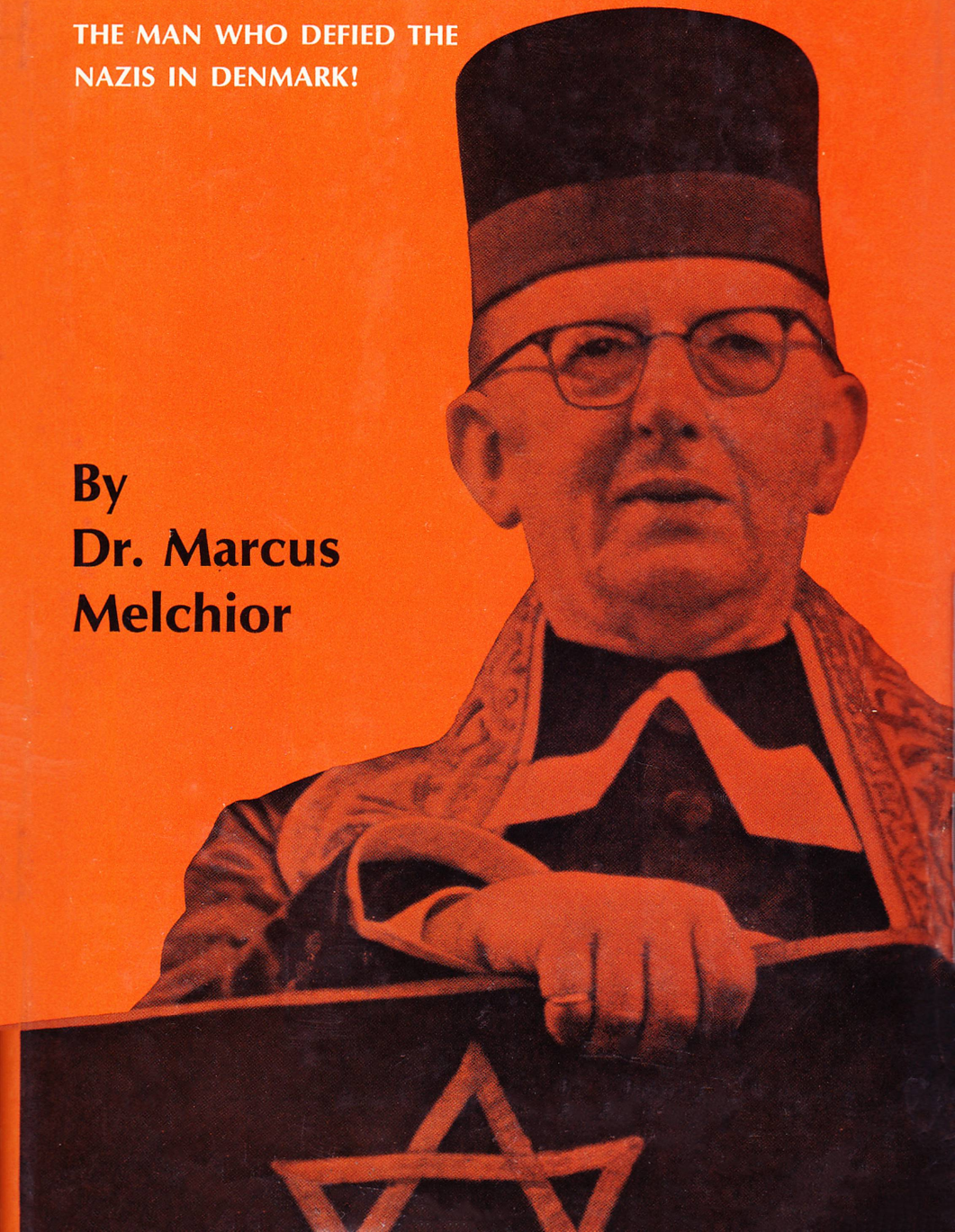
A Rabbi Remembers

THE MAN WHO DEFIED THE NAZIS IN DENMARK!



By
Dr. Marcus
Melchior

$4.95

A Rabbi Remembers

By Dr. Marcus Melchior

This is the story of a Danish rabbi who played a historic role through the horror and holocaust of the Nazi years. For the past two decades Dr. Marcus Melchior has served as Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community in Copenhagen. Melchior was a rabbinical student in Germany during World War I. He was a rabbi in Germany when Hitler took power. He was in Denmark when the Nazis occupied his "small, decent, delicate, gentle, quietly happy fatherland." He and his family were among the refugees who fled the Nazi terror to neutral Sweden, and he served a vital function as "state-employed refugee rabbi" among the displaced and dispossessed who found sanctuary there.

These are his memoirs, faithfully and lovingly translated by his son Werner. Chief Rabbi Melchior's description of a colleague might as well apply to himself: "He was very pious, but also very human. And gentle piety and humaneness are always a noble combination."

This story, told with modesty and charm and a wry, elegant, self-deprecating wit, leaves the reader to read between the

(continued on back flap)

A Rabbi Remembers

by MARCUS MELCHIOR

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2023

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A Rabbi Remembers

To Meta

Contents

PART I	PAGE
Foreword	11
Freakish Fortunes	13
The Tender Sprout (1897-1906)	19
1905	25
Lewenstein the Lion — 1910	37
World War — 1914	52
Arrival in Berlin — 1915	62
Teachers — 1915	67
Armistice — 1918	78

Oslo-Königsberg-Berlin — 1919-1921 86

The First Post — 1922-1923 95

Headmaster — 1923-1925 105

Beuthen, Upper Silesia — 1925-1934 113

PART II

Immigrant in My Native Country — 1934-1940 138

The Obsessed — 1940-1943 161

Separate Status under Martial Law — 1943 174

State-Employed Refugee Rabbi — 1943-1945 184

Back Home — an Editor 199

Chief Rabbi — 1947- 215

Leo Baeck 230

Ben Gurion 234

Foreign Relations 239

New Forces 251

A Rabbi Remembers

Foreword

Just a couple of short remarks . . .

The idea of writing this book was not conceived by me. It was handed over to me—and I was weak enough to adopt it. This is the first remark.

Now for the other . . .

On the way home from church, one lady said to the other, "Don't you think the Reverend Jones's sermon today was lovely?"

To which the other lady replied, "Yes, rather, only it would seem to me that perhaps it was a little too much concerned with the Reverend Jones."

What I want to say is this: You may be sure this book is not a sermon. On the other hand, it deals rather excessively with "the Reverend Jones." It's "I" and "me" and "my" and "mine" all over. But that can hardly be helped in a book of this kind. I have no way of avoiding being "first person" in the grammatical sense and can only hope the reader will kindly consent to being "second person"—that is, the one who is being addressed.

And one more point . . .

Obviously, some of the events recounted here are not very pleasant. It should be remembered, though, that memoirs cannot be just sunny fairy tales. The criterion must be whether things in this book are told in a way that is decent and considerate toward the dead and the living. I have used my best judgment to solve this part of the task in a reasonably fair manner.

Marcus Melchior

Part One
Freakish Fortunes

Who or what is it that decides the fortunes and experiences along man's way through life? Some religious people, in this context, reject the use of the word "fate." Fate, so they say, comprises elements of chance and accident, but it is God, or *Providence,* who determines all that happens to human beings. But for Him, not a hair is hurt on anybody's head, not a straw changes its position or location. Providence rules alone; only God decides our good fortunes or bad luck.

I cannot agree to this distinction between fate and Providence. In fate, in fortune, too, the Creator reveals Himself. God, while being big enough to keep watch over everybody and everything, must be great enough as well to permit the play of chance to interfere with human life. It is—and it remains—a matter of fortune whether it is you or I—or neither of us—who gains the big prize in a lottery, whose life is lost or saved in a traffic accident on land or sea or in the air. It is probably a good religious custom to give thanks to God for human happiness, but not to turn against Him too wildly when one is afflicted by sorrow and disaster. After all, from the outset God has proved this power of

His—His omnipotence, as we call it—by waiving power. By granting man his own free will, He has put man in the position of being able to thwart divine plans and contravene the divine wish. It is unreasonable, or even silly, to insist that the death of six million Jews at the hands of the criminal Nazi regime expressed any will of Providence. Not God, only men willed it so.

Altogether, life is not lived according to rules which could be formulated or called logical. Haphazard constellations accompany man along his way—fortunately not always sinister and disastrous, but very often bright and happy. Let us take an example. In the early spring of 1964, I was asked to deliver the principal speech at a solemn ceremony to be held by the Copenhagen Artisans' Guild at the City Hall. On this occasion, several hundred young journeymen were to receive, in the presence of the King and Queen, their prizes for distinguished work at the conclusion of their apprenticeships. Presumably because of my snobbishness, I accepted the invitation; although in everyday life I work mostly with my mouth and have but little knowledge of handicraft. But, I thought, some inspiration will surely turn up, once the deadline is approaching.

Inspiration did turn up—along random and involved paths. About a week before the address was to be delivered, I chanced to be in Cologne, Germany, for just one day. As it happened—or because I did not want to pay the price for a room at the expensive Domhotel, where I usually stay in Cologne—I put up at the new Mondialhotel. From it the way to the center of town leads past a bookstore, which normally I would not have had the opportunity of noticing. In this shop's show window was displayed a book with the title *Der letzte Fussgänger* [*The Last Pedestrian*]. From there, the association came easily—this is how professional speechmakers function—to "The Last Artisan."

And since, by yet another stroke of chance—on this same evening I attended a performance of *A Midsummer-night's Dream* at

the Koelner Schauspielhaus, where this play was performed only that particular night—well, it all added up to a more or less complete speech. The talk could include the imaginary Last Artisan plus Shakespeare's exuberant fun at the expense of artisans, with the additional remark that if Holberg (the Danish Molière) may ridicule Jews' priests, then Shakespeare is entitled to the same with artisans (but that, still, both Jews' priests and artisans may be very decent fellows indeed). Clearly all of this added up to the ingredients required for an address which would be certain to be unlike those given by others at this annual function.

All the above merely introduces the fact that, obviously, it was a matter of pure chance that I was born at all. Of course, what is stated in learned books is true—that man is born as well as dies *against* his will. But what can one do? The point is that one isn't even asked. A remark in the Talmud observes that it would be the best thing for man not to be born at all (adding that, since it has happened despite everything, one had better make the best of one's life). Then the Talmudic anecdote adds that not to be born is such extraordinary luck that not even one in a thousand can hope for it.

Crowning the whole series of accidental events leading up to my birth is the fact that I saw daylight first in Fredericia in Jutland. Originally, Fredericia was not entitled to expect to be lucky enough to be distinguished in this way. My father's family had for many generations been living in Copenhagen; similarly my mother's in Faborg on the island of Funen. But fate made the combination Copenhagen plus Faborg equivalent to Fredericia. At this time of writing, no plaque has yet been affixed to the house where the historic event occurred in 1897. Sooner or later—at least after my death—the omission will be corrected. Provided, necessarily, that the house is still standing. Admittedly, I have never showed much interest in the house, which is understandable since when I was three months old my parents felt that Fredericia

had enjoyed celebrity long enough, and moved back to Copenhagen.

I saw Fredericia again only at the age of twenty, when I went during a university holiday on a bicycle trip through Jutland. I arrived at the city of my birth by night train from Copenhagen without incident or accident. The occasion seemed a bit solemn to me, and I felt rather like a Jew for the first time setting foot on the soil of Israel. Here, as far as I was concerned, had been the beginning of everything. It was a moving thought. Well, I did not fall upon my knees and kiss the dust of the old railway station of Fredericia, but I did make a mental note that this town, where I had set out on my journey through life, was now the starting point for this trip to which I had been long looking forward.

Later, it occurred to me that Fredericia did, indeed, lay claim to merits justifying the appearance of its name on all my personal papers. The town was really deserving of honor—notwithstanding the fact that it has proved difficult to convince passport control and other public offices in foreign lands that Fredericia is the name of a *Danish* town, of all things.

But it is known that the name of Fredericia is inscribed in golden letters in the annals of Danish Jewry. As early as 1682—and first of all towns in present-day Denmark—Fredericia had granted right of asylum to Jews. It was among the first towns in the Danish kingdom to house a Jewish community and to make possible a normal human relationship between the native population and the recently added Jewish element. As it has been to a great many other things which have been moving and mobile within Denmark, Fredericia has been the *turn-table* also in the life of Danish Jews. From here, they moved north to Randers and Alborg, and east to Faborg, Nakskov, and Copenhagen.

So never mind if it was a matter of chance, asked for neither by Fredericia nor by me, that I started my life there. It is a com-

forting thought that fate has lent meaning to the relationship, and that it has connected the name of this worthy provincial town, which almost signifies the beginning of the history of the Jews in Denmark, with that of a man whose life has been dedicated to the endeavor to continue this history by cementing the future home and place of Danish Jews in Denmark.

The Tender Sprout: 1897-1906

When publishers almost seem to be competing for the privilege of presenting a man's memoirs to the reading public, he may easily get inflated notions about himself. He may even feel that such a situation indicates that he is so renowned as to render further presentation superfluous.

Let it be said now: I am not as conceited as all that. I am well aware that my formal position enjoys more fame than I do personally; and therefore I need not apologize for a word of instruction to possible readers as to who it is that writes these lines. As a matter of fact, rather a lot of rabbinical—to an extent even chief rabbinical—blood is running in my veins. On my father's side, my ancestors officiated in such capacity in the Copenhagen Jewish congregation during the latter half of the eighteenth and quite a bit into the nineteenth century.

On my mother's side, the same applies to three generations residing in Faborg and serving as rabbis with the congregations on Funen and nearby smaller islands. The positions held by the latter were, of course, more modest than those of the Copenhagen

rabbinate, but still were not negligible. It is a bit odd that the main Jewish community of Funen should have been in Faborg rather than the island's capital, Odense, which was secondary in comparison, just as were those of Assens and Rudkobing. One of my great hits as a speaker was in the Funen town of Kerteminde, where an extremely patriotic audience went wild with enthusiasm when I mentioned how another small town, the same Faborg, had outdistanced Odense in this particular respect. Minutes of applause greeted the "news" that "big brother Odense" had been "flattened" by Faborg.

The matter of rabbinical blood has become further accentuated with regard to my children. I, as their father, have added a contribution of one more generation from this side. But a substantial addition has come from their mother's side, since my father-in-law served for one and a half decades as a rabbi, eventually even as Chief Rabbi in Copenhagen. It may not be difficult to understand that, in view of such favorable conditions, my wife and I wanted to have all of our six children. To the best of my judgment, they are all tainted at least to some extent with rabbinical characteristics.

My father, Arnold Melchior, had originally been intended and trained for a career as a stockbroker, but was not very successful in this field. About the time of my birth, he had some rather difficult years during which there also occurred some misunderstandings between him and quite a few members of his somewhat patrician family. However, he kept up his indefatigable energy, coupled with the simple, almost naïve faith in God of a simple Jew. When he began publishing a weekly specializing in finance and stock exchange matters, things looked up for him. But severe illness made him grow old rather early. He had agreed with my mother, a daughter of L. M. Wallach, the last resident Rabbi in Faborg, to keep their household in accordance with Jewish ritual tradition. The two were in agreement on most things in life—above

all on my being a prodigious infant. As a result of this opinion they paced me on rather too much—in retrospect—for my own good.

I was just five when they put me in a kindergarten. It was not the present-day sort of kindergarten, where you send kids at the age of three. No, indeed! Miss Petersen's institute at Nyhavn 42 —which is on the decent side across the canal's ill-reputed line of dives—was virtually a *school* teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, and even geography. When in 1905 I was put into third grade at the Jewish Boys' School, I was even above the level expected there. In geography, I had all Denmark, Scandinavia, and Central Europe behind me. And apart from some unsolved problems with places which did not seem to be where they should be according to their names, I was fairly advanced for my age.

This was particularly true with regard to a subject with which Jewish kids are bothered, namely Hebrew. In the spring of 1903 —having frequented the kindergarten for a year—I also entered the special school where Jewish religious subjects, including Hebrew, are taught; and classes were held each afternoon and part of Sunday by the teacher, Herman Grün. It is only fair to mention him here, since he was responsible, to a considerable degree, for my becoming a rabbi. He soon found out my almost unbelievable grasp of the finer points of the Hebrew language and, therefore, gave me the honorable nickname "The Rabbi" when I was but seven or eight years old. Apart from this, he possessed a certain dry humor, which was useful to him, since he was the father of ten, and since the salary of a teacher of religion was nothing to be cheerful about. Still, his sense of humor did not fail him. Once I came to class with an old prayer book; it had been in frequent use since 1863 and was rather shabby.

"Look at this book," he said. "It's shabby."

"But then, it's from 1863," I answered.

Whereupon he replied, "I'm from 1846, and I'm not at all shabby."

It can be stated with certainty that, from 1906, my mind was made up to become a rabbi. This was, I felt, a profession which put a man in the first rank—at least at service. It permitted him to show off in some particularly extravagant finery—at least at service. And it made it possible for him to keep talking without being interrupted. That this, too, applied only at service, I didn't know at the time. I just felt that it was smart to be able to talk under such favorable conditions.

About that time, I delivered my first speech. It was significant because there was a legend in the family that I hadn't yet begun to talk when I was already two years old. My parents, worried as to whether I might ever say anything at all, had gone to the family physician, lovable Dr. Benny Meyer, to ask if there was any hope left in this respect. He replied in his droll, growling manner that I was "most likely, some day, to talk more than they would care to hear." In the case of my parents, this did not come true altogether, since my father lived to hear me but a few times on a rostrum, whereas my mother, who survived him by twenty years, mostly stayed home in Denmark during the years when I "kept talking" elsewhere. She died quite some time before my rhetoric was to descend on mankind in cascades of real dimensions. But Dr. Benny Meyer's enigmatic forecast did come true—at least in the sense that there have been and still are those who feel that I do, indeed, talk rather more than *they* care to listen.

Anyhow, the kid who couldn't say a word at two was making a regular speech at ten. My parents had arranged a small dinner for a couple of young friends who had just become engaged. And I got up on my feet and, in honor of the maiden, made my maiden speech. It probably was a good deal shorter than my after-dinner speeches are reputed to be by now. But a speech it was, and the memory of it is still with the guest of honor and her family.

From that period also, my own engagement is worth recording. It took place in the autumn of 1906. As I was born in the spring

of 1897, my age is easily determined. My young fiancee was born only in the autumn of 1901. Nevertheless, if you want to be a clergyman, you'd better have some order in your philandering. So, encouraged by my later father-in-law, I made up my mind to become engaged to Meta. This early settlement was taken seriously enough by both of us. Formal engagement according to the custom of the time was, however, declared only when she was eighteen and I was twenty-two; and two years later our marriage became a fact, which is now well into its forty-sixth year. But already in 1956, we were able to celebrate our golden *engagement* anniversary. All these data and facts, thus, are not retroactive constructions for the sake of these memoirs. They are absolutely genuine: The choice of my career as well as of my life partner was, as far as I was concerned, a settled matter by 1906. Never since have I desired possible changes of profession or girl. It was a matter of course that these decisions had been made once and for all. And there have been no grounds to regret either.

1905

Although the term "double loyalty," as a description of Jewish existence and referring to the equal consideration for the native country on the one hand and the Jewish heritage on the other, was originally coined only in the twenties of this century, the atmosphere in my childhood home was conditioned by this same double loyalty, which in actual fact meant double *love*. Loving Denmark was a matter of course. My father had experienced 1864 as a boy, and the memory of Denmark's military defeat, coupled with the determined will to try to win inwardly what had been lost abroad, was strongly alive within him. At that time, the status of Danish Jews as Danish citizens was, obviously, of more recent date than now. Then, generations were alive who were children or grandchildren of the original recipients of the royal decree of March 29, 1814, which virtually confirmed the civic rights of Danish Jews; and they felt a strong sense of gratitude for this fortune of theirs. In an age when at least the lives of reasonably affluent social layers were marked by coziness and comfort, Danish Jews enjoyed the radiance centering upon family life at Fredensborg Castle which

already then surrounded the name and the notion of Denmark.

There is a charming anecdote about a Polish-born Jew who was granted British citizenship a few years ago. When he was congratulated by his friends on his new dignity, he replied, "Thank you so much, but what's the good of it now that we haven't got the Empire any longer?"

As things were in Denmark about the turn of the century, there seemed to be so much to delight in for people belonging in this country that the wounds from 1864 did not appear all open and burning. You were *Danish,* albeit without Slesvig, without Norway —without England, even—but with a great many compensations. You could travel to Berlin or Hamburg by night train, spend the day abroad, and return the next night by train again. To those still remembering the stage-coach—and there were quite a few of them—this was remarkable; indeed, unheard of in itself. Danish agriculture was about to achieve Lur brand quality; the moors of Jutland were under cultivation. City Hall Square in Copenhagen was an established fact. Altogether Copenhagen was throwing off her swaddling clothes—truly, there were grounds aplenty for astonishment and joy. There was much to indicate that one was living not merely in the best of all countries, but in the best of all ages, perhaps at a preliminary stage to the coming of the Messiah, for which in the circumstances no great longing could make itself felt.

Some Danish Jews did not easily find the balance between old and new. So eager were they to prove themselves loyal Danes, they tended to display disloyalty as Jews. The small Jewish congregations in the Danish provinces were wiped out by assimilation towards the end of the nineteenth century, and even the community in Copenhagen showed early signs of erosion at the fringes. Intermarriage was the order of every day, and the resulting children were brought up neither as Christians nor as Jews. The Jewish families in Denmark were absorbed in the fate and history of

Denmark. In return for the rights and status they had achieved, they put their accumulated abilities at the service of their land of adoption. This led many of them to prominent positions in life and to Jewish contributions to Danish culture and public affairs far beyond the insignificant numerical proportion of Jews among the country's general population.

Here, I should like to stress that, during my childhood, the community as I knew it consisted largely of well-to-do citizens —doubtless with quite a number of Philistines included—mostly held in high esteem by the general population, and at the same time hardly aware of the grave fortunes of Jews in countries where there were millions of them. There were virtually no contacts and relations at all with Jews in the outside world. As far as this aspect was concerned, even Malmo (Sweden) might have been as distant as the moon. Who would consider traveling to Malmo, not to mention Stockholm? Berlin and Hamburg were but exceptions from a rule.

