewry supports over four thousand orphans in the Land of Israel. Most of them live with their widowed mothers or with relatives.

Mr. Goldsmith, a Jew from Holland and Mrs. Berger, who serves as inspector of the orphans, led us to the Institute for the Blind, directed by Mordechai Lederer. We found dozens of blind people of various ages, from six year olds to people well advanced in years, all engaged in various crafts according to an excellent method. The Institution is really praiseworthy!

The Hospital for the Mentally Ill, directed by Mrs. Yellin, has government authorization as a necessary and decent establishment. The Diskin Orphanage is very good and fine. The old scholar sees to the well being of two hundred orphans and fulfills all their needs.

A Relief Committee founded by the Joint, directed by Dr. de Sola Pool, saved the settlement in Jerusalem during the terrible post-war crisis. Thousands of people threatened by starvation were supported by the American source of aid, as

were four thousand orphans and the Institute for the Blind, who received their entire budget from this source. A religious committee established by the Central Relief Committee in New York has a budget of ten thousand dollars a month for the support of Rabbis, teachers and religious scholars.

XIII. Last Days in Jerusalem

Thursday, June 16th

Public opinion in Jerusalem is most vexed by the work of the Zionist Commission. They accuse the Commission of doing nothing since the Balfour Declaration. It is said that the highfalutin talk and frequent celebrations have annoyed the Arabs and led to the riots in Jaffa with all their consequences. The leaders of the Commission are accused of not understanding how to deal with the Arabs, who, when told that it is proper to take the six hundred thousand [Arabs] into consideration, as against the one hundred thousand [Jews], would naturally answer: "The country is ours" and close their eyes to reality. The criticism of the Zionist Commission that has reached me seems to be just. But those who blame the celebrations held by the Zionists and their highfalutin talk for the disaster of the bloody Jaffa riots are going way too far. The riots in Jaffa and the Settlements have deep political reasons and the cause lies more in the incitement of external enemies than in complaints of the local Arabs.

* * *

The leaders of the Mizrahi [religious Zionist party], Dr. Shenfeld and others, held a banquet at the Amdorsky Hotel in honor of Sir Stuart Samuel, brother of the High Commissioner. The most important Rabbis, *Sephardi* and *Ashkenazi* alike, were present, led by Rabbi Kook. Everybody praised the guest of honor, the first speaker being Rabbi Kook. When I was called

on to speak I directed my words to Jerusalem. I mentioned her greatness in olden times and the days of her poverty and disaster since the Roman eagle stuck his sharp beak into her heart. How great is the joy of Jerusalem now that her children are coming back to her from all corners of the earth, and one of the greatest among them, the brother of our guest of honor, dwells on Mt. Scopus in the palace of Kaiser Wilhelm and is the Governor of Jerusalem! I thanked Sir Stuart Samuel for the good works he had done for his people, for his activities in Poland and for his communiqué to the British Government.

* * *

Friday, June 17th

I enjoyed some very pleasant visits. The instructors of the Teachers Seminary visited me at my hotel: Dr. Mohilever, H. A. Zutta and A. M. Borochov. Each is a great specialist in his scientific field and carries the burden of Zionist work as well. I also had a visit from my youthful friend the poet L. Jaffe and his wife and from Dr. Joseph Klausner and his wife. I reciprocated with visits to their homes and we spent many pleasant hours reminiscing about our youth.

I attended a meeting upon the invitation of the writer Benjamin Redler [AKA Rabbi Benyamin]. The meeting was held in the National Library on the subject of self-defense. It was a very difficult moment. The bloody riots in Jaffa and the Settlements had a severe effect on the people of Jerusalem and they were consulting on ways to resist the blood thirsty Arabs. Spirits were despondent. Homeowners of the middle class, merchants and famous literary figures attended the meeting. All sat with their heads cast low. I refused to speak. It was hard for me. Self defense – in Jerusalem!

* * *

Sunday, June 19th

A large crowd came to the Synagogue of *Hurvat Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Hasid* yesterday to pray with the High Commissioner's brother. I was asked to speak but my health did not allow. My wife and I went with Rabbi Silverstone to the Western Wall to pray and say farewell to the Holy Wall, souvenir of our greatness and memorial of our destruction. What we found there was a miniature 'Ingathering of the Exiles'. Here, in one place, a group of Yeminite Jews are standing with their wives and children, holding their prayer books and praying in their special accent, pouring out their souls they cry with all their might: 'O cause a new light to shine upon Zion'. Not far *Sephardi* Jews are standing and praying with deep intention in the calm spirit and grace typical of the *Sephardim*. A*shkenzi* Jews are walking to and fro in the small courtyard, dressed in the Jerusalem style – long caftans in bright colors and fur hats; they are reciting Psalms in a melancholy heartbreaking tone. Nearby an old Jew from Buchara is standing with his family and his youngest son, a boy of twelve, is holding a prayer book in his hand. Burning tears pour on the lad's fresh and handsome face as he utters: 'O may our eyes witness Thy return to Zion'...

We were drawn to the Wall as to an old and beloved mother. We clung to the ancient stones and prayed passionately, tearfully and melodically. I have never experienced a prayer like the one I had prayed on that Sabbath.

We finished our prayers. We felt that this is the last time we are standing in front of the Wall. We fell on the cold wall and kissed it with our very mouths. Oh, holy stones! How many portions of burning tears have you extracted from the children of Israel!

We bid goodbye to the Wall quietly and calmly, full of sacred feelings. Suddenly a young woman approached us

with tearful eyes and asked in Russian whether we speak her language. Yes, we do, and who is she?

"I am a woman of your people, and yet not a woman of your people," answered the young woman, "yet you and I share the same fate and the same calamity. I am a Karaite. Our forefathers separated for differences in faith and religion and nowadays our oppressors are reuniting us with their strong hand."

She led us to the small Karaite synagogue not far from the Wall. The synagogue has existed for over a thousand and two hundred years. In the wall there is a bronze plaque in honor of "Anan the President" [founder of the Karaite sect in the eight century CE]. The synagogue is empty and deserted for only five families have remained in the city from their entire community.

* * *

I devoted the day to the schools. I visited the Teachers Seminary whose teachers were: David Yellin, Dr. Mohilever, Borochov and Zutta. I audited many lessons: Talmud, Bible, Nature Studies, Chemistry and Geography. The language of instructions in all classes is Hebrew, with a full academic terminology akin to that of all spoken languages. From there I went with Mr. Yellin to visit the Lemel School. The building is marvelous and excellent order reigns. The children are vigorous and happy. I audited a history lesson given by Ussishkin's daughter, who performed her task with great skill. We also visited the girl's school and teachers college. The Talmud teacher is A. M. Lifschitz.

In the evening we were invited by Mr. Yellin, Chairman of the City's Council of Jerusalem Jews, to attend a meeting of the executive held in our honor. All the discussions and debates with all their parliamentary rules were held in Hebrew as in

any other spoken language. Mr. Yellin asked me to explain the dispute between the American Zionist Organization and the World Zionist Organization to the members of the Council. I did as he wished and made it clear that it was not a personal dispute, but rather a clash between two worldviews, two systems that cannot coexist. Original Zionism rooted in the traditional Jewish education of the *Heder* and in *Hibbat Zion* is quite incompatible with the new, recently created, Zionism, with its cold and mercantile character.

* * *

Monday, June 20th

At five a.m. I went up to the roof of the Amdorsky Hotel to have yet another view, a final view, of our holy city. I saw the glorious sight once again. Here are the sacred mountains, the Temple Mount, the Mount of Olives, Mount Scopus; to the other side are Mount Zion and the Citadel of David by Jaffa Gate. The sun of the land of Israel was already shining in all its glory and beauty, scattering a bounty of gold rays to light all these holy sites, giving them extra charm and magic as a sorrowful and longing son of the exile bid them farewell.

Goodbye Jerusalem, the Holy City! May our Father in Heaven will that I have the privilege of seeing you again in my old age, in times better than these. May your builders, your children, restore you, and may you be a loyal mother to your children who are scattered all over the world. Farewell, our mother Zion. And I - I shall bow and kneel before thee to kiss the dust of your land.

* * *

The train is carrying us from Jerusalem to Egypt.

XIV. Cairo

Friday, June 21st

When we woke up in the morning we were in Cairo, capital of Egypt. We hired a guide, an Arab named Abedallah. He was an elderly man yet full of life and a staunch believer in his prophet. He spoke reasonably good English and explained everything thoroughly like a professor or historian.

"This is the Land of Goshen"* – he tells us as we pass one of the suburbs of Cairo – "here Joseph settled his father Jacob and his brothers when they came from Canaan. And this is the garden of Goshen" – he points his finger at a fine garden full of varied trees and oriental flowers the like of which we have never seen in any country.

Five minutes later we are on the verge of the Sahara desert. This natural wonder amazes us. Suddenly the world of the living has come to an end, there is no sign of life to be seen, the earth and its produce, the trees, date palms, colorful and fragrant flowers, have all disappeared behind us and death has revealed itself before our eyes. We see it on the hills of yellow sand flooded by the sunlight burning like the fire of hell. Sand and sky – without a sign of life – no grass or tree, no bird or insect. It seems as though the living God, creator of all things, concluded his work here and left the rest to the devil, master of destruction and ruin… One more step and we would leave life behind with death looming ahead of us.

* The generally accepted location for Goshen is Wadi Tumilat east of Cairo (translator's note.)

The climb up to the pyramids on the blazing sand was more than we could manage.

We became bedouins temporarily and the three of us, myself, my wife and the Rabbi from Washington, rode on camels. The Arab fulfilled the biblical description and 'made the camels kneel down', and they gave quite a shake when they rose to their feet. Suddenly we were taller and could see the full size of the pyramids. There are nine pyramids with the sphinx to the left. The largest is more than one hundred feet high, and is, as Abedallah assured us, a monument for Raamses the first.* It looks down proudly at the smaller pyramids, like a father upon his children.

We dismounted the camels and approached the four thousand year old stone monuments built by the ancient Egyptians with might and perseverance. The building of these great monuments with no machinery, using human power alone, is indeed a miracle. It is beyond our understanding. Indescribable feelings overcome you as you stand in front of the pyramids. It was for a good reason that Napoleon Bonaparte, hoping to boost the spirit of his troops, pointed his finger at the pyramids and said: "Four thousand years are looking at you!"

A feeling of awe but also of fear comes upon you when you stand before these super human, and yet man made, projects. Unintentionally you recall the servitude of our forefathers in Egypt as they slaved in mortar and bricks; you recall their moaning, as reflected in the biblical words 'and the Israelites were groaning'. How cast down, how deep the sighs of men building stone monuments such as these for despotic rulers.