Happily, as I see it, there also were some Jewish families who found a synthesis of Jewish and Danish, and who appreciated the vital point that civic rights, as finally confirmed in the Constitution of June 5, 1848, had been granted to Danish Jews without any expectation that Judaism was to be deserted. These families, too, were deserted in a certain sense, which merely meant that they had absorbed the cream of Danish culture, and in return had offered their surroundings their own values. They realized that total assimilation ought not to be attempted—that uniformity in matters of the spirit constitutes a deadly threat to the profusion and beauty of any natural culture. This was the stand taken by my family. Being Danish and being Jewish were merged together in them and their kind, who were justified in feeling that they were the core of the Jewish community.

I shall have to say a few things about the structure and fate of this community during my childhood and early youth.

No doubt, by the beginning of this century, the community was numerically on the decrease. Even though it is difficult to prophesy, even in retrospect, what might have happened to it had certain things occurred or others failed to occur, one still cannot altogether reject the assumption that, unless the actual decline had not somehow been checked, today we should have had a pocket-sized community.

The big break came in the years around 1905. There were then millions of Jews living in the Czarist empire, in Russia proper as well as in the Polish parts and in Baltic countries. The Russian defeat at the hands of the Japanese in the war of 1904-1905, once again put the Jews in the role of scapegoats and as an outlet for the excited instincts of the populace, which demanded punishment of those who were to blame for the disaster which had befallen Mother Russia. It was the role which had been meted out to Jews through the ages and under all skies. In a way, it would have been just as reasonable to blame cyclists. But they were a recent phenomenon, whereas the Jews had always been there and available. So their names and their persons had to be exposed to all forms of visitation. As wave after wave of pogroms swept through the Czarist orbit, the Jews took flight. Hundreds of thousands of them poured out of Russia—in those days, you could still flee *from* a country, and no less important, *to* almost any country. The borders of Europe were open, and the United States of America had not yet taken to limiting immigration. With a modest amount of money in your pockets, you were welcome there as a settler. Both in Europe and in America housing was readily available; the flats were not very good or very modern, but they provided roofs over the heads of the newcomers.

Quite a few of the Jews emigrating from eastern Europe stopped over in Scandinavian towns during their travel to distant destinations. Thus they discovered the very existence of the Scandinavian countries, including Denmark. It was true, particularly of large

families, that the parent generation was fatigued by the drab, long journeys, and those travelers were highly sensitive to the idyllic and peaceful atmosphere prevailing in Denmark. So, some stayed on. Thus, the Jewish community in Copenhagen, highly cultivated, but tending towards degeneration, received a blood transfusion, which for a while rendered it rather dizzy. It was quite a revolution in itself when the about three thousand Jews found their number doubled—then increased to seven and even eight thousand in no time.

But what made the meeting between the native Jews and the new arrivals tense and highly charged was that the latter were so different *in every sense.* First of all, they were refugees, and those among us who have been in a similar position—although it was in Sweden, a sister nation, and as some sort of "de luxe refugees"—are well aware how life even as a privileged refugee is degrading to anyone. When King Haakon V, during the German occupation of Norway, lived in exile in London, and one day arrived at the British Broadcasting Corporation to broadcast to his people at home, the little typist at the reception desk first let him wait quite a while, and then addressed this question to him, "Do tell me, what exactly is the name of this country, where you say you are the King?"

But the eastern European Jewish refugees in Denmark were by no means kings in exile. Not all, but the large majority of them, were small artisans, their social and economic level more or less proletarian. There were spiritual giants among them; and even some of the tailors, cobblers, and carpenters possessed intellectual qualities. But an active intellect does not exclude a man from the proletariat. On top of all this, they appeared to be simply strangers with strange-sounding names. It did not at all penetrate to the consciousness of the Danish Jews that the newcomers arrived from many and far different countries; and that Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, and Russian Jews each possessed characteristics

of their own; and that there might be all the difference in the world between, say, a Polish and a Russian or a Polish and a Lithuanian Jew. As the majority of the new arrivals originated from Poland and Russia, they were soon lumped together and collectively called one day "the Russians," another—and mostly—"the Poles" or rather "the Polacks." Some witty people invented the nicknames "the Parisians" for them and altogether overlooked the fact that particularly the immigrants from Russia included highly educated people, whose knowledge of the French language was far beyond that of the creators of this name.

As to the religious aspect, the "new" Jews came from the old centers of Jewish culture, in the national as well as in the religious sense. This, too, constituted a difference between the Danish and the foreign Jews, which is, of course, easier understood by Jews than by non-Jews. The popular belief among Christians that all Jews are "orthodox Jews" is, obviously, as silly as a Jewish assumption that all Christians in this country are Lutheran-Home Mission brand. Just as Christianity embraces many denominations with several variations within each, Judaism is a jumble of trends with many shades within each. Of course, here as there, is a leitmotif common to all. To the Jews it is the faith in one indivisible God together with the memory of "those" days with all their glory and of the subsequent milleniums with all their afflictions and disasters—all coupled with something perhaps imaginary, in any case completely intangible, perhaps a sense of belonging to one big family, not quite definable.

To the relations between Danish and "foreign" Jews, all this did not mean much. The leitmotif was worn thin, to say the least. In wide circles within the Community of the Mosaic Faith, as is the literal translation of its official name, the word "faith" was not written with a capital F. Reminiscences of "those" days and later ages had been replaced by the memory of 1814, 1849, and 1864. And the sense of family relations appeared to be valid only between

Danish-Jewish families. Affinity with others—no, Heaven forbid! The history of the veteran families was so old, by then, that names such as Metz, Trier, Hannover, and others were considered genuinely Danish. This was by no means the case with Klatzki or Davidowitz.

In short, there was a world of contrasts between the two groups whom fate threw together. It may not have been as bad as the complaint by some immigrants, who insisted that "Danish Jews did not deign even to spit" at them. But neither was it altogether off the mark. The root of the lopsidedness of the relationship lay mainly in the fact that the Danish Jews were donors—donors of alms, charitable benefactors—whilst the others played the part of beneficiaries, often even of beggars who had no choice but to stretch out their hands for help.

The image of these aspects is still alive with me, as though it had all happened yesterday. In the administration building of the community, inaugurated as late as 1903, you would find, every day, scores of shabby people, some just arrived, others already weekly clients, receiving the five or ten Danish crowns (at that time the five crowns were approximately worth one U.S. dollar) meted out to them by the hurriedly appointed "superintendent for refugee affairs." The latter was my Talmud teacher and dear friend for many years, Josef Fischer. He was not only a man of learning, but imbued with the highest sense of ethics. The burden of having to identify himself and understand all these ruined lives and to care for all these derelict human beings thrown upon the shores of Denmark was much too heavy for his shoulders—or this was the probable impression of those concerned. As a result, many insoluble problems arose, and there was much dissatisfaction and annoyance among those who sought help.

Strangest of all were the looks of the Synagogue at Krystalgade, when the Sabbath began on Friday afternoon. In Jewish life, each Sabbath eve ranks almost like Christmas night to the Church.

Jewish philanthropy is mobilized not once *annually,* but once *every week.* Friday night, no Jew goes to bed hungry. There has to be a full-fledged feast with wine for the benediction, and then soup, roast, and dessert (preferably also fish before the roast). Crowds of new arrivals, looking for a Friday evening meal (and also for a couple of meals on Saturday!) were standing in the synagogue after service, and their distribution to the various households began. In some of the traditional-minded families, dislike of the strangers was suppressed for the duration of the Sabbath. They knew that their religion obliged them to show hospitality, and they might even have entertained a notion that if they took a real wretch, or even a few of them, to their homes and offered them light, warmth, and nourishment, well, then they might expect that their souls would be received with heavenly light, warmth, and nourishment when the time came to return to their destination for eternity. Some households counted on payment for the food they provided, and in some cases an old philanthropic association called Loaves for Strangers did pay for the treats.

One small episode from the autumn of 1905 illustrates better than anything else the depth of the abyss between the two sides. I have already mentioned that in this year I was sent to the school for Jewish boys. The full name of the institution was The Free School for Boys of the Mosaic Faith. Obviously, my parents didn't sign me up for this school—which incidentally had an excellent reputation—because they waded in money. In 1905, my father was still a poor man, who had to turn every penny over several times before spending it, and who was most certainly in no position to pay the tuition fees of those exclusive private schools where most Jews used to send their kids. At the time of my registration my parents had taken me with them to the headmaster, Hartvig Cohn—about whom I shall have more to say—and he was overjoyed at the event. The steady decrease of children in the community was about to endanger the existence of the school, and

each pupil counted. That day, Mr. Cohn told my parents, "Before you finally decide to send your boy to this school, I ought to let you know that yesterday I felt obliged to agree to register a boy who is the son of an immigrant Polish tailor. I think you should know that from the outset and not come afterwards to tell me that, if you had been aware of this, you would not have sent your son here."

It almost sounds like racial discrimination among fellow Jews, doesn't it? It is known that this sort of thing happens among members of other faiths. The worst Negro haters are white Christians who resent black Christians. Were Jews, too, to display racial hatred toward other Jews? Who can ever grasp this sort of thing? I do appreciate and admire the reaction of my parents. With much dignity they declared that the "Polack" boy was perfectly all right with them, and that it was to be anticipated that quite a number of kids like him would now apply for admission to the Jewish schools. (Nowadays, we have a united school, but at that time it was divided into one school for boys and another for girls.) It should be noted that the approximately forty pupils who frequented the two schools, which then maintained respectively eight and seven grades, were soon to be joined by crowds of others. At one stage, there were no fewer than two hundred and fifty pupils in each school, the great majority belonging to recently immigrated families.

It is worthwhile introducing Hartvig Cohn to the reader with a few words. Rarely has any man been as wrongly placed in life as he. He boasted the title of "cand. philol.," which doesn't exist any longer, but wore witness that the man displaying it had majored in classical languages. For a while Cohn had conducted independent courses preparing students for matriculation, but he had been unsuccessful economically, and when the headmaster's position at the boys' school became vacant in the nineties, he applied for the job and was taken on. This meant that a man with a first-rate

scientific education, presumably pedagogically able as far as adult students were concerned, was placed in charge of an institution with pupils ranging from six to fourteen years. He positively was without any understanding of the educational problems connected with the handling of such children. His short, round torso was supported by a pair of bandied legs, earning him the nickname of "crookie." Since he proved to be rigorous and strict in the extreme, and also in possession of a very loose right hand, the title "The General" was added, the most popular version emerging as "General Crookie."

Most pupils failed to observe that the whole appearance was topped off by a head which bore witness to an unusual personality, with a pair of beautiful eyes, in the corners of which a knowledgeable and winning smile kept playing. Equally little attention was attracted by his considerable learning and his manifold talents, which also made him quite a social success. As a rule, his *hand* played such a prominent part that few dared raise their glance to his eyes. He taught arithmetic, mathematics, and literature in the higher grades, and in a way he was an excellent teacher. But it became difficult to pay attention even to this. As the years passed, he turned rather lazy, often appearing for his lessons only ten to fifteen minutes before the sounding of the bell. Then he set an impossible speed, accompanied with a hailstorm of slaps in the faces of the children, who soon reached a state of total paralysis as some of them—perhaps modestly gifted ones—found themselves faced with a breathless speed and with impatient demands for immediate replies to questions. I had the good fortune to become some sort of favorite with him, perhaps because he sensed that to some extent I was able to see through his mask. When, on completion of the eighth and last grade, I was presented by him with a book dedicated "to my dear pupil," I was overjoyed. And it remains a fact that it was largely due to him that I achieved maximum points in literature when, eventually, I passed my

matriculation exams, because, asked questions about matters that had not been included in my courses, I was able to answer them on account of Hartvig Cohn's intelligent way of dealing with them, though this had been three or four years earlier.

But let me return to the Jewish community. One of its most magnificent assets is the synagogue, among the most beautiful in the world. In my childhood days, the choir was manned by boys from the Jewish boys' school, insofar as they were interested and able. I was accepted right away, and stayed with the choir until 1911. The conductor, the song teacher Albert Meyer with the lovely voice and with a beard like Drachmann's, author of Danish ballads and romantic plays, gradually began using me as his deputy when he was absent. Thus, I was left in charge of the baton, applying it to some twenty boys plus a quartet of men.

When, in 1910, Meyer went on a journey to Spain, the choir was entrusted to me for a full two months and, on his departure, Meyer promised to return with a nice present for me. When the time came, he did come forth with a fountain pen, rumored to have been acquired in Madrid. Unfortunately, he had not bothered to look at the bottom of the box, adorned with a label reading: N. Olaf Moller, Frederiksborggade, Copenhagen. To make the picture complete, the price was there as well: Dkr. 1.25 (at that time, about equivalent to a United States silver quarter).

Altogether, participation in the choir was more a matter of serving the Lord than aspiring to earthly wealth. The annual payment for about two hundred occasions when the choir was functioning, plus rehearsals every Tuesday morning before and Thursday afternoon after class, amounted to Dkr. 45. But it was a function full of its own charm, and I loved equally the calling and the building where it was performed. Considering that I have wound up as Chief Rabbi with my main functions in this very house, I have been wondering if these memoirs should not be called *From Choir Boy to Chief Rabbi.* But the publisher has

abandoned the idea, as such a title would not be considered an efficient salesman. As I write, I still don't know what is going to be the title of this book—if it ever turns out to be a book at all. I am awaiting, in great suspense, the outcome of the deliberations as to what the baby is going to be named.

Lewenstein the Lion: 1910

My regular activity in the house of the Lord brought me into close contact with all that happened there. And heaven knows these were years of excitement and "great" events. I have entertained some doubts as to whether I ought to mention at all the happenings around the chief rabbinate in Copenhagen as they unfolded during the first decade of this century—whether it might be said of me what Georg Brandes said of Meir Aron Goldschmidt (both outstanding Danish Jewish men of letters in the last century): that he was perfectly willing to serve up his own grandmother in acrid gravy. I have decided, however, to include this chapter, though I played only the part of an onlooker during the great drama.

There are good grounds for this decision. Events of fifty to sixty years ago are history by now. Any personal edge has been eliminated, and the factual can always be recounted. Furthermore, I have already touched upon the issue in my contribution to the special anthology published in 1964 on the 150th anniversary of the decree of 1814, which became the Magna Charta of Danish Jewry.

And one more point: Though I was a boy at the time, the events recorded here remain etched in my mind. After all, I had long since made up my mind to become a rabbi; therefore anything rabbis did was of interest to me as their young "colleague." Above all, I also had the opportunity to learn a great deal about how rabbis ought to behave, and, predominantly, how they ought not to behave.

Early in 1903, there was a change of Chief Rabbi in Copenhagen. Danish-born David Simonsen, who had served in this position since 1891, resigned, though only fifty years old, to dedicate himself exclusively to research and philanthropic activities. Indeed, his outstanding gifts were connected with these fields rather than with the standard clerical ones. To the surprise and horror of large parts of the community and its board, who had been dazzled by his successor, Dr. Tobias Lewenstein, and confirmed his appointment, Mr. Lewenstein turned out to follow a much stricter religious line than the learned professor. Where Simonsen had been conservative, Lewenstein was orthodox. Lewenstein was a Dutch citizen and had officiated in The Hague for a few years, but he was actually born in Java. Some of the fascination in his appearance was, in fact, connected with the exotic aspect of his origin. Recently I had the opportunity of seeing one of his great-grandchildren. The child was still more or less an infant, but showed considerable likeness to the great-grandfather and seemed to be a completely Indonesian type.

All this, including the great-grandchild, of course, did not influence the considerations leading to the appointment of Lewenstein, who was then thirty-nine years old. Little was known about him apart from his looks. It was not known that his *nom de guerre* among fellow students in Berlin had been "the wild man"; nor that the elegant, charming, and impressive appearance covered a severe mind and a hard line in matters of religion and ritual. Thus there was a cruel awakening as all this soon came to light. He

had been awarded a contract for life, making him sole arbiter of any religious question within the community. But no one had bothered to brief him on the time-honored handling of various religious matters in this community. By all means, the latter is a conservative Jewish congregation. But conservatism naturally had to be adapted to some extent to those large sections of the community who, while not conducting markedly Jewish lives, still kept the faith and remained members whose community tax payments remained vital. They included some who had achieved prominence and prestige in the general Danish population, and whom the leadership very much desired to accommodate within the community. In view of the composition of the community, it was necessary that the very far-reaching consideration, which had to be and actually was forthcoming on the part of the liberal circles, be reciprocated at least in a display of understanding on the part of the more tradition-minded. Over a rather lengthy period, and under reliable rabbinical guidance, compromises which were not in the least compromising had been worked out. Perhaps even the word "compromise" doesn't really cover the procedure which was used. As far as I can see, it was rather a matter of synthesis, meaning that the positive rather than the negative aspects of divergences of opinion were being stressed.

Now, I am perfectly well aware that in the eyes of the dogged, self-righteous orthodoxy, any compromise in matters of religion amounts to virtual blasphemy. But up to Lewenstein's arrival, there had hardly been any representatives of that orthodoxy, which is inclined to view itself as the Lord's personal lifeguard, in the Danish Jewish community. With the refusal of the new spiritual leader to accept what had been hitherto prevalent rules, and which he rejected through assertion of the exclusive authority confirmed in his contract, the situation was utterly changed.

Fanaticism always attracts some admirers and camp followers. Things can go so far that people who themselves don't at all care

for religion and, in particular, for religious practice, are full of esteem for the absolute, most strict, and stringent brand of orthodoxy. It is as though they feel themselves represented, or even redeemed, through the medium of religious observance of others —as though they feel that in some mysterious way they pay ransom through their theoretical and economic support for the religious lives of other people. If (notwithstanding their assumption to the contrary) at the conclusion of their earthly existence, someone should inquire about the way in which they behaved, they suppose that somehow they can pass the test in a smoother way, if they can refer to others' having been fanatical on their behalf. This, of course, is no means of total absolution, but might just prove an extenuating circumstance, potentially helpful to sinful souls.

As a result of Lewenstein's tough line, there soon developed an open conflict between him and the board of the community, which was then headed by the manager of the country's largest bank, the titular "privy councilor of state" Isak Glückstadt. Shortly after the arrival of Lewenstein, the community's other Rabbi, Dr. Hirsch Goitein, who had been most popular with everybody, had passed away. On the resignation of Simonsen, he had not been advanced to the Chief Rabbi's position, although he was a first-rate clergyman and preacher. But his outward appearance bore no weight, and the post of Chief Rabbi must be filled with a person capable of being the community's spokesman to the general public and of handling the many tasks in the fields of representation and entertaining involved in the position. Now Goitein's death provided the community board with the opportunity to find a new second rabbi, who might to some extent bear the brunt of Lewenstein. After a prolonged, vain search — vain because Lewenstein threatened otherwise willing candidates with virtual persecution—Dr. Max Schornstein from Bohemia was eventually appointed. He arrived in January, 1906.

Despite the fact that Schornstein is the same man whom by September, 1906, I had picked for my father-in-law, and who was later actually to achieve such prominence, it may be worthwhile to underline at this point that I feel capable of objectively rendering the following events. I have never been altogether uncritical of my father-in-law, just as my criticism of Lewenstein has never been unbalanced. Schornstein arrived here at the age of thirty-six —a man at the height of his powers. His religious attitude was moderate-conservative, suitable to the line wanted by most members of the community. He possessed good spiritual faculties and was rhetorically less dazzling than Lewenstein, whose hot temperament earned him (at least for a while) a somewhat exaggerated reputation as a great orator, but he was able and cultured.

His somewhat unusual name, Schornstein (German for "chimney"), unavoidably became the target of a number of jokes. Still it had its advantages, for when Lewenstein tried to intimidate him into withdrawing his candidacy by threatening him with "fire and smoke," Schornstein could reply that a man with his name didn't scare at such a prospect.

But it should be expressly stated here that when the board granted Schornstein the rank of second *independent* rabbi, they committed an open assault against Lewenstein's contract. First to confirm a man's monopoly of binding decision on all religious issues, and then to announce contradictory, independent status and rights for another man—this must be untenable and lead to immediate conflict. One might differ on the extent to which it was strictly ethical of Schornstein to permit himself to take on the job for which the board had designated him. But it should be granted to a man of a certain religious persuasion with a deep conviction of the necessity of fighting for it that the conduct of such a struggle may be considered morally irreproachable. And I know that Schornstein counted on a fair possibility of finding common ground for an understanding and of providing, by this very

act, the double-edged religious leadership which seemed to be exactly what was required in the community.

What happened next made the test of strength between Lewenstein and the board appear to be one between the two rabbis. I have always maintained that it is irresponsible to claim, with this struggle as proof, that two clergymen—not *only* Jewish but, as one notes, Jewish *as well*—cannot coexist in a reasonable manner. Fortunately, there are numerous examples of harmonious cooperation. In the case in hand, any such possibility was ruled out from the beginning. There *had* to be a fight, and there *was* a fight.

It goes without saying that, of all feuds, religious ones are the most repulsive. Clergymen who preach conciliation while irreconcilable themselves clearly play fast and loose with inalienable values. If one preaches water, one should not drink wine. I have the oddest flypaper memory of things that occurred in the synagogue bearing on this whole conflict. I still feel disgusted at the memory of the alternating sermons of the two rabbis, which amounted to a running debate in the feud and were thus offensive in form and in substance. For example, Lewenstein specialized in fables of lions and donkeys. He, of course, was the lion. And at the frequent turn of phrase, "So the lion spake to the donkey," his index finger would rarely fail to point at the Second Rabbi, who was defenseless—at least for the moment. It was all really nice!