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* The famous pyramids of Gizeh date back to the Ancient Kingdom's 4th dynasty (26th century BCE). Raamses I, on the other hand, was founder of the 19th dynasty in 1303 BCE, which is part of the history of the New Kingdom or Empire (translator's note.)

In the afternoon we visited the old city of Cairo rich in remains from Roman times. There we saw the ancient synagogue named for Ibn Ezra. In the middle of the synagogue there is a small *bimah* [platform], where an engraved bronze plaque granulated in marble states that it was here that Moses prayed to God to remove the plagues from Pharaoh and from his people.

We then visited ancient shrines of the two daughters of the religion of Israel. We saw the Moslem mosque with its 365 columns built for the number of days of the solar year. We also saw the Christian shrine with its caves where, according to legend, Mary and her son hid when escaping from Herod, as the New Testament tells us.

* * *

Wednesday, June 22nd

We devoted this day to the Cairo Museum, which contains paintings, gods, goddesses - souvenirs of ancient Egyptian art that are of interest to all tourists with no distinction of nation or creed. But there is one thing that interests a man of Israel, and certainly one who received a traditional education in the *heder* and pictured in his imagination, ever since his youth, the wicked Pharaoh of Egypt who slaughtered the babes of Israel and bathed in their blood, he who decreed: 'Every boy that is born you shall throw into the Nile', the Nile, Ye'or, full of snakes and scorpions. And now when a man of Israel comes to the Cairo Museum he is shown the corpse of a Pharaoh wrapped in cloth and embalmed, with a plaque on the coffin saying: "Pharaoh who tortured the Children of Israel". And the Israelite tourist sees the blackened face of Pharaoh, a face four thousand years old, with its completed white teeth – and as he looks at all this he unintentionally cries from the depth of his heart:

"Oh, murderer! 'Your arrogant heart has seduced you' to annihilate the children of Israel from the face of the earth, and now you lie here, a sight for their descendants. Lie here in your shame, murderer!"

Cairo with its two parts, the old and the new cities, is a microcosm of two cultures. The new city with its multitude of automobiles and trolley cars, its magnificent palaces, wide streets and large and beautiful gardens reminds one of Paris, Berlin, Vienna and London and you imagine that you are in modern Europe. And yet, after a half hour drive, you descend into old Cairo and here you see the ancient east in all its poverty and squalor. Half naked, barefoot people, soiled, devoid of human consciousness extend a black thin hand, run after you calling for a handout in a queer voice: "*Bakshish! Bakshish*!" It reminds you of Hebron and the Arab towns and villages in the Land of Israel. I have witnessed such scenes there as well.

I think Cairo is the only city in the world that contains both extremes – that of the living West and that of the dying East.

XV. Alexandria – Trieste – Vienna

Friday, June 24th

The trip from Cairo to Alexandria takes four hours. The train passes through fertile fields. As far as the eye can see there is no hill, no sand, only fields, fields of grain, tobacco, cotton and sugar cane.

As children we already heard of the Nile, the blessed Ye'or, the river that waters the land of Egypt and turns it into a fertile garden. For the land of Egypt has no rain. And yet you do not comprehend this wonder till you see it with your own eyes. One of the great natural wonders is revealed before you as the Nile branches into thousands and thousands of canals and streams watering every inch of land and everything blooms in front of you.

As you see this fertile land a thought comes to your mind: perhaps God would have wrought an even greater miracle on us had he expelled the Egyptians from Egypt and given this broad and rich land to our forefathers...? But this thought vanishes quickly for who is partner to His hidden ways? He alone devises all things.

In Alexandria I met my youthful friend Mr. Benenson of Minsk, one of the old guard of *Hovevei Zion* from Pinsker's days. He is an old man now, over seventy years of age, and yet full of energy and youthful zeal. Whenever I meet one of the friends of my youth special memories of those days are awakened and I relive those good early times.

* * *

Today we ascended the Italian ship Hullion that is to bring us to Trieste. On board we met Mr. Bloom from Jerusalem, a clever merchant, a member of the City Council of Jerusalem Jews who is well acquainted with the Old *Yishuv* [Orthodox pre-Zionist settlement] and all its drawbacks. We also met the engineer Wilbushevitz, one of the founders of the Shemen oil factory in The Land of Israel. He is a very interesting and impressive man, a member of *Hovevei Zion*, a disciple of the philosopher Hermann Cohen, and a follower of Tolstoy – he believes in the divinity in a special philosophic way and has a unique worldview that derives from his own thoughts and opinions.

* * *

Monday, June 27th

Trieste. The former Austrian city and an Italian one since the War, makes a fine impression. Typically, the sight of the city shows no sign of its recent Austrian past. There is no trace of Austrian life and culture. Trieste today is an Italian city, as far as its culture, language and all the ways of life are concerned, as though it has never been any different. The city is very beautiful, the streets are wide and the houses built in good taste and style. The port is the vibrant core of the town and the fertile hills around it give this core a special rhythm.

A fair number of Italian Jews live in Trieste. They have a large and lovely synagogue. It is impossible to discern their Jewish origin in the streets. They are completely Italian in their language, walk and all their customs. I tried hard to find traces of the greatness of the Italian sages of Israel, the proud crown of Italian Jewry, but to no avail. The national spirit is almost gone. Yet the Jews of Italy, though far from Jewish studies, are loyal to Judaism more than the French Jews. The spark of religion still burns dimly in the hearts of the Italian Jews, they

are innocent people and there are no assimilationists among them, the like of Reinach and his supporters in France. The Italian Jews do not fight the God of Israel, neither openly nor in secret; they are quiet and innocent people, most of them fulfill the commandments of the Torah and even if they do not perform positive deeds on behalf of Judaism, they are not out to undermine it.

A number of Jews from The Land of Israel, merchants of the Old *Yishuv* en route from London, found themselves in the same hotel with the leaders of the Zionist movement, and a vehement argument ensued. Both camps criticized each other, each brought forth just claims, anger and fury were everywhere.

* * *

Tuesday, June 28th

The train ride from Trieste to Vienna is one of the most beautiful a traveler can experience in his entire lifetime. The landscape is magical. Mountains and valleys, forests and rivers alternate before you as by a magic wand. You cannot believe your eyes, cannot believe that this is not a dream. The lower Alps, as against the great Alps of Switzerland, have their own peculiar charm and enchanting secrets. The valleys are flat like an oriental carpet. Sunset in the Alps is a wonderful sight. The mountaintops are slowly kindled by the last rays of sun and burn in fire red, it then seems as though all life in the mountains is on fire. Slowly the mountaintops turn off, expire and die... only a glimmer, reminiscent of a rainbow, remains at the edge of the sky... the small houses in the valleys glitter against the setting sun and look like stars scattered on earth... here and there streams emerging from the mountains are winding their way.

* * *

Friday, July 1st

Here in Vienna, former capital of Austro-Hungary, the devastation of the seven years of war is evident in all its might. The city is beautiful, magnificent, but the residents make a depressing impression on the stranger. The people walking in the streets are pale, bent over, their eyes without a spark; they are dressed in rags, their pride is gone as is their courage and energy. I have seen traces of the war and its horrors all over Europe, but devastation and anemia such as these in poor Austria I have seen nowhere. Austria suffered and is still suffering from the war more than any other country. From a great kingdom of 40 million people it has been reduced to six million in a small, truncated piece of land. Austria has been left as a desert island.

Vienna, the gay city, the crown of the glory of the House of Hapsburg, has become a cartoon, its large head standing on a thin emasculated body with straw legs... You feel the terrible break down and crisis at every step. The moan of destruction is everywhere - in the streets, the hotels, the restaurants, the banks and all commercial enterprises, large and small. The life of the Jews of Vienna is no different from that of the general population. Everywhere, in the synagogues, temples, societies and associations you find the former respectable bourgeois homeowner in his decline, so devastated that he even lacks the strength to beg.

Indeed, though before the war Vienna was not the symbol of Austria as Paris was of France, now Vienna is the image of all of Austria: a large head shaking on a thin, truncated and amputated body...

XVI. Jewish Vienna

Sunday, July 3rd

Tens of thousands of refugees, our brethren from Galicia and Poland, fill the streets of Vienna. They are dressed in the old fashioned way – long caftans, long side-locks and short trousers. The refugees settle down gradually and find a livelihood. Far worse is the situation of the hundreds of poor pioneers, young people, the prime of our devastated nation who have devoted themselves to the ideal of the revival of our people with a burning heart and have set out, under difficult conditions, on the route leading to the land of their hopes. These wonderful youngsters are stranded in Vienna unable to leave, the gates of the Land shut before them following the riots that took place in Jaffa and the Settlements.

The condition of the pioneers is horrific indeed. They number close to a thousand, some have families – men, women and suckling babes – all wallowing in barracks. The Jewish community of Vienna and their leader Z. P. Chajes do a great deal on their behalf. And yet their disappointed hopes, their wandering for weeks and months, the meager food rations that they eat once a day and the lack of air, have all weakened their bodies and their spirits and they walk about the sad streets of Vienna like shadows.

* * *

Monday, July 4th

Yesterday, July 3rd, the 27th day of the month of Sivan 5681, will

be engraved in my memory for as long as I live.

At the Zionist Bureau I met Mr. Mordechai ben Hillel Ha-Cohen and Mr. Abraham Levin of Montreal, Canada, with his wife. Together with Mr. Bloom of Jerusalem we all went to the Jewish Cemetery in Vienna to visit the grave of the late yet still living Dr. Herzl. I did not have the privilege of seeing the Prince of Israel in his lifetime. And here we all were, standing with bowed heads and eyes full of sacred tears on his fresh grave next to those of his forefathers. The word "Herzl" sparkled in our eyes from the large marble stone, the cold tombstone of the greatest Israelite in our generation, he who rose like a star in the dark skies of Israel and extinguished prematurely.

We stood speechless at the side of the grave for about ten minutes. Our spirits were elevated. We imagined ourselves in another world, a supreme world, a pure world, a world without deceit and bloodshed. We stood by the sacred grave like statues, without moving a limb. Before us we saw the crown of Israel interred in this confined space at the Vienna cemetery.

I awoke like a man waking from his sleep and said a few words. Then Mordechai ben Hillel He-Cohen said in a dramatic voice:

"We shall remove his remains from here and bring them to us, to Our Land, as he has asked us to do. We shall fulfill our promise."

It was very difficult for us to leave the grave. We felt bound to it and our feet would not carry us away. We walked backwards, facing the tombstone till we could see it no more.

Dr. Levin and I went to see Dr. Kaminka, who had visited me several times.