A certain climax in the struggle occurred in the autumn of 1906. There are quite a few Jewish holidays in this season and, on one of them, service is limited to the Hebrew liturgy and without a sermon. Of course, the special prayer for King and country was read; and this was, at the time, the Chief Rabbi's function. To the congregation's immense surprise, Lewenstein had not appeared at the service at all, and it was the duty of the Second Rabbi to replace him. But when the time came for this particular prayer, the side door to the Rabbis' room suddenly opened, and Lewenstein virtually *rushed* to the platform, reeled off the prayer, and

disappeared as unexpectedly as he had come. I cannot recall ever having witnessed anything quite like it at any service, though I have seen a great deal. Resentment was boiling in the pews, and any esteem there might still have been for Lewenstein crashed. His behavior was a public display of childishness and provocation.

I am convinced that this event inflicted irreparable damage upon the Chief Rabbi's reputation. It is a very good thing to have a lifetime contract in your pocket, but *contract* without *contact* with the affairs and people, where your cooperation in everyday life is expected, must soon be without any real value. True, Lewenstein remained in his office for another three and a half years, but there was an uninterrupted tug-of-war. Otherwise insignificant issues, which might in normal circumstances have been easily settled, were now inflamed beyond all proportion. Clerical politics had entered the community and were conducted by its leaders and teachers. One may feel about politics according to one's inclinations—clerical politics must inherently be against the best interests of the church and of any religious denomination.

The quarrel between the two sides gradually became concentrated on one particular point: so-called mixed marriages and their offspring. Here, I ought to explain basic Jewish attitudes concerning this matter. Fundamental Jewish opinion says that a Jew should marry a Jew, and a Christian a Christian. The fact that nowadays Jews and Christians have achieved deep and sincere relationships changes, from the outset, little in this view. Admittedly, one may be able to build a marriage between adherents of different faiths on mutual consideration, but there is a self-evident difference between *friendly* fellowship among people of various religions, with its readily forthcoming understanding for the other side's attitudes in this respect, and *marital* fellowship depending on the ever-ready display of understanding, indulgence, and deference. What may be, in one set of circumstances, a service willingly extended, may turn out, in another set, to be a boring,

tiresome, and irritating obligation. Here I have ignored those cases where neither party is conscious of religious needs, and where, consequently, no consideration is called for. Here, such problems cease to exist—and any religion can only take note of the facts.

But we are talking of those mixed marriages where the religious interest of one or both parties makes religion a factor. It, then, turns out that religious minority groups will exert greater binding effects on their individual members than majority groups. This is in the nature of things. If the Danish state church has a membership of some four million, many individuals may be inclined to think: In this context, I can hardly matter a great deal. If ten thousand or even twenty thousand drop out, the church will remain on the four million level. A proportionately small community is in a different position. If Denmark has about seven thousand Jews altogether, it is clear that every single one counts. Apostasy in only a few cases may have disastrous consequences. Furthermore, the Jewish people have had *hard* times for a very *long* time. Throughout all the persecution and degradation to which Jews have been exposed, the obvious Jewish answer has been a mobilization of defiant pride. What others dragged in the mud, Jews would raise to the stars. The darker the shape of Jewish fate, the brighter the light of calling, of ideal, of obligation. And, worst of all: The more inhuman the acts and behavior of others, the stronger the conviction of being the sole truly human beings. In a majority of even the somewhat diluted and washed-out Jews of our time, there is a lingering memory of this pride, this light, and this human feeling.

This has nothing to do with any notion of a "chosen people": Biblical talk of "selection" is exactly a *biblical* terminology, not automatically transferable to the different conditions of different ages. But it is this *memory* which is the secret behind the particular Jewish feeling of a family relationship, and which keeps together this minority in the religious environment into which its members

are born. So, as a young Jew, one may reserve the right to become enamored of a young Christian, but that does not imply an intention of deserting the Jewish fold.

How complicated matters get when good friendly relations between Christian and Jew are to be transformed into marriage is easily seen when a member of some third religion is substituted in the picture. Hardly anyone would consider a marriage between, say, a Christian and a Moslem or a Jew and a Moslem a very promising prospect. After all, even the combination of a Lutheran and a Catholic Christian often proves rather difficult. So, the problems are self-evident and need no further explanation. They exist even when there is a strong religious attachment on the part of the Jew without any corresponding Christian association on the part of the Gentile. Indeed, here problems seem to increase, because a new factor enters into the picture: the readiness of the non-Jewish party to convert in order to share the spouse's faith.

This is the situation where the Rabbi is obliged to play a part. He is the Lord's ambassador on earth in this context, with the right and the duty to grant or refuse conversion to Judaism. It is a troublesome affair for many reasons. You have to show consideration for the needs and fortunes of men, but you should also keep a clean conscience—more or less, anyhow—and be able to retain a sense of decency. And in all this, you have nothing to go by except the assertions of the applicants.

I want to say now that it does happen that *male* persons apply to the Rabbi for conversion. A Gentile man proposing to a Jewish girl may, in some cases, be prepared for her sake to seek conversion to Judaism, although, on top of everything else, it also means that he has to be circumcised. This is a minor operation, but naturally it is an exception for this sacrifice to be placed on the altar of love. In a sense the combination of Gentile man and Jewish girl is the less difficult, because it is the Jewish view that the child's religious status is determined by the mother—quite reasonably so

since, despite modern female emancipation, the mother continues to exert the main influence during decisive years for the formation of the mind. So if it is an important preoccupation to the parties whether any possible children can expect to be recognized as Jews, even when the father is a Gentile, there are no grounds for worry. Judaism does accept them, if their mother is Jewish. Still it *does* happen that men desire conversion to Judaism, and it does happen that their wish is complied with.

But the large procession—I am tempted to say the line-up—for an entrance ticket to the gates of Judaism occurs in the combination of a Jewish man and a Christian woman. In an amazing number of instances, young Gentile girls want to forsake the faith of their childhood to become Jewish. You have them in countless variations, beginning from little, superficial, chirping teenagers to whom a change in religion seems to rank with a change of dress, to serious, thoughtful women, who are quite conscious of the extraordinary and momentous nature of such a decision and the obligation implied in its execution.

Not so long a young girl came sailing into my office and, with a radiant smile, remarked, "Well, so this is where one is turned into a Jew." I had to explain to her that *one* is not, and most certainly not *she*. She encountered great difficulty trying to catch on to this, since she had been given to understand that I was administering some kind of royal concession, the price being Dkr. 33.66 apiece—as in the case of various other public licenses such as change of name, and so on.

But there are serious situations, where the love of a young Christian woman for a Jewish man induces her not merely to seek to share his religious life but activates some latent inclination towards Judaism, which—and it happens with surprising frequency —has been present for long, though released to full consciousness only through the course of events. All this is accentuated and calls for speedy resolution when such couples expect or have already a

child. As is clear from the above, the child of a Christian mother, even if she may be married to a Jewish husband, is considered to be Christian.

Under Danish law, when a civil marriage is contracted, a declaration is signed stating the faith in which possible children are to be brought up; and in a case of the marriage of a Christian woman to a Jewish man, it is obviously assumed that the declaration pronounces Judaism as the faith of the children. It is clear that the Jewish community cannot but honor this declaration. It registers the birth of such children in the public protocols with which it is entrusted; it gives them access to Jewish education; and, of course, it has no objection to a true Jewish upbringing in the home. All this, however, does not make the children Jewish. Danish law can oblige the Jewish community to perform the mentioned registration. It cannot determine who is Jewish and who is not. This not even Ben Gurion and the whole government of Israel were able to do, when the attempt was made a few years ago. This is something which Judaism, through the Rabbis, must determine. And there, the invariable rule is laid down that any non-Jew, including a child, can be converted, if he so wishes, only under observation of all relevant religious prescriptions.

In the Copenhagen community for generations it had been the established rule—and one of the compromises rejected by Chief Rabbi Lewenstein—that, when a child registered in the community protocol despite a Christian mother reached confirmation age and its conversion to Judaism was requested, this was accorded without much fuss. It had furthermore been recognized that when a Christian mother, signatory to a statement that her child was to receive a Jewish upbringing, came after its birth or during its early youth declaring, "I have undertaken to raise my child as a Jew, but I cannot provide an upbringing in Judaism unless I belong to that faith myself," then there would appear to be extremely strong grounds for her conversion. It went without saying that it was for

the serving Rabbi to appraise the degree of religious observance to be demanded in the future Jewish household. As for me, I have normally set strict and unequivocal terms. Lewenstein, however—and this was the disputed issue—demanded compliance with the strictest demands even in cases where the conversion of the *mother* was not requested, but only the admission to Judaism of children destined for a Jewish upbringing, who had received adequate Jewish education and were now to undergo the Jewish equivalent of confirmation in the synagogue. So, a situation arose where the Chief Rabbi said no, whereas the Second Rabbi said yes.

The big blow-up came in January, 1910. Schornstein had decided to convert a Christian woman without asking for Lewenstein's approval. He was making use of *his* contract with the board (which I have conceded was legally doubtful, since it contravened Lewenstein's contract). Still, such a prominent lawyer as the barrister of the Supreme Court C. B. Henriques had found the Schornstein contract permissible and even necessary with a view to existing conditions and out of regard for the very existence of the community. In his desperate rage, Lewenstein took an extraordinary step. He inserted an advertisement in the Copenhagen morning papers announcing the Second Rabbi's intended conversion, with the addition that since he (Lewenstein) was sole arbiter of all religious issues in the community, the mentioned conversion would be totally invalid. There was no addition, like in royal decrees, obliging the public to conform unconditionally with his dixit, but a capital *Dixi* seemed to be hovering over the unusual advertisement. The members of the community held their breath. It seemed to them they heard the booming of a giant gate being irrevocably locked.

This was true in that the board reacted with a means which had been traditionally applied in cases of insubordination of community officials: They suspended Lewenstein from his position. But this did not bother him. He published a second advertisement stat-

ing that the board had no authority to suspend him, and that he would be in no way affected by such a ridiculous measure in the conduct of his office. So the stage was set and the cue given for the only answer left to the board. Lewenstein, regardless of his appointment for life, was instantly dismissed. His special chair in the synagogue was removed, and a circular letter requested the members of the congregation to announce whether or not they approved of the board's decision. Such approval was soon forthcoming all along the line, and it included the immediate appointment of Dr. Schornstein as Chief Rabbi.

It can easily be guessed to what extent the general public spooned up the hubbub within the Jewish community. The whole show took place in 1910, two years before Henri Nathansen's play *Within the Walls*—which has since become a classic on our national stage—was to have its first night at the Royal Theatre. The public display of various aspects of Jewish life, with which this dramatic work deals, lay still in the future, so that for quite some time, indeed since the day of Meir Aron Goldschmidt half a century earlier, Danish literature had suffered a prolonged off-season as far as spicy Jewish dishes were concerned.

And now there was a large-scale dramatic performance in full view of the public. The press gratefully grabbed the extraordinary copy, and on the first Saturday after the row a whole regiment of reporters and caricaturists appeared at the synagogue to witness the continuation. They were not disappointed. The deposed Chief Rabbi turned up in the synagogue and forced his way to the rostrum, as nobody had a real chance to prevent his doing so. His chair had been taken away, so he stood on his feet throughout the hours of the service—a scene so clear in my memory that I still sense how shameful it was that hundreds of persons present in the synagogue permitted a man, who had after all been their Rabbi for seven years, to stand for hours on end without offering him a seat.

Lewenstein could not avoid noticing the icy reception with which he was met by the overwhelming majority of the congregation. His sermon on this occasion turned out to be his swan song in this synagogue. The battle was lost, notwithstanding the fact that a small group of admirers now seriously joined him and saw to it that a modest room was hired in a street near the synagogue, where he could perform services. This group also provided the means and instruments for its own continued religious and ritual life without availing themselves of the institutions of the community. The intention was to maintain this separate apparatus only as long as Lewenstein remained in Denmark. But when—in the late summer of 1912—he eventually did leave, some members of this little crowd had acquired a taste for this form of separatism. They constituted themselves as the Association for the Maintenance of Orthodox Judaism. Since it so happened that, exactly at that time, an Orthodox Jewish world organization was established, the small clique was able to secure economic support from abroad. This made it possible for them to employ a successor to Lewenstein and, as far as I can judge, he turned out to be far more Lewensteinian than Lewenstein himself. And the group has continued its existence to this very day, under a succession of leaders. There may well be cause for some evaluation of what it is, and what it is not.

Of course, the Lewenstein affair did not end with his dismissal in 1910. To the contrary—that was when it began. He sued the community for breach of contract. His primary claim was reinstatement in his office. Alternatively he pleaded for an amount of money which would recompense his financial loss. As things were then, litigation was bound to drag on. This particular case, which was to be finally settled by the Supreme Court, was concluded only after a full two years. Under tremendous public attention, Carl Julius Otto Liebe pleaded Lewenstein's case before the Supreme Court. It was a clever move by Lewenstein to get Liebe (who en-

joyed a most impressive reputation at the time) to handle his side; and since the breach of contract was beyond dispute, the board could only await the final decision as to the price they would have to pay for the dismal affair.

Obviously, there also was the risk of a verdict so adverse as to necessitate the reinstatement of the dismissed Chief Rabbi. Things did not turn out as bad as all that. This demand of his was overruled, but he was awarded a compensation of, I think, Dkr. 85,000 (then U.S. $17,000), which was not only much more than the lower court had laid down but represented a very considerable sum in those days. The board saw to it, however, that the community chest was not burdened with this payment. The money was raised through private channels. And thus the Lewenstein chapter, which had for almost ten years kept the community busy in a manner degrading to all involved, at long last was wound up. Lewenstein got an appointment in Zurich, where for almost forty years he continued to officiate to a group of like-minded.

An episode in the history of the Danish Jewish community, having begun as a glorious sunrise, had ended in murky gloom. To this day, shadows from this period occasionally fall upon the daily life of the community.

World War: 1914

In the early summer of 1914, I matriculated just after turning seventeen. Thus I was still ahead of my age, having cut one year by mastering the high school curriculum in two years at a two-year external course. Even then, I was aware that this way of pushing ahead was a two-edged sword. It is one thing to acquire, with the help of average abilities and average diligence, the necessary theoretical knowledge, but it is beyond a seventeen-year-old to reach the personal human maturity which is normal at eighteen or nineteen. Also, at a course of this kind, one rarely has fellow students of one's own age.

I had one thing in common with my fellows at the course's classical side: They, too, planned to study Divinity. But that was all. The youngest among them were above twenty, most in their late twenties, and one was fifty-four years old. When, at the age of seventeen, I joined these people, who were already fairly matured by life, I felt in my body and in my soul that I was in my salad days. The realization that I had to hold my own not so much in class as in the theological discussions between lessons helped re-

duce that feeling to an extent. Nevertheless, I can still sense how hard it was on me as sole representative of Jewish theology to cope with these ten future state church clergymen—not because they were more gifted than I but because their rich experience of things of which I had hardly ever heard rendered them superior in this confrontation.

As it seems reasonable in these memoirs to apply the principle from the historical accounts of the Bible, according to which chronological order is a secondary consideration, I would like to mention a small experience of more recent date. At the time when I was a rabbi in Germany, of which more shall be told later on, I was concurrently active as a high school teacher, and in this capacity I attended the ceremonies signifying the conclusion of examinations. One of my most beautiful recollections from these occasions concerns an address delivered by a headmistress to her just diplomaed girl students. This is what she said: "I assume you think of yourselves as cultured persons, because you have swallowed an amount of knowledge from books. This is a misunderstanding. One may be immensely learned and yet not cultured. Let me tell you what culture and good breeding mean. *It is the ability to form an opinion,* to judge, to differentiate between right and wrong, to choose and to reject." Under this definition, it had to be most difficult for a seventeen-year-old to be truly cultured.

But, as is known, youthfulness in the sense that it implies immature reactions is one of the shortcomings which decreases with the passing of time. The youth of 1914 was soon to witness events which promoted the process of maturing. In August of that year, World War I broke out. Mankind, nations, and individuals were exposed to tempestuous experiences which were bound to leave deep traces in their minds. Most of the over fifty years since then have been of the kind that makes them seem to count double, in retrospect. Under the tragically changed conditions, one became involved in so much that one was more or less forcibly turned into

a "cultured" person in little time. The very fact that the Great Powers of Europe were to encounter each other in a bloody showdown gave rise to a speechless horror. In a way, wars had been going on rather regularly. South Africa, China, Russia-Japan, and the Balkans had all seen war. These wars were, however, limited to more or less local dimensions. Now, all of Europe was afire, and Europe was the world—or seemed to be.

General dismay that war was really there was much stronger in the Jewish communities than elsewhere. The Jewish populations in most of the various countries had joined, almost to the point of total identification, the nations among which they lived. English Jews were English, and German Jews were German. Some of them were even 120 per cent German. But, of course, a common feeling remained to all Jews, in all lands and across all frontiers. And, indeed, there were countries where the Jews had not been absorbed by the general population. This was especially true of giant Russia, which with its Polish and Baltic provinces had a Jewish population of seven to eight millions. The Austro-Hungarian Double Monarchy accounted for one million, so that the Central Powers among them had one and one-half million Jews. Clearly, the war brought about a situation in which Catholics were to fight Catholics, Lutherans would be pitted against fellow Lutherans, etc. I cannot estimate to what extent religious community in these instances implies a manyfold intensification of the disgust at having to kill each other in the name of God and country. But I do know that the notion that Jews would now be going to shoot each other to pieces in honor of Russia, for example, was preposterous —even unbearable. That Christians, at the time of the Crusades, during the Inquisition, and on countless other occasions had murdered millions of Jews—that was one thing. But that Jews were now to take up arms against each other was bound to increase the sense of horror and dread with which every mind was preoccupied during those fateful days in August, 1914.

Even for a completely insignificant person like me, the outbreak of war meant a serious alteration in plans. Since no faculty exists in Denmark for the study of Jewish theology, it had been determined years earlier that in October, 1914, I was to take up studies at the rabbinical school called the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminar in Berlin. But now that Germany was at war, the inadequacies of my seventeen years were underlined. My parents felt it far too dangerous to send such a young man abroad on such difficult terms. A small delay would not matter a great deal. It would, of necessity, be merely a short delay because "how in all the world can a world war last more than a few months?"

So I remained in Copenhagen during the 1914-1915 season, which proved beneficial in several respects for my further development. I took the Copenhagen University's obligatory exam in Philosophy with the renowned professor Harald Heffding, who during the first year of the war conducted his philosophical course with his last class.

I also had my voice "pitched." My father defrayed the expenses of forty individual lessons with Viggo Forchhammer, who during these very years was consolidating his unique reputation as a teacher of song and speech. It was not a cheap enterprise, but my father insisted it was bound to prove a valuable investment. He showed remarkable foresight. I acquired from Forchhammer the mastery of the sober use of the Danish language. I also learned a bit of singing, at least what is within reach of the less outstanding songbirds in the woods. But the main thing was that I learned proper respiration and the right pitch. If, since then, with a schedule of some four hundred speeches, lectures, sermons, and addresses annually, I have never had to cancel an engagement because of hoarseness, this is Forchhammer's merit. If, once in a while, I may be a bit hoarse, I can still manage just by pitching my voice a bit lower.

But the most important thing was my service during the first year

of the war as a secretary to the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Schornstein. Apart from the many regular functions of his office, there were numerous extraordinary tasks to handle. There was a tremendous quantity of transit mail between Russia and Germany. When war came with the suddenness of a genuine storm, thousands of Russian and Polish-Russian Jews were staying at German and Austrian health and seaside resorts. They were now forced to remain in countries which considered them hostile aliens. Many of them were interned right away like some sort of prisoners of war. They had no choice but to remain abroad without any means of support, and without a chance to establish direct contact with their families. So correspondence began and, since postal communication between the hostile countries was immediately disrupted, the letters had to be sent through neutral countries. To Jews it was natural, then as now, to turn to a rabbi with the request that he serve as intermediary in communications with home and relatives. So, day by day, enormous quantities of mail reached the Danish Chief Rabbi. In the more simple cases, a new address was all that was required. But, often new letters had to be written, and questions had to be answered in either direction. So Schornstein, who had for quite a few years been my excellent teacher in various Jewish subjects, asked me to assist him in the burdensome task which had been placed upon his shoulders. He offered me the princely pay of Dkr. 20.—every month—completely ignorant of the fact that I would have gladly *paid* the same amount for permission to handle this job. The point was that his daughter, then aged thirteen, was my clandestine fiancee. By 1914, this affair was already eight years old, as the reader may remember, and the boy-and-girl attachment from 1906 was approaching a serious stage. Thus, as pleased as Punch, I called every day at the Schornstein home, and to the best of my ability extended the hours of work.

In true fact, there was more to look after than the letters and the fiancee. Quite a number of the Eastern Jews who had been in

Germany had been lucky enough to reach Denmark at the last moment. Some of them were from those parts of Poland and other countries where actual warfare was being conducted. They were simply—and in numerous cases for the whole duration of the war —stranded here, unless there appeared a chance to travel to a country where it might be possible for them to lead a more or less normal life until they were able to return to their proper homes. Most prominent among them was the Yiddish author Sholem Aleichem, famed far beyond the Jewish reading public, whose book *Teyve the Milkman* was published in Denmark in 1961, in my translation. The most of new arrivals who were now in Denmark for various lengths of time were in need both of roofs over their heads and of daily meals. And since most of them would use only food which was prepared in accordance with Jewish religious prescriptions, there was a genuine major problem to be tackled. Schornstein now proved himself in possession of talents as a first-rate initiator and organizer. He had a civic restaurant founded, big enough to handle the clientele. Naturally, these people had other concerns than just housing and food. They very much needed a spiritual advisor, and Schornstein was the right man to deal with the countless issues with which they came to him. This was his second extraordinary task.

The third one, admittedly, was not engendered by the war, but emphasized by it. Many of those arriving *now* were virtually without means, and thus they increased the large, regularly flowing stream of migrants who had been steadily arriving, particularly during the years 1905-1912, from the Czarist empire. I have already spoken of these Polish and Russian refugees. On their arrival, they had moved into housing where the local population would not live any more, because the apartments were too poor in quality even by the standards of that time. Now the impoverished districts concerned became the abode of thousands who were still definitely a foreign element in the city. They were so very *different,*

not only compared with the Christians, but also with the indigenous Jews. Their rhythms of life, their habits and customs, their language and their names were all strange. This was how we felt; and how much more intensive and onerous must have been their feeling. Chased away from home—without having found a new home. And yet, in a way they had. The poor apartments of two and three rooms, where often ten or twelve persons were crowded together, actually were their homes; and I am convinced that within those narrow walls, there may well and often have been more coziness and warmth than in a good many proud bourgeois residences. But it could hardly be said of them that they had reached *home port*. They had scarcely found their own feet, not to mention the community with its members who were socially quite differently situated and saturated.