Dr. Kaminka has already made a great name for himself in Hebrew literature. He has achieved this status thirty years ago with the translation of Homer to Hebrew published in

Knesset Yisrael edited by SHePHeR. During his childhood he was named 'the genius of Berditchev'. He has a vast knowledge of the Talmud and teaches a class in the old Jewish Academy of Vienna where the two great sages of Israel, Rabbi Isaac Hirsch Weiss, author of *Dor Dor ve-Dorshav,* and Rabbi Meir Ish Shalom [Friedmann] taught in the past. Dr. Kaminka has the energy of a young man. He is secretary of the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Vienna. Economically his situation is no different than that of other professionals in the city – he lives a life of sorrow and duress, his income sufficient only for the basic needs of body and soul.

* * *

Thursday, July 7th

Today I visited the Rabbi of Vienna, the learned Dr. Zvi Peretz Chajes, descendent of the great and renowned scholar Zvi Hirsch Chajes. Blessed is the grandson who does not put his grandfather to shame. Dr. Chayes is not only a great scholar but also a man of exemplary character who performs many benevolent deeds. His entire life is devoted to the service of the community. He is the guiding spirit in all aspects of the Jewish community in Vienna. Not a thing is done without him, and in Vienna there is, thank God, much to be done. There is no shortage of troubles. Here in Vienna there are tens of thousands of refugees from Poland and Galicia, a thousand pioneers are stranded here etc. etc. Dr. Chajes does not tire and knows no rest. He works beyond his ability, is constantly on call and supervises all matters at all times. Today he related to me calmly the purchase of a house with a plot of land around it not far from the city. The pioneers will live there during their stay in Vienna and be trained in agricultural work.

Dr. Chajes is one of the most loyal Zionists in our time. We discussed the recent developments in the Land of Israel and

he encouraged me with his optimistic view of the situation as a whole. I was thrilled to hear lofty thoughts and ideas about Zionism from the man who inherited his post from Chief Rabbi M. Guedemann, well known for his opposition to the Zionist movement. Had all the large centers of Judaism been blessed with Rabbis like Dr. Chajes we would have reached our homeland in no time.

I became acquainted with the activities of Mrs. Anitta Mueller and was amazed by this great woman, by her energy, her warm Jewish heart and her devotion. Mrs. Mueller is surely one of the great women of our times. Her charitable works during the War and after it cannot be numbered. I know of no other Jewish woman who did as much for the War victims, especially for the miserable orphans, as did Mrs. Mueller who is beloved by all. The acts of our Lord are great indeed for He anticipates the blow by providing the remedy. Here in misery stricken Austria, in destitute Vienna, center of sorrow and suffering, place of shelter for the refugees and orphans of Polish, Galician and Ukrainian Jewry – here a great woman like Anitta Mueller rose to remedy the plight of the miserable and to diligently do everything possible for their wellbeing.

* * *

Sunday, July 10th

I happened to meet my friend Dr. H. J. Epstein of New York, who is here in Vienna for advanced professional training. On Saturday we went together to visit the Rabbi of Chortkov, a famous Hasidic Rabbi with followers world over. The Rabbi received us cordially. We spoke about various Jewish issues for about an hour. He is a wise and practical man, favorably inclined toward the settlement of the Land of Israel, and yet opposed to Zionism, even to the *Mizrahi* [religious Zionism] for joining with the Zionists who, in his opinion, have

distanced themselves from Judaism because of their attitude to religion. He cannot agree with them. With all the zeal of his great soul he allied himself with *Agudat Yisrael* in the hope that this faction will act on behalf of the Land of Israel more than the Zionists do. May it be so!

XVII. From Vienna to Carlsbad

Monday, July 11th

Yesterday Dr. Epstein and I visited the great German-Jewish playwright Richard Baer Hoffmann, author of the famous drama *The Dream of Jacob*. He is now writing a new play - *David and Jonathan*. The two hours we spent with the playwright, a man deeply rich in spirit, brought us great spiritual pleasure. His mind is so very sharp, his power of observation so profound, and his admiration for the Jewish national spirit so great! With no Jewish education, no knowledge of Hebrew, raised and educated in a foreign environment, he managed to penetrate the very depth of the biblical spirit, to understand the life of Israel and to describe the situation of Israel among the nations with genial talent in his portrayal of the twin brothers Esau and Jacob. Only a man whose soul resembles that of Herzl can achieve this and Baer Hoffmann is indeed such a man. He is not a complete Zionist, for being an artist he is above all the factions. But how great the distance between the view of the Rabbi of Chortkov about Zionism and that of Hoffmann, as great as the distance between Chortkov and Vienna. The first demands of all to be Zionist according to his will and opinion and the latter asks all the people of Israel to support Zionism so that there will be no Zionist parties, but rather a national movement, and so all the people of Israel will aspire to reach the Land of Israel.

In the home of this artist as well I sensed the terrible poverty dominating the entire city of Vienna. He lives in his own

mansion and owns several other houses – but nevertheless his economic condition is very difficult, as the houses in Vienna devour themselves. There are many first rate extremely talented professionals in Vienna who live in poverty and misery.