It should be pointed out that these "new families" were also in the sociological sense quite unlike the native Jews. They included a disproportionate number of tailors and cobblers, although most crafts were represented among them. As chance would have it, the outbreak of war brought with it possibilities for full employment to artisans of those categories. The security forces maintained by Denmark throughout the war needed uniforms and boats far in excess of the previous requirements of the defense establishment; and suddenly there was work for all. And even at normal rates! During preceding years the newcomers had occasionally provoked the wrath of the trade unions by offering to work cheaper than usual, merely to get any employment at all. This now belonged to the past. The immigrants joined the trade unions themselves and began having bourgeois notions.

An important contribution to the normalization of the lives of the Eastern European Jews was made by the institutions established by them at their own initiative, including an artisans' association and a choral society for the cultivation of the Yiddish songs they had brought with them from their countries of origin. But

important was an organization established by the Chief Rabbi. It was called the Central Bureau and was intended and did function as a pooling center for solutions to all the economic, social, and cultural problems. An institution of this kind was not born overnight. Countless deliberations and considerations preceded its start. And once launched, it had to face each day new tasks demanding ever more thrashing out. Schornstein succeeded in gathering around him the elite of the immigrants for daily consultations. Many of them turned out to be politically well trained. They had been members of a Social Democratic organization in Eastern Europe, called the "Bund." The rulers then in power considered this group revolutionary, so that many of the persons concerned had come to Denmark as political refugees in the literal sense of the term. It is worth noting that this "elite" was broad as far as the number of its members was concerned. It was soon recognized that there were plenty of highly gifted people behind the unassuming appearance.

In this way, little by little, some order was introduced into the lives of many rootless human beings. In the community, now consisting of two main categories, these were sniffing at each other, until gradually a measure of mutual adaptation became noticeable. Much credit is due to Schornstein, because—and this was during the first year or two of the war—he envisioned what everybody else failed to see and realize: the immeasurable importance of these people for the future of the community. The assimilation process ravaging the veteran families had not yet affected the new ones. There, it made itself felt later, when this group, too, had become acclimatized and had achieved Danish citizenship. The Jewish community in Copenhagen, thanks to the immigrants of 1905-1912 together with a rather small addition of German Jews during the Nazi period, has grown from about three thousand persons at the turn of the century to approximately seven thousand today.

To those unaware of the *mental* development which was necessary, the whole thing may seem to have been achieved quickly and painlessly. But this was far from being the case. As late as 1923-1925, when I served as headmaster of the Jewish boys' school, the homes from which its pupils came were markedly proletarian. Even when in 1934 I returned to Denmark after nine years as a rabbi in Germany, there was bitter linguistic conflict between the groups, because the newcomers still were inclined to feel themselves and to have themselves looked upon as strangers, and because they kept insisting that Yiddish was their true mother tongue. In other words, out of the sixty years since this whole process began, half the time was wasted on nothing, on guarding mutual frontiers and maintaining a vacuum between the sides. On the other hand, the second half brought the complete reversal, which meant not merely adaptation, but total amalgamation. In today's Jewish community in Copenhagen everybody counts the same. Whether our great- and great-great-grandparents lived in Faborg and Nakskov, or in Piotrkov and Dvinsk, is of no importance, and no one except the silly fringe would ever care.

One should remember, in this connection, that nothing passes as quickly as time, particularly nowadays. In olden days, when "a generation" was supposed to mean about thirty years, the implication was that after such an interval a new generation would begin to grow up. Now, man may live longer than he did then, but his successor generation is there and ready much sooner. Since most marriages are contracted at an early age, a generation becomes a matter of little over twenty years. Those who immigrated here early in this century are great-grandparents, and in not a few cases on the verge of adding one more "great" to their status. In other words, a fourth generation is knocking at the door. If, as the old proverb has it, it takes three generations to produce a gentleman, no more seem to be needed to create a proper Dane. The immigrated Polish and Russian Jews are now Danish. They are Danish

Jews, by all means, but no less Danish for that. The Constitution does not say a word about a religious criterion determining Danishness. Neither does it say that one's forefathers must have been Vikings in order justly to consider this country one's homeland. If the ancestors happen to have been prophets or authors of psalms, this is not thought to be disgraceful at all.

Arrival in Berlin: 1915

When all this was still in embryo, then, I was sitting with the Chief Rabbi as his secretary dealing with current work and the whole spectrum of multifarious tasks. There was time enough left to look after the philosophical lectures by Harald Hoffding, and above all the daily Talmud studies. I had been preoccupied with these studies for quite a few years, and with considerable diligence, but they now had to be intensified to enable me to be accepted at the rabbinical seminar in Berlin as a full-fledged regular student (*ordentlicher Horer*). If I had been able to take up the courses in Berlin in 1914, I would probably have had the status of some sort of outsider (*ausserordentlicher Horer*). It is interesting to observe that in Copenhagen, which was considered rather in the periphery of Jewish life and learning, it was possible to undertake a serious and intensive study of the Talmud.

I do not want to take up much space here with explanations of the Talmud. This subject should be treated in separate works. Just the main point: Talmud is the written, but originally verbal, tradition handed down to comment on and enlarge upon the meaning

of the Bible and the Jewish way of putting it into practice. It is the comprehensive collection of Jewish literature, beginning about 500 SCE and ending about 500 CE. All that has been said, discussed, and legislated on these subjects throughout the period concerned is gathered in this work of thirty-six large treatises, which in the original—a difficult mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic—fill a score of bulky folios. Its German translation takes up twelve thousand large pages of small print. Since the Talmud—though during the intervening fifteen hundred years has been followed up by countless rabbinical writings—ranks as the basic book of all Jewish tradition, it forms a most vital part of rabbinical study. With Josef Fischer, introduced above in his capacity of manager of immigrant affairs, I had had Talmud lessons since I was ten years old. Fischer was fully able on the Talmudic ocean. In his youth, he had attended a famed Talmud school in central Europe, and in Denmark he was superior to virtually everybody else in this particular field.

After his arrival in Denmark in the early nineties, he soon became acclimatized. He had so completely entered into the spirit and lives of Danish Jewry as to become the biographer of the community. A great number of genealogical tables of old families in the congregation were compiled by him. To this work he brought the painstaking scrupulosity, and above all the scientific intuition, which placed his performance in the field of genealogy on a high academic level. Despite the change of spiritual climate to which he was exposed when, as a young man, he left his Hungarian home to accept his nomination here, he preserved his strictly conservative religious observance. But he was very tolerant toward others, and he deserves much credit for his unwavering loyalty to the community during the hectic heyday of Lewenstein. There were a good many attempts to entice him into the extremist camp. But he—who might, due to the authority which his learning lent him, have been a most valuable support for Lewenstein—never wavered in his understanding that the split which Lewenstein caused in the community

was a trifle compared with the disintegration of the whole Community of the Mosaic Faith which would have ensued if this small splinter group had been permitted to hector the entire community.

Josef Fischer, some twenty-five or twenty-six years my elder, maintained his friendship for me until his death in 1949. By then, I had advanced to Chief Rabbi. But it did not bother him in the least to treat me, his pupil in days of old, as his superior. For my part, it came natural to show him genuine deference. As he had been an important mainstay to a succession of Chief Rabbis—this was true of Schornstein as well as of M. Friediger, who came next —he played the same part in regard to me; and his death, after he had happily survived both deportation to Theresienstadt and several serious operations, meant a severe loss not only to his family, but to the community, and to me personally. I have laid down the rule that his name is to be included among those of the former Rabbis of the commmunity at the services which include memorial prayers for the deceased.

In view of Josef Fischer's great love for this community, everybody would have been pleased had he lived to witness his son's, barrister-of-law Leo Fischer's, career in its leadership. Since 1964, he has served as chairman of the board of the Jewish community. In the eyes of the public, it is a position of outstanding importance which is now filled by a Fischer, and it gives me great pleasure that the name has been preserved in such an honorable manner in this framework.

Members of the board have always been accustomed to consider this position as one of the highest in the world. This is illustrated by a small incident which C. B. Henriques was very fond of telling. About 1907, he had almost simultaneously achieved his appointment as barrister of the Supreme Court and his election to the board of the Jewish community. When his mother met a lady acquaintance in the street, the latter congratulated Mrs. Henriques on her son's new dignity, saying, "How nice for you that your son

has become a Supreme Court barrister." To which Mrs. Henriques replied, "Well, Supreme Court barrister, that's all very good, but above all he has become a member of the board of the Community of the Mosaic Faith." Nowadays, the board—and its members will agree—is not so exclusively composed of persons of rank in high society as was the case then. Still, there is an inclination in the community to stick to the old view of this council, composed of seven persons, to whom the administrative management of its affairs is entrusted. Each of the seven gentlemen handles one of the activities under the board's authority, including synagogue services, schools, buildings, cemeteries, finances, charitable institutions, and foundation grants. The board is the recognized guardian of the latter, which is no small affair, since the various foundations, among them, total Dkr. 10 to 11 million ($1,500,000). It should be noted that in quite a few cases allocations may be granted to non-Jews. Of course, inflation has eaten into these funds and reduced their real value. Still, they do represent substantial money, and they provide efficient support for many worthy social and cultural purposes.

To return to my Talmud lessons: There were others than Josef Fischer who were able to teach me this important branch of knowledge, with the result that when eventually I sought admission to the rabbinical seminar in Berlin, I was rather well versed in extensive sections of this gigantic field. And this brings us up to the milestone in my life, October, 1915, when my rabbinical studies began in earnest. In the meantime, it had become evident that the great war was going to last "longer than a couple of months." Also, I had turned eighteen and further postponement of my studies would have been far too risky. So, a start had to be made. As of early October, 1915, I was standing on my own feet, and one day found myself at a railway station in wartime Berlin. Apart from the address of the college, I had only one single address in my pocket. A Danish Jew, who had, many years before, emigrated to Berlin, had permitted me to look him up, once I arrived there. I

hired one of the many horse-cabs outside the station—automobiles for public convenience were still rare. I did not carry much cash, so first I worriedly asked the driver the price of the ride to Mr. Hartvig's place.

I can still hear the laconic reply, "Sechzehn Groschen." That was 1.60 German marks, which I, offhand, increased to 1.70. I had been awarded a scholarship for my study from the funds administered by the community board, the particular grant being intended for just my kind of education. I had to economize with these means, which were extremely modest. The same was true of my knowledge of German, which did not go beyond what I had acquired at school. So there reigned some scarcity both in my pocket and in the little grey cells presumed to be found in my upper story.

Teachers: 1915

At the time of my arrival in Berlin, Germany was not yet much ravaged by the war. The supply situation was close to normal, and life in Berlin appeared to go on as usual. But one did scent quite soon that the atmospheric pressure was, well, oppressive. A not very well-spiced aroma, impossible to ignore, lay over the metropolis, and the absence of many tens of thousands of young men who were at the fronts was bound to make everyday life lopsided. When I turned up at the Hartvig home, I got a very friendly reception, and was installed in a hotel room for the first night. That same night I found myself exposed, for the first time in my life, to an assault by vermin. Since I had never before been in touch with creatures of this kind, it was somewhat disheartening that they had called a general meeting exactly that night, and exactly in my bed. To the best of my ability, I endeavored to turn their reunion into a mass funeral—and became so much the more eager to find permanent lodgings.

I succeeded the next day. After having been on a visit to introduce myself to the venerable old head of the seminar, Dr. David

Hoffmann, I took lodgings with a family whose main business was letting rooms with full board to Jewish students. It is almost fantastic to think that the price for the quite large and nice room allocated to me, where I lived throughout the six years of my studies, amounted to 100 marks a month in return for which I had the room, light (gas), heating (briquettes), as well as five meals a day. They were breakfast (at 8 a.m.), second breakfast (11 a.m.), lunch (1 p.m.), afternoon coffee (3 p.m.), and supper (7 p.m.). In the early stages, the meals were even ample and elegant. But it did not take long before food provisions became scarce. The Vienna schnitzel of the first day soon turned into some sort of rissole, produced from little fish of the stickleback family. The weekly meat ration was reduced to less than five ounces, including bones, and the ration of butter to less than an ounce. But I managed, and I think with much gratitude of the aging couple to whose care I had entrusted myself. The mistress of the house was an involuntary *komische Alte* (funny old one). She appealed irresistibly to my sense of humor, and with good-natured patience she suffered whatever youthful hocus-pocus I might be up to with her.

I was aware from the outset that it was a kind of twofold study I was entering upon. There were, first of all, the Jewish-theological subjects, which implied four to five hours of lectures every day, apart from a considerable amount of homework. But beyond this, at least then, it was absolutely necessary to supplement the specialized study with a university degree, which, under the German academic system, was to be based on one main and two auxiliary subjects. If, in addition, a doctorate was aimed at, a dissertation had to be prepared within the main subject, and to be approved by all professors of the faculty.

A doctor's title was actually indispensable. It was more than—as was said—a Jewish first name. It served as documentation to any community of the real all-around academic training of a candidate. At certain German universities, it was rather easily acquired.

At one time an anecdote was in circulation which was damaging to the University of Heidelberg. It explained how the conductors of certain express trains would, upon reaching Heidelberg, shout, "Heidelberg! Stop for two hours! Gentlemen wanting to take their doctorates are kindly requested to hurry." Now, it was not as simple as all that. Anyhow, at some other universities the demands connected with the oral examination as well as with the written thesis were not exacting. This was true not only of the University of Berlin, but of a great many others, including the Immanuel Kant University in Konigsberg. As chance would have it, the latter was the stage of my test in this respect. But that came later.

For the time being, the implication was that I had to attend daily university lectures as well. I had chosen Oriental Languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic) as my main subject, and Philosophy as one of the auxiliary ones. I tried to get the other on the sly by picking Old Norse, since I was fairly familiar with it from my school days. When it turned out, however, that Old Norse was supposed to include Ancient German and other nuisances as well, I immediately climbed down and took refuge with Egyptology, i.e., the hieroglyphs and the not-too-extensive literature in this field. This proved almost easy to master, and in my younger days I felt so capable in the subject that for a while I even considered seeking a lectureship in it.

Apart from study, the young student's everyday life was marked by good fellowship with his comrades. There were not too many of them, since most of the seminar's students had been called to the colors. But as so often in life, the distress of some turned out to be an advantage to others. The teachers, principal, and lecturers of the college now had more time for those in a position to continue their studies. This was, apart from my case, true for some few German-Jewish students who either suffered from some physical defect or had returned wounded from the front and could not be called up again for some time. It was the case, too, with stu-

dents who were subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where, in contrast with Germany, and as a matter of principle, students of Divinity were exempted from military service.

Particularly three of the seminar's teaching staff were to leave their mark on my education. First of all, there was the principal himself, the greatest Talmudic capacity in the German-speaking world. He was mild and modest of disposition, but could let fly rather sharply at students who were wanting in the diligence demanded for the subject. These outbursts of his were, however, coupled with so much charm and quiet humor that even their targets were not angered by them. Hoffmann was a scientist of standing. In a number of books of lasting importance, he took issue with so-called biblical criticism and, figuratively, carried the war into the enemy's camp. At the time when he became my teacher, he had for forty years decisively participated in the training of future rabbis. As to the internal ideological attitude to religion, the seminar had placed itself on the strict traditional line. For the maintenance of this, he had proved a skilled chief officer, whose personal authority was also enough to prevent a rightward alteration of course. He was mild and moderate in his interpretation of the Law, and this alone secured for him the deferential love of all former students who were now holding office as rabbis—and the more so that of the current students.

Since Hoffmann, who after the end of the war was granted the title of professor, was an old man, it must be admitted that the great difference in age caused some distance between him and the students. Things were different with Dr. Joseph Wohlgemuth, the lecturer in ritual subjects, philosophy of religion, and preaching. He was not yet fifty when I became his pupil. Despite a gigantic mane of grey hair, he possessed a youthful, ardent mind and eager manner. Underneath the mane, an aquiline nose was the first thing to attract attention. But you soon forgot this excrescence, because you were spellbound by a pair of soulful eyes, gleaming and spark-

ling behind a pair of double-cut spectacle lenses. Once in a while, his glance would have a flash, when this impressionable man was absorbed with the subject he was lecturing upon.

His fifty years notwithstanding, he still underwent vivid developments in his mind. If you imagine a volcano not only *emitting* fire but also occasionally *swallowing* it, then your picture of the man is very accurate. A good deal later, unhappily, the fires in his mind flared so violently as to cause severe damage—with the paradoxical result that the lights went out. By then, I had held office for quite some time, and the eclipse in his soul was not to affect me directly. Still, it was a most saddening feeling that this logical thinker and master of style should so soon be paralyzed, eaten away from within by an unrelenting craving to solve—if only in a tiny segment—the riddle of life.

During "my" years, he was hale and hearty and, if later I was to prove reasonably able in the art of speech and sermon, it was in large measure due to him. As a matter of fact, my first trial sermons made this man, whose fancy was easily aroused, more enthusiastic than was justified, in my view. But this gave me the self-confidence which is indispensable when the question is to be decided for a future—or even for an already ordained—preacher, whether he is to exert mastery of the spoken word, or to be its serf.

Wohlgemuth was not the only one to affect me in this respect. Old President Hoffmann had his share in the enterprise. This came about in the following manner: When the students from the rabbinical college were to deliver trial sermons, usually some of the Rabbis serving in Berlin—themselves former students of the seminar—would volunteer to attend. They probably felt that it was a pity for the young men to have to play to an empty house —which might happen to them soon enough, once they were appointed to a post. So here, in a sense, there was a royal audience in the stalls. But the greenhorns remained utterly unaffected. They would proceed in a manner which at least then was—and in the

view of a good many preachers even today is—considered unavoidable: They performed in an almost positively sulfurous manner. From their high pulpit, they would brandish their scourge over the congregation—in actual fact nonexistent—which was their victim. The latter was hauled over the coals for not observing the Sabbath, for trying to sneak away from ritual duties, for leading a morally reprehensible life, and more in this vein which a spiritual leader may use to castigate his defenseless flock. I could not help admiring the numerous pious listeners who put up with being addressed in this way. I did understand that they felt themselves to be participants in some sort of game, but it was beyond me why, when the time for critical comment came after the trial sermon, there would be no remarks made on the erroneous procedure—both with regard to its applicability to the actual audience and as a matter of general principle.

When my turn came to deliver such a first, semi-public sermon, I decided to behave along different lines. I had some scolding to do myself, but instead of blaming the assembled clergy for *imaginary* sins, I was going to expostulate to them about something of which they were *really* guilty. It should be recalled here that, by 1915, a mere three years had passed since the conclusion of the Lewenstein case in Copenhagen. Lewenstein was himself a graduate of the Berlin rabbinical seminar, and the circles connected with this worthy institution lent him one-sided support in his feud against the Jewish community in Copenhagen. Many sharp, unjustified, and unreasonable remarks were made about the congregation which I loved so much. To me, the whole thing appeared to be a smear campaign, based on prejudiced condemnation and perpetuated by insincere echoing of each other. Now I was to have the opportunity to assert a view of the affair which was in the current man-to-man discussions brushed aside with a shrug.

As always on occasions of this kind, the text provided by

chance came to my assistance. During the week concerned, the first part of the story of Joseph was read, where his dreams of curtsying sheaves and of sun, moon, and stars paying homage to the seventeen-year-old braggart catch the reader's attention. But the Scripture has a remark, too, that Joseph brought his brothers' "evil reputation" home to their old man—in other words, that he was a sneak, or even an informer. And this was what I took in hand. I spoke about the power of words to create and to kill, their edifying uses, also outside the synagogue, and their equally destructive and disruptive evil potential. All this was accompanied with adequate quotes both from the Talmud and from general treasures of proverbs, and finally brought in relation to what was on my mind, with the observation that poisonous words strike out in many directions—not only at those at whom they are aimed, and those who are being addressed, but also (with the effect of a boomerang) at those who speak them. The whole thing culminated with the statement that whoever speaks evil of an institution with which he is not familiar is no better man than the one who slanders an individual victim.

When, after this thunderclap, it was the turn of the critics to speak up, the principal requested to be given the floor. He was, then, a man of seventy-four, a most venerable figure, far above worldly sin or weakness, or so it looked to us. The greater, therefore, was the effect, when he said, "You have to hand it to the young man that he has said things which should be taken to heart by all of us."

As it was more or less unthinkable that anyone should presume to contradict the head of the seminar, comment was so benevolent on this occasion that its like was rarely heard. Most important, however, was the fact that I acquired that self-confidence which is so important to a speaker. Of course, it is necessary for many activities. If one suffers from an inferiority complex, one is even worse off than if confidence is turned into arrogance. A quiet

conviction of one's ability to handle the situation is the best guarantee of the peace of mind which is transmitted from speaker to audience, and which the latter expect from the former. I am inclined to think that the balance in mind and heart with which, ever since, I have faced and coped with my speaking engagements, originates from that sermon and from the principal's positive remarks. It occurs to me that this fact in itself contains an intimation to educators as to how dormant forces in their students might be stimulated.

The third one among the lecturers of the seminar, to whom I am greatly indebted for all he provided of knowledge and rabbinical standards, was the historian, exegetic teacher Dr. Simon Eppenstein. He was a highly gifted, busy-as-a-bee scientific investigator. Incredibly modest, almost self-effacing, he fought the hard battle between faith and knowledge, almost in full view of his audience. This was bound to affect deeply a young man who had, almost without reflection, entered upon a study of Divinity, and who now necessarily encountered those doubts and scruples which must make themselves felt in all walks of life, and who saw that the struggle for religious conviction was carried on within others than himself, including even a man who trained clergymen. All the others seemed so firmly embedded in their faith that it almost amounted to too much of a good thing. It seemed to put them at a remote distance from one who was in the midst of his personal crisis with regard to things supposed "to stand for ever"—as Isaiah says the word of the Lord.

But Eppenstein let us understand that what we were experiencing was but man's natural internal discussion with himself, which might well continue until much later years. Time and again he would say in the course of his lectures, "Well, gentlemen, here faith and knowledge are locked in combat within me." The edifying part of it all was his demonstration of the way in which a person, even when beset by doubts, may carry on with his religious

way of life, until he reaches the stage when this practice has recovered its natural motivation. Eppenstein died in January, 1920. It became my duty to eulogize him, on behalf of the students, at the memorial service in his honor. It was the first time I had stood on the pulpit of a great synagogue. But the agitation of the mind at the death of this beloved teacher completely overshadowed whatever other emotion this prominent position in which I found myself might have evoked. It was a subdued, gentle first performance.

From my Berlin period, I must make mention of a man who in many respects was to serve as a model for me, although I was aware that, in others, our ways must lead us apart. This was the Rabbi of the synagogue situated on the very college campus. He, Dr. Esra Munk, belonged to a strictly orthodox separate congregation. He was very extreme in his religious attitudes, which he set forth with much severity in his manners as well as in his points of view. But behind all this, well hidden in the corners of his eyes, there was a boyish, roguish, indescribably charming smile—apparent to those who possessed the antenna with which to pick it up. I did have it in regard to Dr. Munk, which meant that I remained undaunted by a man reputed as being quite standoffish. Most remarkable was his rhetorical talent. Let me say, in this context, that the art of speech consists not merely of the ability to talk. Many can do that without being speakers. Speech, after all—though I am aware that this need not apply to diplomatic talk—is knowledge transformed into words. The thoughtless or empty-headed can never become a speaker. Neither can the ignorant. I know very well that many knowledgeable and thoughtful persons don't become speakers either, but it is a hopeless undertaking to set foot upon a rostrum without a background of incessant intellectual and spiritual activity.

Munk was a man of vast knowledge and, above all, he was indefatigable in his deep, serious pondering of matters. He was a man given to brooding and, when he stood in the pulpit, you could follow his astoundingly exciting thinking aloud and his fine ability to

lend soaring flight to his thoughts. He also had the refined custom of starting his address, whether from pulpit or from rostrum, in such a low voice that you could hear him only if the audience was completely silent and strained its ears and attention to the utmost. Gradually, he would raise his voice, until the grand pathos was attained, and when he reached the climax of his speech he would have the part of the audience not asleep by then in the palm of his hand. To a student, it was an exceedingly instructive experience to be among Dr. Munk's audience—to me it was a true festival every time I sat in my seat in his synagogue. For this seat I paid a rent which was, in my circumstances, considerable, in order to be assured of it whenever Dr. Munk was scheduled to preach.

Let it be no secret that not a few of those frequenting the synagogue had difficulty keeping awake as the profound stream of words kept pouring down upon their heads. Dr. Munk's talents as an orator were marred by his inability to control himself with regard to time. As far as I was concerned, I did not at all mind listening to him for the hour he often took to perform, but this was far too much for laymen. Once, in a church in Gothenburg, Sweden, a man had taken his little son with him, and the vicar kept preaching. At long last, the kid said, "Daddy, won't he finish soon?"

"He finished long ago," answered the father, "only, he doesn't know it." Munk really was not finished before he concluded, but one did feel, once in a while, how good it would have been if he thought a little less or a little quicker so as to keep the service chronologically balanced.

Regardless of the God-pleasing, devout slumber in which occasionally the congregants indulged, Dr. Esra Munk enjoyed unlimited esteem in his community. One was conscious that he was one of the outstanding Jewish theologians of his day, and one sympathized basically with the deep gravity which he usually displayed. It should be underlined that his was a special and independent congregation. It was organized by people to whom the great official

Berlin Jewish community with its two hundred thousand people was a little bit too liberal, so that from the outset there was spiritual accord between this separate congregation and its Rabbi.

A certain event in the autumn of 1918 made admiration for Dr. Munk overflow its banks. I shall be the more eager to recount it below, as it is one of the experiences from my youth which still touches the chords of mind and soul.

Armistice: 1918

As time passed, the war caused ever deeper furrows in German everyday life. The draft scraped the bottom and reached the very youngest classes. True, the German armies everywhere stood on enemy soil, but at home things went from bad to worse. Food supplies grew scarcer day by day, and even the most common consumer goods disappeared from the market. Precious and even semi-precious metals were confiscated for military use. When the Germans handed in their cherished objects, they got a diploma in return, praising their patriotism with the words *Gold gab ich für Eisen* [I gave gold for iron]. Even articles of brass and copper fittings, anything, indeed, had to be given up. Life had become hard as iron.

At long last, rations had decreased to the point where there was no question of having one's fill. Danish citizens, however, were at an advantage. They were permitted to receive, every month, a shipment of sixty eggs, some ten pounds of butter, and some meat from home. It goes without saying that, whenever I got my parcel, I dealt out from it at parties at my lodgings. I had

some difficulty finding out whether the popularity which I seemed to enjoy among my colleagues was due to my being such a nice person in every way, or whether it was a result of the parcel parties. Anyhow, the latter were a contributing factor to the frequency with which my room was the gathering point of the whole seminar gang. And from that time, otherwise marked by horror and gloom and tragic news from the fronts of the death now of one acquaintance, now of another, there remain memories of many hours in pleasant and instructive company.

In December, 1916, there appeared a faint hope that the war might come to an end when the German Reich Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, from the platform of the German Parliament, made a so-called peace offer to the Allies. This hope was short-lived. It did not occur to Germany, with her armies deep in France, Italy, and Russia, to concede that she was beaten. Therefore, her proposal was based on the illusion that Germany was in a position to lay down detailed terms for calling off the war. Bethmann-Hollweg's initiative was coldly rejected. And the war dragged on —more rigorously than ever. By February, 1917, Germany took the desperate step known as total submarine war. This provoked the American declaration of war upon Germany, and what had hitherto been a European war now became a world war in the full sense of the word.

I resist the temptation to recount war history, although an abundance of incidents comes to mind after having been suppressed for so many years. Let us move on to October-November, 1918. Germany was fairly done up. After the collapse of the Hindenburg-Ludendorff offensive in late May, defeat was a virtual certainty, and the war ought to have been wound up. But it was decided to carry it on to the bitter end, and another disaster lay ahead—one which Germany was to share with many other European nations. A virulent influenza—the so-called Spanish flu, in Germany named Die Grippe—ravaged the Old World. Young people

were particularly susceptible, and it caused wholesale deaths among them. The words from the Fifth Book of Moses, Chapter XXXII, Verse 25—speaking of the sword ravaging on the outside, horror on the inside—literally came true.

This was how Germany proceeded into the final phase of the war. Military defeat at the front, hunger and disease at home led to the inevitable breakdown. The sailors' rebellion at the naval port of Kiel was but one of the numerous insubordinations in the armed forces, and chaos loomed overhead. So Hindenburg counseled Emperor Wilhelm II to resign, the more necessary because the Allies demanded his abdication before they would consider armistice negotiations. In Berlin the official announcement was awaited under enormous tension. Thursday, November 7th, and Friday, November 8th, passed without any decision. But everybody was fairly certain that Saturday, November 9th, would signal the end to imperial and royal rule.

As is known, Saturday is the weekly Jewish holiday. That particular Saturday, the synagogues in Berlin were filled to capacity. Many, of course, had come to satisfy their religious urges. But there were many others who put in an appearance in order to see how the Rabbis would handle the situation at the point where the prayer for emperor and country had to be read from the pulpit. There was no news yet from headquarters as to whether the abdication was sealed or not. As it turned out, practically all Rabbis in all synagogues, as if by mutual agreement, had omitted this part of the service. There was a single exception. This occurred exactly in Dr. Esra Munk's synagogue, where I spent that Sabbath morning. As I tell what happened here, I still feel the grip of the excitement which caused the many hundreds present to shiver, as the dramatic and meaningful moment came near. What would the so vastly admired Rabbi do? Would he remain in his seat or enter the pulpit? And, if the latter was to be the case, what was he going to say?

Dr. Munk *did* enter the pulpit. Everybody did his best to make even his breathing inaudible, so as not to miss a syllable of what was said. Doubtless, the Rabbi was aware of the stirring situation. Like all German Jews, he was a patriot to his fingertips and, as things had been, love for the fatherland had been identical with love for the hereditary King and Emperor. How the imperial family ranked in the minds of the public may be illustrated by a newspaper report referring to a church visit by that family: "The *Very Highest* party entered the church in order to pay thanks to the *Highest*." Now, the Rabbi seemed to stand there with the fate of the Very Highest monarch in his hands. He was quivering with tension like the rest of us.

At long last, Dr. Munk spoke. He referred to the events in the XVth chapter of the First Book of Samuel concerning the clash between the Prophet and Saul, King of Israel. Saul had disobeyed the Divine command as communicated to him through Samuel. In his anger, Samuel declared that the Lord had rejected Saul as King of Israel, and that another man, "better than he" (i.e., David), was to take his place. Brokenheartedly, Saul asked a favor of the Prophet: "At least, do pay me honor in the presence of the elders of my people, who of all my people do remain at my side, so that the people may not yet learn of my abasement." And Samuel complied with this request and showed himself to the people at the King's side. "In this spirit," Dr. Munk concluded, "we shall now read the prayer for the Emperor and his house."

Everybody had a tingling sensation down the spine. In an ingenious way, Dr. Munk had taken an attitude towards a problem which, at the time, was felt to weigh much heavier than can be explained half a century later. He had enriched all of us with an experience which can compare with any great and solemn thing we might live to see, even if our lives were rich in occasions of this kind.

I also ought to mention the Second Rabbi in Dr. Munk's syn-

agogue, Dr. Meier Hildesheimer. The reason for this is both that he was a son of the founder of the rabbinical college, and that he had inherited his great father's human nobility and kindness. Evidently, this was no small heritage. Esriel Hildesheimer, as a priest, a teacher, and a scholar, had been in a class by himself. But he had been greatest as a human being. One particular incident, which throws a clear light upon his character, should be told here. Hildesheimer was an inveterate cigar smoker, and he was known to forego this cherished pleasure only on two occasions: when he was lecturing, and on the Sabbath. It is part of the Sabbath rules that fire may not be created, carried around or used in any way while the day of rest lasts. Fire is a decisive ingredient in the domination of man over nature—and, for that matter, over his fellow man—and it is one of the underlying ideas of the Sabbath that this domination should not be exercised on the great day of rest. The notion of rest should be felt throughout, by all and everything. So fire, including smoking, is out of bounds on the Sabbath.

Now, it once happened that Dr. Hildesheimer was summoned for audience with Emperor Wilhelm I, and on a Sabbath, of all days. In the course of the conversation Hildesheimer asked to be excused. Since he did not want to bother the Emperor with a lengthy and perhaps tiring account of the Sabbath law, he explained his refusal by saying that he did not smoke. This would seem to be an enormous lie. But Hildesheimer *was as good as his word.* He never touched tobacco again in his life. From that day on, he was truly a nonsmoker.

The son, Dr. Meier Hildesheimer, had not inherited his father's learning. His talents were on a more modest level and, therefore, he had to leave the position as First Rabbi to Dr. Munk. But in his ethics and whole way of life he was the equal of old Hildesheimer. With a kindly smile on his lips he went his way through this world. When on his way to the pulpit he passed people attend-

ing service, he would wish them "good night." He himself told the story of the pupils of the school for Jewish religion who, when on several-day excursions with him, would often call him in the evening and say, "Uncle Meier, we can't fall asleep, so wouldn't you, please, preach to us?"

Whereas Dr. Munk, in his leaden gravity, could often appear to be shy of people, Hildesheimer would conquer their hearts right away. He took part in the fortunes of people for better or worse, in happiness and distress alike, and thus was the ideal spiritual advisor.

Incidentally, when the disastrous German inflation had ravaged the foundations which the rabbinical college had acquired, it became his special task to travel to Jews everywhere in the world to create the economic basis for the continued existence of the seminar. He did extremely well. Had the job been conferred upon Dr. Munk, he most probably would have been looked upon as a boresome mendicant friar. Hildesheimer knew how to convey the feeling to his donors that the very fact that they were permitted to contribute to a cause which *he* was promoting implied a distinction of which they were hardly worthy. And for that, they, of course, were duty bound to pay something extra.

Rather soon after the revolution and the armistice of November 11, 1918, I had the opportunity for an unscheduled visit home. Throughout all these years, I had every time, without exception, been happy as a lark whenever the time arrived for such a visit. This rather goes without saying. But my happiness on these occasions increased with the strengthening grip of hunger and sorrow of Germany and the German people. However, in the summer of 1917, my stay at home had been too much prolonged. After the introduction of the intensified U-boat war, an entrance visa into Germany proved impossible to obtain, and I had to wait until, by October of that year, patronage helped me overcome this obstacle so as to enable me to continue my studies. This time,

I got an extra chance to go home.

Throughout the war, the German Jews had been cut off from contact with Jews in the outside world. For instance, only by November, 1918, were they able to take notice of the declaration of the British government—the Balfour declaration of November 2, 1917—with the promise that, after the conquest of Palestine from the Turks, England would support the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Now, there were many negotiations to be conducted between the German Jews on one side and international Jewish bodies on the other, and since by that time Germans were not yet permitted to travel in other European countries, it was quite natural that I was requested to undertake, via Denmark, to establish contacts in every direction. Although I had had no scores whatsoever to settle with the imperial family of Germany—to the contrary, I very much sympathized with Crown Princess Cecilie, since she was a sister of Alexandrine, the Queen of our King Christian X—it was a fact that Germany had not enjoyed democratic rule. As a student of twenty-one, I obviously felt it to be a great and important event that Germany was now to become a democracy.

During this visit of mine at home, I gave vent to this opinion to old Professor David Simonsen. He was full of skepticism with regard to Germany's ability to conduct herself as a democracy. "Perhaps," he said, "you may recall the story of the schoolboy who, beside himself with joy, says to his classmate: 'Hurrah, hurrah, the school is afire!'

" 'Are the teachers burning, too?' asks the friend.

" 'No,' the boy answers.

" 'Then the whole thing is no good,' retorts the other.

"You see," Simonsen went on, "as long as the German civil servants remain in their positions, nothing really new is going to happen in that country. The teachers have not caught fire."

It is not really a secret any longer that, in a way, Simonsen was

right. But there were other reasons than those mentioned here. We may have to return to that subject later.

My stay at home was important to me personally insofar as on this occasion the parents of my secret fiancee came to realize that they were destined to become my parents-in-law. We were, by now, twenty-one and seventeen years old respectively, and it was not altogether unreasonable that the parents on both sides should be made to face certain facts. We were not yet officially engaged but, little by little, the secret leaked out. My parents were exceedingly happy that such a lovely girl as Meta Schornstein was to be their daughter-in-law. Presumably, my future parents-in-law were somewhat less enthusiastic. But what could they do? Meta, as it happened, did not want anything beyond what I might be able to provide for her. And her "old folks"—they were then in their late forties—had no choice but to be satisfied with just that.

Oslo-Königsberg-Berlin: 1919-1921

In the spring of 1919, Dr. Schornstein resigned as Chief Rabbi in Copenhagen. Although he was only forty-eight years old, already in 1918 he was in poor health and therefore gave notice that he would quit as of January 1, 1920. Relations between him and the leaders of the community had not developed as smoothly as might have been expected when he had assumed the position in 1910, and by now he felt tired and worn out.

As chance would have it, in early 1919, he found himself in conflict with Danish authorities on account of a truly insignificant issue. Through the mail he had sent his relatives in Austria a very small quantity of rubber which was used for dentures, as a present. In Austria, this commodity could be traded for foodstuffs, which were extremely scarce in the hunger-ridden country. But there was a clause prohibiting the export of denture rubber from Denmark and, although Schornstein had mailed his gift altogether at his own expense and with no commercial profit involved, he had undoubtedly committed an offense. Schornstein, who had remained an Austrian citizen, was compelled to take the dire consequence

of this, and to resign. Judge Thorup, before whom all cases of this category were brought at the time, and who handled them with great severity, later in a statement intended for publication declared that Dr. Schornstein's violation of the export statutes concerned had been for purely altruistic reasons and thereby the judge in actual fact had fully rehabilitated the accused. The board of the community, which had already approved an annual pension to Schornstein, now agreed to honor the previous agreement through a once-for-all grant.

Soon afterwards, Schornstein left for Germany. He settled in Dresden, where his family followed him in October, 1919, and where the official engagement between his eldest daughter and me was announced. In the first round, however (in the spring of 1919), the sudden vacancy in the Chief Rabbi's office meant that Professor David Simonsen, who had resigned that post already in 1903, had to be called on in the difficult situation in which the community found itself with no authorized Chief Rabbi. Also the librarian and Talmudic scholar Josef Fischer was called upon to take charge of the ritual affairs within the domain of the office. But ordinary clerical matters were put into Simonsen's hands. The annual confirmation ceremony was approaching and, when Simonsen declared himself not strong enough to take on the burden of the remaining tuition or even all of the ceremony itself, I, being at home on leave between terms, was entrusted by the board with the lessons and with assisting Simonsen at the solemn event.

The active participation in the confirmation ceremony in Copenhagen in 1919 was overshadowed by another function which oddly and unexpectedly fell to me about a year later. Although I was but twenty-three years old, and had another year of study left, I was charged with the festive inauguration of the newly built synagogue in Oslo. The Hungarian-born Rabbi in Oslo was on extremely poor terms with the Norwegian language, and the prospect of having to speak in Norwegian at such a big and

solemn function, and in the presence of the representatives of the authorities and the general public, had a paralyzing effect on him and made him ask, in January, 1920, for immediate relief from his contract with the community, and to return whence he had come. So, there the Oslo community found itself with all plans ready for the great event, which was to take place on May 20th —but without a priest. It was most unfortunate for them, furthermore, that they did not feel that any of the Rabbis officiating in Scandinavia at that time was suitable for this particular purpose.

Copenhagen's new Rabbi as of January 1, 1920, had come from abroad and was linguistically ill-equipped. The rabbis in Stockholm and Gothenburg were too liberal in their religious outlook and behavior for the tastes of the Jews of Oslo—or Kristiania, as it was still called then—and there were other objections to the Rabbi from Malmo. But the chairman of the community, Axel Grün, a brother of my teacher Herman Grün in Copenhagen, knew that at the Berlin rabbinical seminar there was a student from Denmark whose studies were drawing near their end. Perhaps he might be used. He was certain to be able to speak Danish, which after all, was the tongue of the King of Norway. If the teachers of the seminar would agree to furnish their only half-finished candidate with appropriate authorization, the community would have a way out of the embarrassing dilemma in which it found itself.

To make a long story short: The arrangement was settled, and one evening in May, 1920, seven venerable board members of the Jewish community were standing at Oslo's Eastern Railway Station in order to receive "the Rabbi of the congregation." All the gentlemen wore high silk hats and were wondering and worrying what the man they were so anxiously awaiting might look like and how presentable he might turn out to be. After all, quite something was at stake for a community which had up to then led a very quiet life, and which for the first time was now going to show its

face to the Norwegian public. Also, some of the board members had dedicated much time and energy to having the synagogue built with all details as beautiful and dignified as possible.

I must repeat once more that I was hardly twenty-three years old, and I must add that I didn't even look that age. As a matter of fact, I looked rather like a dish standing on its edge. Neither physically nor mentally did I boast an immediately impressive appearance.

The way I experienced my arrival in Oslo, I looked forward after a long day's journey to meeting those people who had entrusted to me the outstanding function which most Rabbis are never privileged to perform in their whole lives: the inauguration of a new House of the Lord. So, I got off the train, and noticed at a distance the seven gentlemen armed with their high silk hats. They, of course, did not notice me at all. They were looking for someone or other who would look like something or other.

At long last, I was the only arriving passenger left on the platform, and slowly it dawned upon the committee of honor that, no matter how improbable the fact, I must be the one who was to serve them in the capacity of a priest. With a quiver, they put their question, "Is it you, *you,* who is going to be our Rabbi?" I, of course, answered in the affirmative—and right away, one of the honorable board members passed out! He had been ready for much, but not for as little as all that. When after a while he had recovered and gotten to his feet again, it was possible to exchange the usual verbiage for occasions of this kind. I can still visualize the walk from the platform to the cars and the arrival at the hotel where a room had been reserved for me. It seemed to me that the expressions on the faces of the hotel staff indicated the astounded question: Is that thing there really supposed to be a rabbi?

In a sense, I wasn't really a rabbi yet. There was a year left to my final exam—if I could pass it at all. On the other hand,

quite a number of people still live in Oslo who are willing to testify that no one doubted during the inauguration ceremony that I was "really a rabbi." I went to the great event as calm and, if I may be permitted to say so, as unimpressed with the situation, as I have since gone to most solemn occasions—some of them on the really high level—at which I was to speak. The "grey fog" which is said to appear before so many people when they are called upon to speak, and which beclouds their minds so as to tie their tongues exactly when they should be set into motion, to the best of my memory never showed itself to me. It is true that some schoolmates, devoid of any sense of humor, told a story according to which, as a boy of thirteen, I had been told to say a few words in honor of one of the school's benefactors who had passed away, and that I had wound up the address by wishing him "a long and happy life."

It goes without saying that I can recall nothing of the kind ever having occurred, and that this whole anecdote is but the byproduct of yellow envy.

In Oslo, anyhow, I got along without any sort of haze. And once the whole affair had come to its end, such a shower of compliments and thanks descended upon my head that I was induced to think that I was a devil of a fellow. The board member who had taken up the horizontal position on the station platform at the mere sight of me, and who had, incidentally, been extremely kind to me during the days before the great event, told me on my departure that "it is better if something begins with skepticism and ends with enthusiasm, than the other way round." The old chairman, Axel Grün, requested permission to kiss my cheek, and he had been authorized by the board to ask me to accept all priestly functions at the services during the many Jewish holidays in the autumn. I was happy to accept, and had the opportunity to acquire considerable practical experience before I ever had been declared able to stand on my own and officially stamped

"fit and entitled to take up office as a rabbi."