On the Sabbath we walked to the Great Temple but found its doors locked. The community cannot maintain the synagogue properly. The famous cantor, Morgenstern prayed in the other room of the building. I enjoyed the style of his prayers very much, and was especially amazed by him when I learnt of his personality and his vast knowledge of Hebrew literature. It is a pity to see such talented people living a miserable life because of the money market. Oh, the money market! This is the magical word of Viennese life! People ponder over it when they rise and when they go to sleep, when they sit and when they walk, they think of it by day and dream of it by night. The small traders, refugees from Galicia, run around the stock exchange like bees, fill the coffee houses, buy and sell dollars and marks, franks and crowns. Every day there is a different storm. The rate of exchange goes up and down and it is by these ups and downs, these changes, of a crown for a mark and a dollar for a frank, that thousands of refugees make a living. They rush from one street to the other, cane in hand and head spinning, buying and selling. Some manage to earn their daily bread and some have nothing but the smoke of their cigarettes, which never move from among their lips

* * *

Carlsbad, Thursday July 14th

The twentieth century is a swift one indeed! It seems as though it is sitting in an aeroplane, flying through the air; things happen at such speed that it accomplishes in months what previous centuries have done in decades. How many great developments have taken place in the last seven years.

Countries have been destroyed and laid waste, Kings have been deposed, thrones shattered, crowns melted, thousand and thousands of youngsters sent to the slaughter – and at the same time new countries emerged, republics and monarchies established and a new world came into being. I doubt if the nineteen past centuries had witnessed so much history as the first quarter of this century, a century of destruction and building, extinction and creation.

The small city of Carlsbad, the Austrian spa famous world wide, reflects the rapid world developments in miniature. In the past the name of Emperor Franz Joseph could be seen on all the houses of Carlsbad, on the gardens and the streets; the eagle of the Habsburg dynasty spread its wings over all the palaces and spas. And now there is no memory or remnant to the glory of the House of Habsburg, as though the eagles and emblems of the Emperor had never been displayed here. They are all gone. The names of the streets and springs have changed. The monuments in honor of the Habsburgs are covered in black and hidden from sight. And the 'salve who became a king', the maidservant of Czechoslovakia, the new republic, reigns supreme with its army, police, postal service, language, loud uniforms, customs and manners, as though it has been in power since the six days of Creation.

And when you come from the Land of Israel, a land four thousand years old, property of a four thousand year old people, in both the historical and moral sense, then, as you arrive in new Czechoslovakia your heart breaks seeing the difference between an enslaved people living in its own land and an exiled people, torn away from its land, scattered and dispersed all over the earth.

* * *

Sunday, July 17th

It is a captivating spectacle to watch - twice a day, in the morning and at sunset, the guests form a long line from the clinic to the spring house, and to the right up to the palace well. Tens of thousands of men and women, who come from all over the world, without distinction of nation, race, creed or color, young and old, short and tall, heavy set and lean, good looking and ugly, dressed in different clothes speaking in all tongues – all of them standing on line, holding cups and containers in their hands, moving one foot after the other calmly, following each other till they reach the springs. There, dozens of young girls work systematically and swiftly. The girls take the people's cups or containers, the guests continue walking to the edge of the spring where each receives his own cup full of water, and no cup is ever confused with another. The guests, full cups in their hands, walk in file once more and sip the water as they return. A faint murmur of drinking is heard matching the rhythm of music played by the band that accompanies the sipping parade twice a day.

Looking at the faces of the sippers you can immediately distinguish the newcomers from those already naturalized water drinkers. The newcomer takes a sip from his cup, frowns and looks at it angrily as he finds salty water unpleasant. The regulars, on the other hand, look at the cup with satisfaction; they take their sip calmly, in complete faith, believing that the water shall cure their ailments.

XVIII. On the Eve of the Zionist Congress

Friday, July 22nd

I have not written my notes for the last few days, it is hard for me to write. "Neuritis"- that terrible disease, has attacked my right hand, my writing hand. The pain is great. My good physician, Dr. Kohler [sic],* by the way, a loyal Zionist, President of the movement in Carlsbad, prescribes various medications to alleviate my suffering: baths, electrical treatment, radium, medicines and also morphine shots to daze my nerves and spare me from sleepless nights.

Yes, I must regrettably separate from my diary for an indefinite period; my agony deprives me of the ability to focus my thoughts.

Oh, God Lord of Zion! In all the days of my life I have never forgotten Jerusalem, why then should 'my right hand forget its cunning?!'

* * *

Sunday, August 28th

I have not written my diary for over a month. This terrible illness, neuritis, has robbed me of my typewriter, of my right

* The Hebrew original gives the name of the Physician as Dr. Kohler, however, in the Protocols of the Zionist Congress a Dr. Walter Kohner is mentioned as Chairman of the local Zionist group in Carlsbad (*Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des XII Kongresses in Karlsbad...* Berlin, Juedischer Verlag, 1922, p.41). Dr. Kohner addressed the opening session of the Congress, greeting the delegates on behalf of the local Zionists (translator's note.)

hand, for a whole month. But the blessed waters of Carlsbad, radium and electricity have soothed my pain and my hand can once again hold a pen and record my daily impressions.

In honor of the Zionist Congress Carlsbad has become a miniature Jerusalem. The guests who came for medical reasons have already completed their treatment and left Carlsbad. The few who are still here resemble late birds. Had it not been for the Congress, Carlsbad would have already been clothed in her off-season attire, that of a pretty, post-summer Czechoslovakian town with fine, but locked, hotels, closed restaurants and empty boulevards. But the year 1921 will be recorded in the history of Carlsbad as an unusual year. On the first of September the 12th Zionist Congress will open, and in its honor the pulse of the city is pounding with all its might, the hotels and restaurants are full of people, new faces of water sippers crowd by the springs, there are lots of people in the boulevards and gardens, and the atmosphere in the entire town is one of festivity and high spirits.