This was how things stood in the summer of 1921. Before that, I had been through a hectic half year. The first three months I had spent at Königsberg, where I had won my Ph.D. at the university. My thesis, a textual criticism of some medieval manuscripts on the Hebrew verb, had been approved for defense by Professor Bergsträsser of the Berlin University. But he moved to Königsberg by the end of 1920, and I was forced to spend a part of the subsequent term at the university of that city. Here, then, I put the last touch to the thesis as well as to the subjects in which I had to undergo oral examination: Oriental Languages, Egyptology, and Philosophy. I had had rather good teachers in all these subjects; and in Königsberg I had the outstanding experience of attending philosophical lectures by a man who was fully qualified in the fields of philosophy and medicine alike, Professor Narziss Asch. Some students had the notion that his family name, in German provoking associations for a word indicating the buttocks, was a cry of woe on account of his first name, but I didn't care. Till this day, I am aware that his opinions, particularly in the field of the philosophy of volition, as well as his way of presenting them, have strongly influenced my own thinking and explanation of it.

My dissertation was printed. It had become difficult to have it published, because inflation had caused all prices to soar, and most expensive of all was print, which had to include German and Hebrew on the same pages. But it did appear—though it must be said that apart from me and possibly Professor Bergsträsser, whom I thanked in the introduction for inspiration and other help, hardly any living soul can have enjoyed making the acquaintance of "Mordechai Yaïr's Tenets on the Hebrew Verb." But, as already mentioned, at that time the Jewish communities attached major importance to the ability of their Rabbis to gain access to intellectual circles with the doctor's title as a key. So, it *had* to be

acquired. Personally, I have never cared a great deal one way or the other, particularly since I was elevated to the prestigious level of Chief Rabbi (in Danish *overrabbiner),* although I do admit that on short winter days there are advantages if you can make do with a title of a mere two syllables.

Unfortunately, I have not been quite able to rid myself of the habit of introducing myself as "Dr. Melchior." This I do, in particular, when I order a taxi. Since I am a major consumer of taxi rides, the result is that I am informed of the diseases and illnesses of all taxicab owners and drivers, and those of their good ladies as well, and I am asked incessantly for advice for pains in the back, blisters under the feet, and many other troublesome afflictions. One day not long ago, when I got into a cab and couldn't quite hide a rather violent cold in the head, the driver said, "Just imagine—so you can catch a cold, too, eh?" Let me admit that when on such occasions I inform the gentlemen concerned that I am not *that* kind of doctor, but only deal with mending souls, their esteem of me falls so drastically that one can almost hear the crash of something being dropped on the floor.

On one occasion this doctor's title caused a rather amusing episode. In May, 1921, between the conclusion of my university and seminar studies, respectively, I appeared before the medical board for men liable for military service. I had obtained the common postponement for students, but now it was to be decided whether I would be called up for half a year's or even a year's service. I did consider that there were fields where I might be of greater use to my country than the military and, after fifteen years of engagement, my fiancee and I actually thought the time had come to move on to the state of marriage. If, however, I were "taken" by the military medical board, plans in this respect could not be realized for the time being—or that at least was the common consensus in those days. Well, but here is what happened on the occasion concerned.

After the standard investigation of my physical peculiarities and abilities, the physician asked, "How old are you?"

"Twenty-four."

"What are you?"

"A Ph.D."

"What was your thesis about?"

"The Hebrew verb."

And then, with aplomb: "Oh good Lord, no! Out you are!"

So I left the "session," as it is called in Danish, as "permanently unfit for service." Reference was made, in my papers, to the medical advisor, paragraph this, section that. Later, I asked my private doctor to look it up. The natural uneasiness I felt upon learning that it concerned a heart condition was considerably relieved by the further comment that I could rest assured that it was definitely not dangerous at all. I have never quite been able to get rid of a notion that the army physician considered my brains rather than my heart to be the defective organ—but that he was good enough to spare me the humiliation of authorized documentation that there was something wrong in the uppermost part of my body.

And all this I owe to the Hebrew verb.

Then, in July, 1921, I obtained the coveted rabbinical diploma. Over the years the various phases of my studies had already been marked by a long succession of exams. Now there remained, apart from some minor tests, the all-decisive one: the detailed written papers on three questions concerning Jewish ritual practice. Once this hurdle was taken, the day for my formal authorization as a rabbi was fixed. It was July 10th, the anniversary of the death of the founder of the rabbinical seminar, Dr. Esriel Hildesheimer. As I was the sole student at the college passing his final exams that year, I was rather much in the center of the ceremony. After the diploma—in both Hebrew and German—had been handed to me, and it had been indicated that the seminar counted upon me to do it credit, since it had promoted my career to this point, it

was my turn to preach. The whole ceremony had the character of service. The text for this sermon I took from the Fourth Book of Moses, Chapter XVII, Verse 4, where it is said of the high priest that he "stood between the living and the dead." In true fact, it is the duty of a priest, particularly so of a Jewish priest, to stand between the living and the dead, to find the middle way between who and what *has* been—and this includes all that is called tradition—and whoever and whatever there *is,* that is, contemporary life and the needs and urges of living people. This sounds easier than it is, because there is an incessant tug-of-war going on between fanatical traditionalists on one side, and opponents of tradition on the other. In the inner circle of the rabbinical seminar there may well have been some who hoped that I would join the former group. But I do believe that I have been a credit to the name and honor of my college by taking the attitude (which has been mine in my spiritual and secular behavior) to stand *between* the living and the dead, to combine respect for the past with the clear understanding that the law, including the religious law, should stand in the service of life.

The First Post: 1922-1923

A month and a half after obtaining my degree, I carried home as a bride the girl who had kept her faith with me through so many years. The wedding was held in Dresden, where my parents-in-law had established their home. As was customary in Germany, the ceremony consisted of two parts. Since the religious wedding had no civil validity, we first had to go to the town hall to get married there, and then on the next day to celebrate the religious —to us, the "real" wedding. I am sorry to state that the secular ceremony impressed us rather as a circus performance. In any case, it provoked the bride's laughter to such an extent that the officiating mayor felt compelled to ask worriedly whether the bride was mature enough to marry. The religious ceremony took place in the home of the bride, with her own father officiating.

We have only happy memories of that day. They were not even clouded by an after-dinner speech which lasted for three quarters of an hour and threatened to spoil the whole schedule. It was my teacher from Berlin, Dr. Joseph Wohlgemuth, who took that long to explain the qualities of the bridegroom to the bride and her

family. It is on account of this experience that I myself never—or almost never—speak longer than half an hour on occasions of this kind.

I must admit that the term that I "carried home" my bride is not quite correct. As a matter of fact, I did not have a home for her. I had neither a flat nor an office. So it seemed as though there was a good deal of rashness about the whole thing. To compensate for this, we possessed a good deal of confidence that everything would come out right. We were prepared for modest beginnings. After all, for a while we might get a roof over our heads with my parents-in-law in Dresden as well as with my own parents in Copenhagen. And after our honeymoon trip—we were not going to renounce that—first of all, I did have an appointment for the holidays in Oslo, and there were even hints that they might appoint me as their permanent Rabbi there. However, nothing came of this. At a general meeting in the congregation, it was stated that they could not afford a rabbi, and that they would have to make do with the chazen, the precentor. Some years later, the Norwegian community decided, after all, to employ a rabbi. I am sorry to say that he was necessarily included in the disaster which, in the course of the German occupation of Norway, befell Norwegian Jewry. He was deported and became one of the countless victims of the Nazi holocaust. It stands to reason that, had I been appointed Rabbi in Oslo, these memoirs would never have been written.

Clearly, the most natural solution to my problem would have been my appointment as Second Rabbi in Copenhagen. But there was not any possibility of this. Chief Rabbi Dr. Friediger, who had taken up his office in Copenhagen in January, 1920, did not wish to have any fully ordained rabbi at his side. It is not intended to blame him here for his attitude. If one is in no position to defend oneself, one should not be exposed to criticism—at least not comparatively few years after the events concerned. Of course,

I did not approve of his attitude—and most certainly I do not either today. Particularly, I do not subscribe to his maxim that two Rabbis cannot cooperate harmoniously in the same community. Of course they can, if they want to. I had more understanding for the fact that, from the point of view of the language, he was in an unfortunate position compared with me. To him, Danish was an acquired, second-hand language—and what a difficult language Danish can be! Whereas to me, it was the mother tongue, *my* language. So he might have entertained some fear of disloyal competition, although I hoped most sincerely that in regard to me he would overcome any such apprehension.

But, apart from this, it should be said that it was not only Friediger's fault that I, the young Danish Rabbi, had to look for an office abroad. The board of the community doubtless were in accord with a widespread opinion in the congregation when it considered a rabbi of twenty-four as some sort of infant, who ought really first to learn to babble before he started speaking. To the community, I was "young Melchior," and that was to remain the view of me for a long time to come. By contrast to Dr. Friediger, whose outward appearance was of colossal dignity —tall, distinguished with an impressive, well-tended beard—I, so to speak, cut a figure without characteristics, beardless, skinny, and boyish, exactly so as to justify the fainting board member in Oslo as a fair proponent of public opinion.

I had to find consolation in a story from the sixteenth century, according to which the Spanish King had sent a young nobleman to Pope Sixtus V in order to forward his congratulations on the Pope's accession. When the Pope, annoyed that such a young man had been delegated, said, "What is your master's idea, sending me a beardless ambassador?" the young Spaniard replied, "If my master had known that your holiness measures dignity by the beard, he would have sent a billy goat."

Since there was no place for me in my own homeland, I had

to look for one elsewhere. In the East German province of Upper Silesia, after World War I, a plebiscite had been held to determine what parts of this originally Polish province were to be restored to resurrected Poland, and which were to remain German. The result had been that, generally speaking, the towns had voted in favor of Germany, whereas the rural districts chose Poland. At a time when the frontiers had not yet been decided upon, I was offered the rabbi's office in the small Upper Silesian community in the town of Tarnowitz. There were some fifteen thousand inhabitants, of whom four hundred to five hundred were Jews. There was some worry lest the town, despite a 97 per cent majority in favor of Germany, might be annexed to Poland, since its surrounding territory had produced a similar majority preferring just that. But it was still hoped that the outcome would be in favor of Germany.

In this context, it should be remembered that at that time—the winter of 1921-1922—German Jews were still German to the bone. Why, more than that! To the German-Jewish imagination, Poland was the worst anti-Semitic country one could think of—a country where for centuries hundreds of thousands of Jews had been exposed to pogroms, and from where anybody who had the slightest opportunity had attempted to flee as long as anyone could remember. True, in a very distant past, during the Crusades, when Jews had been fleeing *from* Germany *to* Poland, they had been hospitably received there. But this was too long ago to count, and the very thought that a new borderline might leave them on the Polish side of the boundary was horrifying beyond words to the Jews of Germany. If any such thing were to happen, they would rather leave the district and move to Germany. This, at least, was the predominant mood in the plebiscite region.

Despite the uncertain political situation, I made up my mind to follow the call to Tarnowitz, so as to make a start at all. This was January, 1922, and my wife expected to be confined about the

end of May. The consideration of getting a home enjoyed first priority. So, we moved to the southeastern corner of Germany, to an area which at the beginning seemed to us to be some sort of Siberia. That was how cold it was there, and how undescribably devoid the landscape was of any beauty. But the people were extremely nice. They were busy encouraging each other with regard to what the future might bring and, since they were most eager to get a rabbi and religious teacher, leading members of the community insisted to us that, even if the town were to be annexed to Poland, they would remain there in any circumstances. On our arrival, we were received with open arms. No board member passed out. To the contrary! It was, I think, considered rather complimentary when some people felt that I "looked like a Protestant clergyman." Upper Silesia was 90 per cent Catholic. The rest were minorities, part Lutheran, part Jewish; and there was a certain solidarity between the minorities. So, there, my undignified appearance was considered dignified enough.

Although this whole splendid Tarnowitz business lasted a mere fourteen months, and although in the middle of those months we had (hardly yet settled in our home) to move to a new flat, we have good reason to think of our first rabbinical year with deep appreciation. I explicitly say *"our* first rabbinical year," because, in true fact, we were both, then as now, preoccupied with the calling. Whenever I have held the Rabbi's office, my wife has been my Assisting Rabbi. In particular, she has taken upon herself an abundance of social and spiritual tasks, to which she brought a wonderful mind and personality and a truly rare ability to talk to people and make them feel that, in her, they had found a fellow being whose very heartbeat was motivated by sympathy for them. The grateful love flowing toward her in the Jewish community of Copenhagen was fully hers already in Tarnowitz. She was universally beloved, just as I was respected for what I was able to do as a priest and a teacher.

At the time of the Weimar Republic, it was the Rabbi's duty to provide the religious education for Jewish high school students up to two years before graduation, and, for the latter occasion, to hold religious exams with them. When scripture lessons began, classes were split into three to the extent that there were sufficient pupils for special lessons on behalf of the religious denominations concerned. Thus, I became involved in an activity which was to be of overwhelming importance to my own further development. As is known, high school students belong to the age group undergoing a personal religious crisis. These are the years of frequent rejection of established authority—parents, teachers, God Himself. The religious teacher, then, is often viewed as the hostile power against whom doubts, irony, skepticism are discharged, often as though they were live munitions. And whereas I unreservedly admit that I have shown little ability as a teacher for younger pupils, I venture to think that I have been more successful with the older groups. As it is my general inclination to give tit for tat, I did just that with the high school students at Tarnowitz. They got as good as they gave. And what mattered more: I do think that I was capable of *explaining* religious thoughts and customs to them, insofar as such things can be explained at all. It is self-evident that I can *provide proof* neither of the existence of God, nor of an eternal life. For the mysteries inherent in any religion are also in Judaism which is, otherwise, so crystal clear. But in many respects, the students, despite all, felt attracted and satisfied, and this was a source of great happiness to their teacher.

During our time at Tarnowitz, our eldest son was born. In his life, then, Tarnowitz plays the same part as Fredericia does in mine. From Tarnowitz, strong ties went out to the numerous Jewish communities, large and small, in all of Upper Silesia. I became a member of the district's rabbinical association, and once every three months I would meet with half a dozen colleagues from other communities for deliberations on theoretical and practical

issues. I had great veneration for the Chief Rabbi of the neighboring town, Beuthen, whose name was Dr. Kopfstein, and whose community, which numbered four to five thousand souls, employed three Rabbis with him as Number One. He was a man of such tremendous dignity in his outward appearance that, in comparison, even Friediger in Copenhagen would seem to be an advertising pillar next to that city's famed Round Tower.

Undeniably, however, dear Dr. Kopfstein was rather self-centered. No matter whether you started a conversation with him on the subjects of the winds or the weather, the sun, the moon, the stars, or the Lord above, world, worm, or man, unfailingly you would find after a few minutes that you had reverted to the subject of Kopfstein. He attached the greatest weight to his title of Chief Rabbi, in German preferably called *Gemeinderabbiner* (Community Rabbi) in contrast to rabbis within more limited and semi-private fields, who are simply called *Rabbiner.* If anyone happened merely to address him as *Herr Rabbiner,* he would immediately produce a story about some occasion at which he had surprised others by the opinions he expressed which had provoked the reaction, "But Herr Oberrabbiner, do you really think so, Herr Oberrabbiner?" In this way, he would knock into the head of the presumptuous person concerned that he was face to face with a real live Chief Rabbi.

I visited him regularly, and I did hear and learn a great deal from him. A couple of minutes after my arrival he would ask, "Tell me, dear colleague, what was your sermon last Sabbath?"

When this happened the first time, I struck the appropriate pose and pointed my lips for a full account of the words of wisdom and the grandiose new thoughts which I had managed to extract from the Scriptures. But I did not get beyond the preliminary run. As it turned out, Kopfstein's original question was merely the introduction, the continuation of which was, "You may be interested in hearing, first, what *my* sermon was, or aren't you?"

Why, there could be but one answer to that, and for the next hour or so, I would be listening to the second and enlarged edition of his sermon. That, to be sure, did me no harm since, as far as I could judge, he was a great preacher, whose words were supported by great rhetorical ability and much experience in life, the combination of which is one of the secrets behind preaching at service. But it would have been useful if there had been an opportunity to tell him of one's own efforts in order to learn from his comments or criticism. We never got as far as that.

On one occasion, I was almost embarrassed by the kindness he felt and displayed towards me. He came to Tarnowitz when our son was to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. He and I spoke at the lunch after the ceremony, as did some of the lay guests. *He* spoke marvelously, whereas I was unsure and groping—it was the first large party ever in our home, and I had not yet acquired confidence with this sort of event. But afterwards Kopfstein told me, "There will always be a difference whether it is you or I who is speaking, or one of the others. The two of us know how to handle ourselves, but they just do *not*." I have never been able to find out whether there was irony, consolation, or true conviction in these words. Obviously, I would like to think it was the latter, but I dare not quite exclude the other possibilities.

The friendship with Kopfstein was of direct consequence to me because, during the illness of one of the other Rabbis in Beuthen, I was called there to take over the religious lessons at the four high schools. In this way, I gained rich experience in this particularly important field and, especially, I got into contact with quite a number of people in this large neighboring community. This was to bear fruit a few years later.

Meanwhile, Tarnowitz got her political verdict. The town and the surroundings were awarded to Poland. It was now to be seen what was the true value of the promises that, in all circumstances, the Jews would remain there and maintain the life of the com-

munity. Well, the promises were *not* kept! Right after the entry of Polish troops and civilian authorities in the summer of 1922, mass flight to Germany began. It involved Christians as well as Jews. But things went as they had to: The Christian (in this case Catholic) community was large enough to survive this reduction in its human capital, but to the Protestant and Jewish congregations the decimation was downright disastrous. An additional difficulty was that, for a transitory period, German currency was to remain valid in the new Polish districts—and German currency was deteriorating from day to day. The ghost of inflation, with its rattling grin, scared the guts out of wage and salary earners, savers, and small capitalists. It had not yet reached its crazy final stage, when it became clear to everybody that it was the result of a conscious, premeditated financial policy which was aimed at freeing Germany from her debts and obligations. But this controlled, daily decrease in the value of money made everything utterly hopeless to people with regular incomes. As long as there still seemed reason to hope that the fall might be halted and followed by a revaluation, no one was prepared to add a dime to our salaries. We began to starve, and several months went by during which literally we had more to drink—some of the Jews of Tarnowitz were distillers—than to eat. Of course, the total disintegration of the German mark was a catastrophe also to the population in Germany proper and, therefore, also to those families who had fled to Germany.

To those who did not live through the witches' dance to the accompaniment of inflation, which turned all standards upside down, the following story may convey some of the impact. My father-in-law, upon moving to Dresden in 1919, had bought a house, a very beautiful and well-kept three-story building, for about 200,000 marks. When, one day, he was offered a million for it, he was so overwhelmed as to accept right away. But instead of investing the sum in other property without delay, he kept the

money for a few days. By then, in order to get anything at all in return, he had to agree, in hot haste, to acquire an old, battered automobile. For this, soon afterwards, he was offered five million, still a sizable profit! But, alas, this money, too, was permitted to lie fallow for a short time, and then . . . that sufficed for the acquisition of—a roll. So, here you really had inflation for all your money's worth: A house sold for a bit of bread.

On the whole, 1922, in many respects, was an ill-omened year. To us who had survived the war years and at war's end had let ourselves be lulled by the hope that everything was going to be well now, it was bitter to face up to the developing hard reality. In June, 1922, the foreign minister of Germany, Walther Rathenau, was assassinated. He had been an outstanding personality, great in word and great in deed. But he was Jewish, and in the German underworld the poisonous seed was already sprouting which was soon to flourish under the name of Nazism. To the gangsters, it did not matter that Rathenau was the most highly gifted of all. The Jew already by that time was a virtual outlaw in Germany. In September, 1922, in Denmark the crash of the biggest bank—the Landmandsbanken—occurred; and even to us, who were abroad and far away, it was distressing that our beloved country had to suffer severe shocks.

I have the feeling that this chapter of my memoirs does not constitute very encouraging reading. But I shall not try to rewrite it, since a fresh start would most probably lead to the same result. These were, after all, not very encouraging times. If we, personally, got through them fairly easily, this was because we were young and happy newlyweds with—despite all—a happy vocation. Then as well as later, when we experienced slow and hard times, we managed to retain our confidence that miracles were still possible, and that some day the dark clouds would break.

Headmaster: 1923-1925

One December evening in 1922 a cable came from home with the news of my father's death. I went straight home, and was permitted to speak at his funeral. Shortly before, the headmaster of the Jewish boys' school, Hartvig Cohn, had died, too; and the school management took advantage of my presence in Copenhagen to negotiate with me about a possible take-over of the vacant position. I was offered the job as principal of a school whose seven classes had two hundred fifty pupils and a teaching staff of thirteen ladies and gentlemen, Jewish as well as Gentile. The way things had developed in Tarnowitz, after the surrender of the town to Poland, there was little hope left that my community would survive. In addition, there was my deep longing to return to Denmark where, despite many adversities which had befallen the Danish people, the atmosphere was incomparably less untoward than in newly Polish Upper Silesia. After very thorough consideration—together with my wife, of course—we decided to renounce the rabbinical vocation and to meet a pedagogical challenge which, re-

gardless of the manifold differences, was not quite unconnected with the lines of the rabbinate. The departure from Tarnowitz was hard. The community and the Rabbi's family had developed a sincere mutual friendship and, as things were, the parting of ways involved an element of desertion which depressed my own mind.

Had I been a young priest at twenty-four, I was an even younger headmaster at twenty-six. It was a mere twelve years since I had been a pupil at that school myself, and now I was back in the capacity of an autocrat. By this time, about 90 per cent of the pupils belonged to families of eastern European origin. In the community's school for girls, the Carolineskolen, a parallel situation prevailed. And their acclimatization in Denmark was still very incomplete. The kids' parents among themselves mainly spoke Yiddish, and they spoke Yiddish with the children as well, which could not but hamper the progress of the youngsters' Danish education. If a boy had been absent from school for a few days, the note he brought from home might well state a "toothpick" or some similarly grotesque affliction as the reason. The "picks" permeated the lives of the poor kids. But there were some pupils whose whole attitude bore witness to some progressing normalization at home. Clean, reasonably well-dressed boys, who had even done their homework properly, were not rare any longer. To the parents this generally involved a major effort: Their own absorptive process *plus* the care for the numerous children with which most of these homes were blessed.

My actual problem was the relationship with the teaching staff. The chasm between the late Hartvig Cohn, who had reached an age of about seventy-five and the new headmaster with his twenty-six years, was almost unbridgeable. This was true, for example, of little Miss Hansen, who had taught me writing during the very first lesson I had had at the school, in 1905. She and some of the other kindly souls met their new boss with rather frowning faces. Why, things even started with some sort of attempt on my administrative

life, in the form of a claim that Hartvig Cohn had, shortly before his death, promised them an increased number of weekly periods, and that they were "dead certain that I would feel honor bound to make good on this promise." All teachers were at that time paid according to weekly periods. They received 2 Dkr. a period, increasing every third year 25 øre, until a maximum of 3 Dkr. (then about 60 United States cents) was reached. Fully employed teachers could reach a maximum number of thirty-three weekly periods. Many had much fewer periods, but to them employment at the school was only part-time work.

My wife and I did our best to gain the good will of the teaching personnel. We had an adequate common room equipped for them. (Under Hartvig Cohn, Spartan style had prevailed.) We invited them to small parties in our home—an official residence on the old school grounds, with the rather hopeful name "the villa." We introduced a class teachers' system, and created the illusion among teachers that they were going to be very important. To an astonishing extent, we managed to establish a contact and, later, a genuine friendship with most of them. Unavoidably, difficult situations occurred once in a while. When the boys announced, with sarcastic delight, that they had seen that (male) teacher kiss this (female) teacher in a square in the city called "Trianglen," I had no choice but to ask the couple concerned, whom I had myself observed kissing each other in the school building as well, to renounce all demonstrations in public places. One teacher, thinking himself unobserved, had the habit of reading a newspaper during class. Another would correct and mark essays and compositions only under direct pressure. In fact, there were all the variations.

My own teaching subjects were Danish literature, German, and Hebrew—mainly in the later grades—and I choose to believe that part of the pupils felt, rightly, that they did learn something from me. I am less proud of the pedagogical principles to which I subscribed at the time. I was still quite a disciplinarian and refused to

the children many of the liberties which are, nowadays, natural at any school. It was my personal tragedy that I went around with the feeling of having betrayed my true vocation and of not being a real educator, and that subsequently no satisfaction with my work showed itself. Although I gave a few lectures in various Jewish organizations, access to the pulpit was denied to me, and I missed it badly.

In the spring of 1925, only two years after my entry into the function of headmaster, a conflict arose between the chairman of the school board and me. The cause of our controversy was utterly unconnected with the school. Nor was it to be found in our personal relations. It was exclusively a matter of our differing evaluations of a third person. The sharpness with which this Axel Abrahamsen, normally so very gentle toward me, blamed me for my attitude caused me both disgust and distress. It may well be that, had I otherwise felt satisfied with what I was doing, I would not have taken our clash for more than the truly insignificant issue which it was. As things were, it began to weigh heavily upon my mind. On my return home after my interchange with the chairman, I told my wife, "I'm going to quit and return to the rabbinical vocation."

Both were easier said than done. My contract with the school stipulated a year's notice from both sides. And the prospects for a suitable rabbinical office were not overwhelmingly bright. In our times, rabbis are scarce. Not only is it difficult to find adequate rabbis for the Jewish communities in Europe, but even in the United States, where salaries are very attractive, there is at present a demand which cannot be met for three hundred additional rabbis. All this was quite different forty years ago. When in 1920 the Chief Rabbi's office in Copenhagen was vacant, there were one hundred applicants. Some of them could not be seriously considered, but quite a few possessed high qualifications. Outstanding rabbis were sitting, in the hundreds of Jewish communities all over

Germany, in positions of secondary importance, and many of them never got beyond those.

One evening, a few days after the awkward altercation with Axel Abrahamsen, my wife and I were discussing the outlook for rabbinical office. On the local scene, I now had not only Friediger against me, but Axel Abrahamsen as well; and he, with his great insight into things as well as his enormous capacity for work, played a dominating role in the board of the community. Oslo had long since been written off, and the Swedish communities were out of the question, quite apart from the fact that there were no rabbinical vacancies in that country. Then there was Germany. We went through the list of the greater communities, and I found some of them too orthodox for my taste, others too liberal.

"But which community could suit you, then?" asked my wife.

And I answered, "If the Conservative Rabbi's office in Beuthen [Upper Silesia] were to become vacant, I think that would be the best one." But, as we knew, it was not vacant. However, a few words about Beuthen.

I have mentioned the town's name already, in connection with Chief Rabbi Dr. Kopfstein and my experiences as a substitute religious teacher at the high schools there. When Tarnowitz became Polish in 1922, Beuthen, only some seven miles away, remained German. It was a town with about one hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom some four thousand were Jewish. It was in the midst of the resource-rich Upper Silesian mining district. The community had in a peaceful and sensible manner established two synagogues; one, liberal; the other, conservative. There were many such communities in Germany. Their official name was *Einheitsgemeinden* (united congregations). They had joint boards and joint institutions. Separation affected only the synagogue service. Mostly, the liberal synagogues were bigger than the conservative ones. In Beuthen, the liberal synagogue, where Kopfstein officiated, had one thousand seats, the conservative one, three hundred. I was

well acquainted with this community and many of its members from the years 1922-1923, and I felt qualified to handle the conservative rabbinate, if and when it became vacant. Kopfstein had died shortly before, while the much younger Conservative Rabbi, Dr. Krakauer, had indirectly advanced inasmuch as the title of Chief Rabbi had only been awarded to Kopfstein personally, whereas his successor was a *Gemeinderabbiner* just as Krakauer himself.

The conversation with my wife about our future prospects took place on a Saturday night. On the subsequent Tuesday evening, I received a cable offering me the Conservative Rabbi's office in Beuthen! As it turned out, Krakauer and Kopfstein's successor, Rabbi Ludwig Golinski, did not get along well together, and Krakauer had sought and already obtained another position. The telegraphic communication from the community informed me that, if I would answer the call, they would not advertise the post as vacant at all. They further asked me to come to Beuthen immediately to negotiate details of the contract.

To a man who is aware of the erratic play of fate, the order of events in this case was bound to look like a direct and gracious intervention of Providence. Of course, anyone is entitled to his own reaction. At the time, the whole thing had an overwhelming impact.

However, there were difficulties to overcome on the home front. In Beuthen, they wanted me to take up office by September—it was already June—but the contract with the school provided for a year's notice. In a surprising manner, Axel Abrahamsen came to the rescue. Whereas several other members of the school board were inclined to insist on the terms of the contract, since, oddly enough, they considered my resignation a loss to the school, Abrahamsen declared that if my mind was set on the rabbinical vocation, then it must be unreasonable to place obstacles in my way. In the school board, too, his opinion carried decisive weight, so that I received a green light for my further career abroad. I have

never doubted that Abrahamsen's positive attitude on the issue of my resignation was based on the human consideration to keep the road ahead open to me. It was of secondary importance to me that he may also have pursued the aim of ridding himself of the responsibility for the loss to the community's school of a headmaster who was both Danish and Jewish. This responsibility, later, became perceptible, as it proved impossible to fill the position with a man who possessed both these qualities.

Despite all, my relations with Abrahamsen were never properly mended again. This I very much regret. He never forgave me for my first reaction upon the outbreak of our conflict, though, to my best judgment, it was exceedingly moderate in its verbal form. But as the uncrowned head of the community, he was not accustomed to opposition or criticism. Nevertheless my reverence for him, while he lived, and for his memory after his death in 1932, has ever remained the same. He was a proud man and a great man; in true fact, also a good man. Personalities of his caliber are rare, not only in our small Jewish community, but in the larger Danish nation.

It became possible, before I left Denmark in September, to appoint my successor as headmaster of the Jewish boys' school. In certain circles in the community it caused annoyance that this school was now, as had long been the case with the Carolineskolen, to have a non-Jewish headmaster. It was felt that a school of a particular religious coloring ought to have a principal belonging to the same faith. To me it would appear that the board of the school at that time deserves a compliment for placing pedagogical considerations above religious ones. (This is not to say that the latter should be of secondary importance.) Therefore, it was decided to entrust the Chief Rabbi with supervising the religious subjects as well as the school's other tasks and conduct in the religious field. These easy terms for the division of powers was agreed to by the new headmaster, until then high school teacher Harry Pihler.

It need not be any secret that Pihler would not have been elected

if the applicants had included a Jew with equal pedagogical qualifications. This, however, was not the case. And Pihler, who resigned in 1965, at the age of seventy, after forty years of service, merits confirmation that he has been of great value to the school. After an early phase, during which he rather closely followed the accustomed paths, he suddenly embarked upon the introduction of modern educational ideas, with greatly expanded liberties for pupils and such ample sexual enlightenment that quite a few parents might have learned something from their children. This trend caused a good many misgivings in the community. When after the return from our stay as refugees in Sweden, the schools were united, it was widely felt that, since the community was left only with this one school, it was dangerous to use it for experiments. But Pihler applied the brakes to an adequate extent and in adequate time; soon an agreed pace was found, and the school entered upon a development which, as far as I can see, is approved by the great majority of parents.

I feel entitled to state that the school's teachers, including the female ones, wept some genuine tears when I left. They had been having a pleasant time with me, particularly, perhaps, because I had been indulgent toward many of their whims. It was doubtless a gain to the school to get rid of a priest and get an educator instead. I am convinced that the fine reputation which this school, ever since the time of Hartvig Cohn, had enjoyed in professional circles has been maintained during the Pihler era.

The very fact that the Jewish school in Copenhagen had been taken over by a Gentile headmaster was on a later occasion, during a debate with Norwegian Nazis in Trondheim, to provide me with efficient counterblows to their usual attacks. But this happened about the time of the outbreak of World War II, and shall be recounted in its proper time.

Beuthen, Upper Silesia: 1925-1934

The departure from Copenhagen in 1925 aroused the same contradictory emotions as in similar previous instances. The sadness at leaving home and joy at returning to the vocation for which I had prepared myself through my prolonged studies performed an intricate dance with each other. Whereas the sadness was unqualified enough, the joy was leveled by a sense of uncertainty. For two and a half years, I had not practiced the German language, which now I was to use in sermons and in all my public functions. When originally I went to Berlin, I had known only the common Danish school German. Then it had not been too serious an offense to say "das Uhr," "der Milch," "das Universität," and more of the same brand. While there, I had acquired a fair knowledge of the language and had managed in Tarnowitz without notable difficulty. Still, the truth is that every person really possesses but one language—one which is fully mastered. Of course, one may become so clever in several languages as to produce the impression that mastery of each is complete. This in contrast to the Dane who said, "My relation with the English language is like that with my wife;

I love it, but I don't master it." Even so there are often difficulties with synonyms and technical terms. It is a fact that when one is to work out figures, one reverts to one's mother tongue. And if one is to give vent to anger with real vigor and pith, the same is doubly true. The mother tongue is the sole suitable instrument whenever the big drum is to be properly banged.

So, there I was with my loss of routine with the German language, and with the awareness that I was to officiate on a much bigger level than in my first community. On top of it all, I knew that my future colleague in Beuthen was German-born, and was known for his supreme command of the German language. He was as well versed in Goethe and Schiller as I was with Danish classics such as Holberg and Oehlenschläger. But what could I do with those in the big foreign world? In other words, I faced a severe, a dangerous challenge, and this in one of the most important and sensitive fields of the theological profession—that of the use of the language. There was nothing for it but to clench the teeth, relax again, and let come what might.

After my unfortunate first reception as a rabbi in Oslo, and the subsequent more successful one in Tarnowitz, the third one in Beuthen was to really count. Already during the negotiations about my contract, I had come to understand that the leading members of my new community were prominent figures in general public life. The Chairman, David Goldstein, was Managing Director of the *Oberschlesische Holzindustrie* and behaved like some minor Napoleon; although he, aged almost seventy, was not devoid of kind deference to the twenty-eight-year-old clergyman. His closest associates in the leadership of the community were prominently placed in the local coal and iron industries. I was most impressed by the Deputy Chairman, the constructor of bridges Max Grünwald, a silver-haired, Viking-like type, an impressive giant of a man, who soon let you feel that, because of his profession, he was accustomed to large-scale dealings and decisions. The sole excep-

tion to this principle was rabbinical salaries. This was understandable inasmuch as Germany had just got her inflation over with, and every single *Rentenmark* was looked upon as a major piece of property. Grünwald sat upon the community's treasury, and he sat there most heavily. Only at a later stage did he permit himself to relax a bit and lift the treasury's lid ever so little.

Among those receiving me was the Liberal Rabbi, Dr. Ludvig Golonski, who was then forty-five years old. When I arrived, he had been in Beuthen for only half a year. From his former service in the Czech-Bohemian town of Pilsen he had appropriated a professor's title, which had there been granted to anyone teaching at high school. Thus, he had in Pilsen had the same additional function as German rabbis—of teaching high school classes and preparing them for matriculation in the religious disciplines. His former community had been much more liberal than even the liberal sector of the Beuthen community; and it soon leaked out that the considerably greater demands on his working capacity in Beuthen weighed considerably upon him.

One must know, in this connection, that the Upper Silesian communities specialized in demands of this kind. The Bohemian habit of spending a few afternoon hours at a cafe, passing the time with newspaper reading and chess games, could not be transferred to Upper Silesia. The district was Catholic, the majority of the population very strict in religious observance.

The proverb *wie es sich christelt, so jüdelt es sich* (like Christian, like Jew) here proved fully valid. If the Christians displayed positive religiosity, the Jews felt it de rigeur to do likewise. And this attitude permeated far into the liberal layers of the community. To Professor Golonski, the so-to-speak relentless activity expected of Beuthen rabbis was so hard as to affect his health and cause him some rather severe depressions. Since to some extent we were to act as substitutes for each other in cases of need, a quite considerable load of work was placed on my still young shoulders. I was

made to feel that I had entered a position which demanded a seven-day work week.

Indeed, here we touch upon the real problem in this vocation for Christian ministers and Jewish rabbis alike. They never can take a day off. The biblical day of rest often is our most outstanding day of work. And we get no compensatory time throughout the week, unless we announce ourselves as "not at home" some day. Of course, one may try to set "reception hours" or "office hours"; but the true spiritual advisor, no doubt, ought to apply to himself what Esaiah says of the Lord in Chapter XV: He must always permit himself to be sought. Since it should always be possible to find him, he must permit himself to be called—even over the telephone—at any time, since he ought to be ever present and available.

The first years in Beuthen, for a good number of reasons, were a happy period. The natural resources of Upper Silesia, with the progressing economic stabilization, provided fair conditions for the population, and even the material conditions of salaried officials were considerably improved. *Ideal* conditions, the way I was confronted with them, could hardly have been more favorable. As time went by, the German language became ever easier for me to handle, so that I encountered trouble neither at preaching nor at teaching. Of all the eight and a half years during which I carried out my task in Beuthen, it can truly be said that they ripened and trained me in all the functions of the vocation to a degree which most probably exceeded anything I might have achieved if I had remained in the more pleasant and peaceful home groove. It became altogether clear to me that there are two all-decisive factors to a man of my—and possibly also other—academic vocations. One is what one knows before embarking on one's study; the other is what one learns from life after its completion. On the stage of life, congenital predisposition and experience gained through hard work are the things which carry you through challenge and conflict and all the

parts which you are called upon to play. You cannot study the subject and pass an exam in how to be a pastor and spiritual advisor. Nor can you learn in school how, without advance notice, to determine an attitude toward the problems and fate of individuals and whole groups of people. Anyway, you never get a real apprenticeship in these fields, nor can you possibly merit it. But it still means a great deal that you are taken to task in the school of life, that you acquire confidence and authority, that you become sufficiently self-confident to constitute authority to others.

During this period, I had the good fortune to deal with people so much ahead of me in wisdom that I could learn from them. This was the case with some of my colleagues and also with some of the laymen in my own community. Special pleasure is aroused by reminiscences of a man named Arnold Wiener. He was one of the wisest as well as one of the wittiest personalities I have ever encountered. He combined encyclopedic knowledge in several scientific fields with an extremely rare ability to formulate his words so pointedly that the impact on the mind and memory of whoever happened to listen was indelible. Still, our relationship was not too promising at first. When I came to Beuthen, he was fifty years old; and since his early youth he had been a Zionist of deep conviction and a highly gifted spokesman for the Zionist cause. I, on the other hand, was hardly interested in Zionism at all.

It should be recalled here that Zionism is the movement founded by Theodor Herzl at the First Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897. The Zionist program stated that the movement "strives to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law"—usually known as the "Jewish national home." This was what, through the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, the British government had pledged to realize. But even this rather historic document had not fired my Danish imagination. In my youthful superficiality it had seemed to me, first, that if one had Denmark as one's fatherland there was no reason to take a political interest in

Palestine; second, that any renaissance for Jews in Palestine would have to be brought about by direct intervention from Heavenly Powers. In other words, this was an utterly religious issue—or rather a Divine one—which man ought not to try to handle and thereby interfere with the Lord's personal production. In this attitude, I had been confirmed by the sharp rejection of political Zionism at the hands of the Berlin Rabbi Dr. Esra Munk. He would not even be swayed by the presence, among the various Zionist groups, of a specific religious faction which sought to combine the rebuilding of Palestine with the realization of the religious ideals.

Out of the approximately six hundred thousand Jews living in Germany by 1925, the large majority were of German-national orientation, whereas a minority of about one third were Zionists. It should be stressed that the Zionists, too, considered Germany as their fatherland. The struggle to transform Palestine into a Jewish national home was primarily aimed at providing those Jews—who were plentiful even before the Hitler era—who were homeless in their homelands, a country where they could not be placed outside the law, where pogroms could not be initiated against them, and from where they could not be banished. It is worth mentioning that in some of the new states established after World War I, the local Jewish populations had been constituted as national minorities. This was primarily true of Poland and Czechoslovakia. The six hundred thousand German Jews, including the Zionists among them, had not opted for any such status. But the Zionists had reserved the right to pursue policies on behalf of the cause for a Jewish rebirth in the ancient Jewish land, and there were cases, too, of individual Jewish emigration from Germany to Palestine. About those who in this manner took up a new life in the old country, Arnold Wiener used to say that they "had deserted to the front."

Obviously, to a man like Wiener and the group whose leader he was in the Beuthen community, I appeared to be inadequate and unreliable. The point was that, in my inaugural sermon, I had

stated that I did not intend to be the Rabbi of any party, but of the whole community. I thought that this sounded nice and uncontroversial. It did not, however, take into account that the German-national Jews did not at all consider themselves as a "party," but as "the community," whereas, in their eyes, the Zionists were a party. So, the former had delightedly devoured my words like a fat slice of layer cake intended for them, while the Zionists felt them to be like a kick across their shins. On other occasions, the sharp wit of Arnold Wiener descended upon my head. He declared that it was impossible to straddle the fence. And he ridiculed the neutralist fiction by telling the following fable: One day, the king of beasts felt indisposed by a cold, and asked a donkey to smell the royal breath and say what that was like.

The donkey answered, "I'm sorry to say, but your majesty's breath smells rather ill."

"What," roared the lion, "how dare you speak like this to your king? This is lese majesty." And he ate up the donkey.

Then he put the same question to a horse. The horse had seen the fate of the donkey, so it said, "Your majesty's breath is delicious and aromatic as the scent of roses."

"I have never heard anything like this," said the lion. "How dare you lie to your king? Only through your death can you atone for this offense."

After this, it was the fox's turn. "Well, fox," said the lion, "what do you think, how does my breath smell?"

To which the fox replied, "Your majesty, I humbly apologize, but I happen to suffer from such a cold in my head myself today that I can't smell anything at all."

Arnold Wiener, in this context, coined the term "neutralistic hay fever," and he clearly had no high opinion of persons afflicted with this disease. Including me.

However, the irony with which Zionists looked upon those who thought differently could, of course, in no way unhorse me. Cer-

tainly my position was delicate. As a Dane, I could not share the patriotic sentiments of German-national Jews. I did *understand* them, since I entertained corresponding feelings towards my own country. But I could not identify myself with them. To the contrary, it often seemed offensive and reprehensible to me that rabbis originating elewhere were often loudest in the fashionable display of chauvinism. Yet it was out of the question for me to join the Zionist party. Palestine, to me, remained a narrow issue, strictly limited to its religious aspects. Apart from this, too close association with the Zionists might provoke a suspicion among the German-national Jews that "the Danish Rabbi" was altogether out of place in a German Jewish community. Therefore, it seemed to me, my policy of neutrality was a necessity. No matter how difficult it might be to maneuver between Scylla and Charybdis, it had to be done. In time, I acquired some debating skill myself, and whatever Arnold Wiener and others gave, they got back with interest.

The different philosophies did not affect personal relations and, on the whole, we had a pleasant time together. What mattered to me was that I was able to go about my work as Rabbi in synagogue, school, and home in such a way as to render political problems secondary in importance. Many friendships flourished also with circles outside the Jewish community. At the four Beuthen high schools, there were over one hundred senior masters and masters. More or less without exception, they became my friends; frequently we entertained groups of them in our home. There was talk in Beuthen of a "holy trinity," a term indicating the tolerant good fellowship of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish clergy. Some of these people were amazingly flexible. One of the Catholic prelates even, in his younger days, had played the organ in the liberal synagogue. On his twenty-fifth anniversary as a divine, he was celebrated at a giant dinner party attended by eight hundred persons. On that occasion I delivered the main address. Referring to the priest of Midian, who became Moses' father-in-law and gave

him some useful advice, I said that, while the man we were honoring, being a Catholic priest, had valid excuses for not having a father-in-law, nevertheless, I had fatherly-in-law, why, almost fatherly feelings towards him! He was twenty-five years my elder, but Judaism is fifteen hundred years older than Christianity, hence I would like to say some kind words to him. It is noteworthy that, during the Weimar Republic, one could strike such a note and not run into trouble for it.