* * *

Tuesday, August 30th

The atmosphere of the congress is getting stronger by the minute. The most important guests, the leaders of the people, are almost all here and the number of delegates is increasing rapidly, some say that their number has already reached six hundred. The delegates from Poland and Galicia are getting a taste of the money market. They brought purses full of marks that melt between their fingers as they change them to Czechoslovakian crowns at the rate of 15 marks per crown that is worth less than one American cent. Nevertheless the money market does not hold up the delegates. They arrive from Poland and Galicia by their factions, all are full of enthusiastic devotion to the great idea of the revival of our people and its

redemption.

Among the Polish delegates there are many Rabbis, Hasidic Jews and communal leaders all members of the *Mizrahi* [religious Zionist party] led by Mr. H. Farbstein of Warsaw. They are dressed in long caftans and wear the bronze emblem of the *Mizrahi* on their coat lapels.

The Congress atmosphere is getting stronger. You are unconsciously drawn into it and you feel your spirit being elevated. On all sides you hear various sounds that lift your spirit and fill your mind with thoughts. The mood of the Congress! Who has become a delegate and does not know it?

I have not heard the sound of the Russian language for decades. Today as I walked under the colonnade near the Milbrunne Well I suddenly heard a pleasant and familiar voice speaking beautiful melodic Russian. I turned around and saw a handsome old man, tall with a Russian style beard, walking arm in arm with Menachem Ussisshkin. One more look and I recognized my old friend of thirty years standing, the government- appointed rabbi of Yelisavetgrad Mr. Vladimir Tyomkin. He was one of the leaders of *Hovevei Zion* in those days, the days of Pinsker and Lilienblum. How typical that he recognized me at exactly the same moment. "Tyomkin!" "Masliansky!" – voices of glee came simultaneously from our hearts. We exchanged warm greetings and then walked arm in arm for several minutes renewing the memory of our friendship of thirty years standing. Once again images, far and yet near, flashed before my eyes, pleasant loveable moments from those days, the enthusiastic days of *Hibbat Zion*.

Oh, memories, how I cherish my encounter with them!

* * *

Wednesday, August 31st

The Zionist family is growing by the minute. Its members

are coming from the four corners of the earth to the Zionist Congress about to convene and lay a new foundation for the actual activity of our movement. Here is a group of delegates from Italy, walking about speaking their musical language. It is said that they are loyal and devoted Zionists. One of the greatest of our generation is with them, speaking their language and translating their words to others – this is a man dear to all, Dr. P. Chajes, the Chief Rabbi of Vienna.

"The Americans are here already!" – The news passes from one camp to another. Everybody rejoices in the members of the American delegation. All the delegates without distinction of country, faction or party, agree that the salvation of the Land of Israel shall not come form the frank, nor from the crown or the mark, but only from the formidable dollar. All regard the American delegates with respect, as they hold the key to the great dollar about to build the Land of Israel for the People of Israel.

The key to the dollar... yes, it should be in our hands. Is it actually so? Who knows...?

"Have you heard? Bialik has already arrived. I have seen him with my own eyes" – I hear a young man announcing this to a group of young Hebrew men and women standing near the "Schutzenhaus".

The news runs through the group like an electric current. A spring of joy flows before them as they learn that their dear poet, for whom we have already wept and whom we have already eulogized as we followed the information in the papers, their dear poet is with them and with us in Carlsbad. Bialik is alive and writing for his people who love their national poet deeply.

Poets, thinkers, writers and columnists gather around Bialik. Among them are Dr. I. Klatchkin, Z. Shneor, H. D. Gomberg, M. Kleinmann and many others. All honor and admire the

great poet Haim Nahman Bialik.

And here are the leaders of the Zionist movement: Prof. Haim Weizmann and Mr. Nahum Sokolow. A miniature 'Ingathering of the Exiles', the chosen from among the ranks of the Jewish people, regard them with respect and long to hear great and important tidings from them tomorrow at the opening of the 12th Congress, the first after the Balfour Declaration and San Remo.

* * *

Thursday, September 1st

Today the 12th Zionist Congress is opening.

It has been a long and hard journey en route from the Land of Israel...

I shall not lead the reader with me on this journey...

Afterword

Masliansky's Grandchildren Recall

My name is Jim Weinberg and I am a grandson of Zvi Hirsch Masliansky. I was born in 1922 at home at 5218 12th Avenue in Boro Park, Brooklyn. This community, now known for its Hasidic majority, was then a large and diverse Jewish community, home to orthodox Jewish leaders and to leaders of the Zionist and Labor movements as well. It was there that my late grandfather lived and graced the community for many years until his death in 1943.

Our home was a two apartment building where my grandparents lived on the first floor and we lived above. Some years later, my grandparents moved to a spacious first floor apartment house just one block from Temple *Bet El*, where the great Cantor Mordecai Hirschman attracted so many orthodox members that there was always a waiting list for enrollment. Just one block beyond was Temple Emmanuel, one of the first conservative synagogues in the country where the Cantor Zevel Kwartin served.

My earliest memories of my grandparents involve being brought to their home on Sundays, when they held an open house visitors' day. Grandpa would sit in a chair with a hassock, his right foot under his left in a spot where he could see everyone in the room. A list of just some visitors whom I remember forms a dazzling sample of Jewish life and leadership: Rabbis Stephen Wise, Israel Levinthal and his father Bernard Levinthal; the Zionist leaders Abba Hillel Silver,

Chaim Weizmann, Louis Lipsky; labor leaders J. Barondess and B. Charney Vladeck; the poet Chaim Nachman Bialik (my mother said I complained because he pinched my cheeks,) and many others including Rav Tsair and Rabbi Wolfe Gold.

I would play with my cousins. Grandpa was proud of my ability to speak Hebrew for it was largely his influence that created a Hebrew speaking, Zionist Yeshiva, where Yiddish was not spoken, to accentuate the revival of Hebrew. That was the Yeshiva *Etz Haim*.

Dad told me that on the desk was a letter Grandpa had written to Justice Louis Brandeis, the great Justice and one time President of the Zionist movement.

One week, my father drove grandpa, my older brother Ed and me to, I believe, the Academy of Music to meet Albert Einstein, who was being honored. I distinctly heard him tell us, that the man we were about to meet was perhaps the "smartest man in he whole World" – which was a bit scary. There the man was with the curly gray hair reaching his hands out to be shaken. I don't remember what else happened, but had something to tell my friends.

As I reached my *Bar-Mitzvah*, at Temple *Beth El*, I can distinctly remember that the entire audience in what seemed to be a vast synagogue floor and a sweeping balcony all rose in honor of my grandfather as he entered through a side door. Indeed even at the small restaurant on 13th Avenue people rose when we brought Grandpa and Grandma for a dinner. This unbelievable experience was repeated years later after Grandpa spoke, as did Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, at a mass meeting. When he walked in the streets of New York people tipped their hats as he passed by. People would pass grandpa and touch his coat or jacket and then kiss their hands as though they were kissing the Torah as it is carried through the assembled synagogue audience on the Sabbath.

Let me end this memoir many years later, when as President of the United Jewish Appeal of New York, I was asked to present a large check to the Rumanian government on behalf of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, as an expression of our gratitude for what the Rumanian government had done following an earthquake which damaged the Jewish quarter in Bucharest. After making the presentation the Rabbi who represented the Jewish community asked me if I would join him on the following day, the Sabbath, and attend services in a synagogue in the quake area, that he thought I would enjoy. I told him that I would gladly do so and he asked me whether I would like to be called to the Torah for an *aliyah.* I told him that if he so chose I would do the final *Aliyah*, the *Maftir,* and read the *Haftorah* [the portion from the prophets.] He was delighted and the following morning when we entered the synagogue, which was packed in both the main floor and the ladies balcony upstairs, he announced that the representative of the Jewish community in New York, and the "*einekel*" [grandson] of the great Maslliansky was their guest. A clear sound of recognition could be heard, as many of the older people present had heard him speak. I was seated on a narrow platform [*Bimah*] next to a very elderly Rabbi. Others seated on the *Bimah* were the Israeli Ambassador, who I learned was a secular person, an *apikoros* so to speak, and the press officer of the USA Embassy.

The elderly former Rabbi, who was ninety years old, spoke. His father, so he said, had told him that Masliansky was the "Jews' greatest speaker" and had taken him to listen to his sermons. He said he could remember some of grandpa's speeches word for word: he preached for the establishment of a Jewish homeland and the revitalization of Hebrew as a national language. He added that had they in Rumania truly listened they would not have lost hundreds of thousand in

the Holocaust. The story brought tears to my eyes as I was standing there, perhaps 70 years later, representing the Jewish community.

When I was called to read the *haftorah* , I could quickly see that it was from a chapter describing the Jews, exiled in Babylonia, singing of the return home to their land. In juxtaposition with what the elder Rabbi had just told me, I was overwhelmed. I sang the *Haftrorah* as I was taught in the Yeshiva and I could hear sighs in the synagogue. When I finished the *gabaim* [synagogue directors] kissed me and their cheeks were wet as were mine and one said in English "you are the first young man do the *Haftorah* in many years." I was then in my fifties and that statement told a fantastic story.

Marshall Weinberg, Masliansky's youngest grandson recalls:

My *Bar Mitzvah* was the last time my grandfather left the house, in a wheelchair, to Temple *Beth El.*

I remember particularly an incident that took place a few years later in 1946 at Sampson College: A professor of Mathematics welled up with tears when he saw my middle name, Masliansky, and asked if I was related to the great orator. He then told me: "I was only a little boy in the *shtetle* [small town] in Poland, but I still remember him speaking. You cannot know how much it meant to us, how much he inspired us."

All through the early years of my public speaking career I would hear whispers in the audience: "Masliansky's ein einekle" – Masliansky's grandson, and I could clearly sense what a great impression he had left on his audience.



The memoirs of Zvi Hirsch Masliansky, published in Yiddish in 1924 and in Hebrew in 1929, are now presented to the English reader. They describe the life and public activity of the renowned "national preacher" over several decades and on three continents. From his childhood in the town of Slutsk, Lithuania, where he was born in 1856, through his education and early working career as a Hebrew teacher, to his involvement in the Hibbat Zion national movement from its inception in 1881, and especially his travels as itinerant preacher on its behalf through the Jewish centers of Czarist Russia in the early 1890s.

The second focus of the book is on Masliansky's activity in the American Jewish community since his arrival in the country in 1895. As a writer, public worker and first and foremost as a much adored public speaker he played a pivotal role in the adaptation of the Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe to American life, while encouraging them to preserve their national tradition.

The final part of the book describes his visit to the Land of Israel he had always longed for, during the formative stage of the building of the "Jewish national home" under the British mandate after World War I.

Front cover: Zvi Hirsch Masliansky in his sixties (1920s).
Back cover: The Masliansky family in Russia, 1892.