It probably advanced my development that I was often sent for by other communities in Upper Silesia, where I was wanted either as a lecturer or to speak at weddings and funerals or to preach. This happened in Gleiwitz, Hindenburg, Ratobor, Oppeln, Neisse. Even Breslau requested my visits but I was a particularly frequent guest in those Upper Silesian towns which had been ceded to Poland. During a prolonged period when the rabbinate in Kattowitz was vacant, I performed a great part of the rabbinical functions there; and, of course, my old community in Tarnowitz needed only utter the slightest hint to make me come and share the joys and sorrows of their life. Most interesting to me were my visits to Krakau. This Galician town, restored to Poland in 1918, was a center of Jewish life and culture. The two hundred thousand citizens included seventy thousand Jews, and it was only natural that they should, to a considerable degree, influence the whole life and character of the town. When in 1928 in Krakau I stood, for the first time, in the pulpit of a synagogue with an attendance of eleven hundred, I almost had to pinch my arm to make sure that I was not dreaming. I was not yet sufficiently removed from the Copenhagen school boy, to whom Krakau was as distant as the moon (as distant as the moon was *then*), not to have a feeling of unreality upon finding myself a central figure at a great service there. The many-sidedness of my vocation really became conspicuously evident on occasions like this. One day, I would officiate at a wedding in a Galician community, among Jews dressed in caftans and

the characteristic fur-trimmed hats. The next day, I might be standing as president in a German Jewish lodge, wearing white tie and tails, admitting new brothers in a surrounding marked in its whole appearance and manners by American and western European custom and culture.

Our family was growing, too. In 1927, the two boys we had brought with us to Beuthen got a little sister. Professor Simonsen's wife, Cora, sent us a letter of congratulation saying that in her parental home there had been two boys and a girl, and that was that. Despite our warm feelings and veneration for the fine and lovable old lady, we did not take her delicate hint. We have since augmented our family with another litter of three, again two boys and a girl; and Cora Simonsen, who to my regret did not live to see the births of the two last, would have had the complete analogy of the first and the last halves of the total as her sole consolation. Number one in that second half, too, saw the light of day in Beuthen, in 1929. We venture to think that, in this particular field, we have shown our communities a good example, although, of course, the result here was as in other cases: We *pointed* to a way, and we *followed* that way, while most others limited themselves to venting surprise at the road sign.

In several ways, 1929 was a revolutionary year for us. During that year, we joined the Zionist Federation. I'd better state right away that this was not an indication of the slightest change in our feelings towards our Danish fatherland. We had long since realized that the efforts for a Jewish renaissance on the soil of Palestine did not in any way affect the question of one's national solidarity with one's fatherland, not to mention one's duties and rights as a citizen. And I would add that this meaningful change of our political attitude was altogether independent and unaffected by Arnold Wiener's banter about "neutralistic hay fever." But the way things developed—internal things within the Jewish community—we felt that there was no alternative to this decision.

The actual event was that the Zionist group in Beuthen, in cooperation with other local Zionist groups all over Germany, undertook a special fund drive with the motto: Aid to the Jewish Child in Palestine. The raising of such funds had become imperative because the postwar years had seen a considerable immigration into Palestine of people of little means. Most of these comprised groups of pioneers who had taken up the challenge of the impoverished, obstinate soil, and it was they who were to water the deserts and drain the swamps. Many years would have to pass before they could expect any reasonable reward for their toil, and there were grounds for Jews—why, for men of good will altogether throughout the world—to take the cause of these pioneers to their hearts, and above all to contribute to a healthy growth, good upbringing, and adequate education for their children.

My wife and I, as was our habit, had undertaken to participate in the various arrangements planned in connection with this campaign. And then it was that the unlikely—indeed incredible—happened. The association of German-national Jews (the so-called Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger judischen Glaubens) which, in Beuthen as all over Germany, comprised a majority of the membership of the community, and without whose benevolence the fund drive was doomed to failure, declared that it denied any support to the campaign. And it recommended that its members do likewise. This, in itself, was tough. It was impossible to discover any justifiable reason why the children of people who were the object of the admiration of the whole civilized world should be denied due support for their education, merely because of some people's notion that such aid involved a conflict with their duties and sentiments toward Germany.

But even this was not all. What was worse was that these people declared without any sign of shame that, had it been a case of Jewish children in Bulgaria or Albania, they would have been glad to help. But in Palestine—that was out of the question. This whole

affair made us realize that the point in the political program of the Centralverein, which was formulated as *love for the fatherland* (it was, of course, in rather poor taste to have such a self-evident sentiment proclaimed as a political program) should have been called *hatred for Palestine*. In actual fact, it was a hatred without limits and without sense. My wife and I agreed that so much meanness on the part of one group was bound to drive us into the arms of the other.

In this way, we became Zionists. Zionists to us did not mean emigration to Palestine. We did have a fatherland and were not looking for another. Membership in the Zionist organization meant intensification of efforts in which we had been involved for a long time—efforts to support the rebuilding of Palestine. It was obvious that the means would have to come from Jews all over the world. The Jews in the United States, in South Africa, and in Europe alike should all feel fully obliged to make weighty contributions to this end. The Balfour Declaration had created a possibility and an opportunity which should not be missed. The Jewish name and honor as well as the welfare of numberless people were going to depend on the results of work over there. This should not be permitted to fail because of tepidity and halfheartedness. Not because of some people's horror of loosening their wallets a bit.

We had now, with more legitimacy than before, entered both the ideological and the material struggle for this great cause. The German-national Jews were deeply disappointed in view of their expectation that some day I would turn out to be as German as so many Hungarian rabbis had become. Arnold Wiener, on the other hand, was most enthusiastic and felt—with some exaggeration—that he had been "the midwife at this birth." I would like to stress that this whole development was in no way similar to any "revelation" a la Grundtvig. It was all much simpler. We had gradually come to realize with whom we could work, and with whom we could not. The continuing chain of events was to prove to us that

we had made our decision at the right moment—or, rather, at the last moment but one.

The year 1929 was to prove fateful in other respects, and with much more far-reaching effects. In Germany, the ghost of unemployment was haunting the whole country. Economic conditions, after a few years of stability, were now steadily deteriorating. Many enterprises ran into difficulties, and things got really bad when one of the big so-called D-banks, the Darmstädter- und Nationalbank, suspended payments. Countless big and small businessmen were dragged along in the crash. In our circle it was felt to be a particularly hard blow when the mighty concern Oberschlesische Holzindustrie, whose managing director was chairman of the Beuthen Jewish community, went bankrupt. One of the managers of the firm, a man of bubbling vitality and great ability, was just preparing the celebration of his fiftieth birthday with all the festivity to which he was accustomed. He tried to remain cheerful and encourage those who came to congratulate or commiserate by saying, "Don't worry, each time I complete fifty years, I go bankrupt." But all this could not obscure the depressing fact that the fall of this stout trunk and the unavoidable death of the many smaller saplings surrounding it shook the economic foundations of the whole community. This community, like most in continental Europe, based its existence on taxation of its members. In Beuthen, as well as in Copenhagen, this taxation far exceeded the common church tax. The many economic disasters of 1929 signaled the beginning of a decline in the strength of the community which was to reach its first climax in 1933.

Still, for yet another while the community managed to fulfill its obligations, and it was inclined to view the worsening times as a passing phenomenon. Nobody seriously believed that Germany, so rich in so many respects, would not eventually ride out the gale and soon create improved conditions in the field of employment. Even the darkening clouds which were gathering on the political

skies were considered temporary. The Hitler party, this hodge podge of right-wing nationalistic and leftist Socialist elements—this abnormal collection of all dissatisfied, cantankerous and asocial persons—just about that time achieved sensational gains in the parliamentary elections. During that first round, I think they increased their representation from twelve to more than one hundred Reichstag seats, and the German Jews were made to shiver. Still, life went on as usual. After all, despite their substantial progress, the Nazis were not even approaching the status of a parliamentary majority.

But as weeks turned into months, and months into years, one could no longer close one's eyes to the fact that one was living on the edge of a volcano. The Centralverein had an opinion poll taken to throw light on the popular German attitude to the revival by the Nazis of "the Jewish question." The result was disheartening beyond imagination. Of the German population, then sixty-five million people, fifty-five million had to be ranked as clearly "incurable" anti-Semites, and out of the remaining ten million Germans, eight million had to be considered as, at best, "unreliable." Millions of marks had been spent on the Jewish side in order to enlighten the population against mendacious anti-Semitic propaganda. The money was thrown away. You might as well have let single drops of water fall upon a red-hot stone. From one day to the next, the downright criminals strengthened their grip on the Nazi party. Swastika-embellished, howling crowds flowed through the streets, screaming vicious songs about how Jewish blood was to squirt from the knives so as to rid Germany of her obligations under the Versailles peace treaty. On certain occasions, all Jewish shop windows were smashed. In Upper Silesia, as in the rest of Germany, desecrations of Jewish cemeteries were the order of the day. Meanwhile, the unemployment figure reached seven million, and since the Communist Party had proved incapable of instigating a revolution, a considerable portion of its members switched over to Na-

tional Socialism. It was not merely a figure of speech when it was said how difficult it was to determine the borderline between these two parties with their revolutionary and subversive programs.

In the early summer of 1932, the Social Democratic-Liberal governments of Prussia and the "Reich" met their ignominious death. The coup arranged by Von Papen did not encounter the slightest resistance, not even his takeover of police headquarters in Berlin. That spring day, when the Von Papen-Schleicher revolt became a fact, the hopes of German Jewry for a continued bearable existence were reduced to zero. Power had, as yet, been grabbed merely by nationalist, right-wing parties. Officially it was asserted that this aimed exactly at forestalling a Nazi revolution. But it was impossible to rid oneself of the feeling that all this was but an intermezzo, and that much worse was soon to follow. In the final event, it was none other than Von Papen who maneuvered Hitler into power. And this came even at a moment when there were slight indications that the crest of the Nazi wave might recede.

In November, 1932, I was in Copenhagen to give some lectures before Jewish organizations. Of course the situation in Germany was on everybody's agenda. By innate disposition I am an optimist and always ready to view life as brightly as possible. But my optimism has never been of the silly type which closes the eyes and refuses to acknowledge dangers, refuses to see shadows and gloom entering the picture. As things were, I felt bound to inform the Jews in Copenhagen of the grave plight of German Jewry, and I expressed the conviction that, if Hitler were to come into power, the German Jews would lose their rights as German citizens and find themselves placed outside the law. This gloomy prophecy—sadly enough, one didn't have to be a prophet to pronounce it—earned me pummelings and harsh words. Chief Rabbi Dr. Friediger, in the subsequent discussion, criticized me for my pessimism and declared, "Israel has never listened to prophets boding ill." He felt it should be forbidden to speak in such discouraging tones

as I had done, and the audience more or less joined him in his opinion. I could not do much about that, but I experienced the dawning of some understanding of the definition which has it that optimism is the bright view with which you look upon other people's anxieties.

On the way back to Beuthen I got hold of a copy of that day's *Berliner Tageblatt*. Here, for the first time, the so-called Boxheimer documents were published, among whose authors was the later German plenipotentiary in Denmark, Werner Best. These papers disclosed the plans of the Nazis once they seized power. The Jews, playing a central role in this program of action, were to lose their rights as German citizens. But that was only the beginning. No "Aryan" Germans were to have any dealings with them. They should not be permitted to buy medicine, to own a telephone, to use a tram, to enter public parks, or similar privileges. It was such consistently diabolical material as to surpass all earlier records set by human malice. One could only try to sustain the hope that these criminal fanatics would never get into power in Germany.

Well, hopes aside, on January 30, 1933, they did ascend to power. The events of that and the subsequent days are not to be accounted for in these memoirs. Closer examination of all this belongs to other works. I merely want to mention immediate Jewish reactions. The first moment's consternation, the spreading sinister atmosphere, are self-evident. But it was remarkable how quickly man's deep inclination to hope for the best, despite all, surfaced again. "I wonder if this Adolf Hitler is not going to prove a mere windbag." "Now that the Nazis have to act under responsibility, mark well *international* responsibility, they have to change their tune." "Strict masters don't rule long." "It has all natural limits." This and similar samples of wisdom constituted the daily dose of sedatives.

In the great world outside during those days, there was a degree of concern—but not more than that—caused by the changes of

political system in Germany. Only one of the prominent commentators, the editor of the Gothenburg *Goteborgs Handels- och Sjofartstidningen*, Torgny Segerstedt, perceived clearly what was about to happen and had the courage to say it. In the historic article in his "Today" column of February 3, 1933, there were the unforgettable sentences saying how unforgivable it was that the world press and world policy would now have to be preoccupied with such a "figure" as Adolf Hitler. "Herr Hitler is an insult," Segerstedt concluded. *He* realized it, and of course in a way the Jews did as well. But they were expecting some sort of miracle, waiting for the German people to rid themselves, in time, of the tyrants, or for the powers to use their potential to have things put in order. The periodical of the German-national Jews even made a pronouncement, which one may either admire for its naïve ingenuousness or brand for its stupidity: "We shall be able to go on *struggling* to maintain our justly acquired rights." Why, sure! "Struggling!"

Throughout the whole subsequent development, this was the most striking factor: The German Jews never had a chance to affect or influence anything to any extent. They had no choice but to stand still and absorb the blows raining down upon their heads. Neither when they were hit by the initial boycott, nor when they found themselves exposed to successive decrees, first depriving them of civil rights, and then aiming at destroying their human dignity, were they able to attempt any self-defense. Certainly, they could undertake nothing of the kind when they were herded aboard cattle wagons and carried to the death factories. Deliberately, I speak of measures *aiming* at depriving them of human dignity, because *that* aim could not be realized. Unforgettable to all who lived through those times, indeed chiseled into our memories, stand the headlines from the Zionist *Jüdische Rundschau:* WEAR PROUDLY THE YELLOW STAR! and SAY YES TO JUDAISM! Unforgettable the both impassioned and sober appeal of the Berlin Rabbi Leo Baeck and the

philosopher Martin Buber to the Jewish population not to be cowed in their souls. Somewhat disheartening and wretched the pastoral letter of the extreme orthodoxy: "All this descends upon our heads because of our sins." That was one way to put it, too. And thus, the first of April arrived.

The Nazi government had observed that the *Jewish world press* printed reports from Germany which sounded the alarm with regard to the immediate fate of German Jewry. In fact, right after January 30th, frightful events occurred. Every now and then there were processions in the street, where one or several civilians, mostly Jews, were marched off surrounded by armed men. Clearly, they had been seized for beatings, imprisonment, or in order to be taken to "one of those new camps"—this was how the concentration camps appeared on the German map. In enforced passivity, one watched these street scenes. But news of the numerous cases of authorized or unofficial torture leaked out to foreign countries, and the Nazis, who were masters in psychological warfare, immediately stamped any claim of outrage against Jews as *Greuelmärchen.* Since it could be none other than the German Jews who were spreading these "lies" all over the world, they had to be punished, of course. During the last week of March, it was decided that, as of Saturday, April 1st, at 10 a.m., the Jews were to be subjected to a German boycott. From that moment, no "Aryan" German was to be permitted to enter a Jewish shop, consult a Jewish doctor or lawyer, or have any dealings with a Jew or a Jewish family. For violation of this boycott, Germans were threatened with expulsion from the "German people's community" and, since guards were posted outside all houses where Jews were living, there was little chance that anyone would dare defy the prohibition.

It goes without saying that the rabbinical vocation, particularly preaching, presented altogether new challenges in these circumstances. Personally, I was in a favorable position, because I was not a German. True, the nearest Danish representative, a Vice

Consul, resided in Breslau, one hundred and fifteen miles away, so he might have had difficulty hearing me cry for help. But the very fact that I was Danish made me draw myself up and gave me strength. To the best of my ability, I tried to keep up the spirits of my congregation.

I must record a saddening fact. It has been mentioned above that I had established friendly relations with the numerous senior masters at the Beuthen high schools. I am sorry to state that, after January 30, 1933, there were but few of them who deigned to greet me. I do not think that a majority of these nice and simple teachers had turned Nazi overnight. They just did not *dare* greet me or answer my greetings for fear there was a traitor in their midst who might report to some authority that there was collusion between them and the Jew. But it was a disgraceful feeling, during breaks, to find oneself in virtually complete isolation in the staff room.

About that time I had given a young Catholic master, who was preparing for additional exams, quite a few private lessons in Hebrew. In an odd, or perhaps miraculous way, I had even become the direct reason for the extraordinarily fine result he obtained. The day before the written examination, I had asked him if he was familiar with the Sixth Chapter of the book of Isaiah and, when he replied in the negative, I had said that we had better look at it together, since one could not present oneself for examination when one was ignorant of Isaiah, VI. The next afternoon he came to see me, beaming with joy: The subject had been Isaiah, VI. He asked me what he owed me for our many lessons together.

I answered, "You owe me to return my greeting when we happen to meet on the street." He accepted with no hesitation, and I feel duty bound to record that, whenever we met, he would not only answer my greeting but even, energetically waving his broad-brimmed Catholic priestly hat, would anticipate it.

The boycott fixed for April 1st caused plenty of concern in

advance. What was this going to be like? How long would it last? Was it, God forbid, to be permanent? All Jewish businessmen made up their minds not to open their shops and offices at all that day. If the row was to begin at 10 o'clock, one might as well stay away altogether. Some of these people were religious Jews whose firms would remain closed on Saturdays anyway.

Two aspects had to be especially considered. One was the Sabbath service, which usually lasted from 8:30 to 11 or 11:30 a.m. It had to be started early enough for everybody to be indoors in their homes well before 10. Of course, no one wanted to move around in the streets after h-hour.

The other and far more serious issue was that of Jewish pupils and students in public schools. What was to be their lot, once the fateful hour struck? It was feared that they would be seriously molested, so I did not feel merely that they ought not to go to school that day, but I went to see the principals of all four high schools to request that the kids concerned be exempted from having to appear. It seemed too risky to keep them at home arbitrarily. Considering the general atmosphere, this might have been used as a pretext for their expulsion from the schools. Three of the principals showed understanding and without much discussion granted my request.

It was different at the fourth high school, the Realgymnasium. The principal's name there was Hackauf. He was most mediocre and, at oral matriculation examinations, had blundered so badly that in the presence of the whole teaching staff, he had been severely reproached by the *Oberschulrat* presiding over the board supervising the exams. It was obvious to all that he had obtained his position through patronage. The breakthrough of Nazism provided him the chance to compensate for what he was lacking in intelligence. On the 30th of January, he had without delay equipped himself with an outsize buttonhole swastika, and his always petty-officer-like manner had been further accentuated. I visited

him too, that Friday, March 31st, with the same request that the Jewish students be exempted from having to appear the next day. The reply was a thundering "no." This was completely out of the question. When I referred to the risk that there might occur maltreatment of Jewish boys at the hands of their fellow students, Dr. Hackauf gave me the reply which is the reason why his name is mentioned in this book. He said, verbatim, "If the Jewish pupils are maltreated, I shall personally see to it that they *can leave the school building* through a side door."

I thought I had misheard him. The implication was that, first, the kids were to take their thrashing, and then, *they* were to be permitted to leave through back doors. All my Danish and my Jewish dignity was aroused, and I said, "Dr. Hackauf, in that case, the pupils are going to stay at home—on my responsibility. I shall within this very hour cable your Oberschulrat my decision." That last remark struck home. I was positive that Dr. Hackauf wanted as little discussion as possible with his Oberschulrat. The vital point was that this school's pupils, too, should remain at home on the day of the boycott, without any subsequent further discussion.

Then, that very Saturday morning, it was announced that the boycott was to be enforced only this one day. The outside world had produced a much stronger reaction than at the time of the seizure of power in January. The Nazis were so freshly established as the governing party that they did not yet dare ignore the violent reaction in world public opinion. So, it was to be just one day's boycott—or that is what they said. But obviously, here, if ever, Goethe's word of "the spirits, which I invoked, I now can't dispose of" came true. Consciously and unconsciously, the boycott was now in the blood of "Aryans" and Jews alike. For a long time, Aryans would not venture into a Jewish shop or to Jewish professionals. And the Jews could be relied upon not to grumble. To them happiness in life now consisted in the absolutely negative hope that they would come to the least possible harm. No longer

could they entertain any expectation of positive blessings, right, or justice, or only the simplest decency on the part of their fellow men. A chapter of their history, which had lasted for about two thousand years, was approaching its end. The sun was about to sink into a swamp.

Ever since January 30th, German Jews had been looking around for emigration possibilities to other countries. Naturally, after boycott day, their inclination in this direction increased rapidly. It was not as easy as it sounds to get out of Germany or into other countries. Changes of home within the same town cost money; migration to foreign lands took fortunes. The poor ones had not a chance. There were no European countries ready to receive them. They had too big unemployment troubles of their own. On top of this, they were somewhat fearful of Hitler's frown. The American quota was quickly exhausted. All that remained were distant, more or less exotic countries—and then, of course, Palestine. But here, there was a British Mandatory administration, which even then, regardless of the Balfour Declaration and the obligations towards the Jews incorporated in the Mandate, applied restrictions to the immigration of Jews. To the more well-to-do Jews, prospects were somewhat better. To be sure, they could take but a fraction of their property out of Germany. But it might always suffice for their temporary support, and there were even some European states which would admit them provided some local citizen would take upon himself to guarantee that they would not become a public burden. Above all, provided they possessed £1,000—they were called thousand-pound-capitalists—they could enter Palestine unaffected by immigration restrictions. Many good old anti-Zionists thus discovered that the rebuilding of Palestine by the Zionists, despite the opposition on the part of the German-national Jews now desperately in a quandary, was good for something after all. They were not in love with Palestine, but it did serve them as a port of refuge. The number of arrivals in Palestine was so big, in

time, that the joking suggestion was made—Jews never quite stop making jokes—that a statue of Adolf Hitler should be erected in Tel Aviv with the inscription *Unser He(e)rführer.* It was a pun, meaning either "our commander-in-chief" or "the man who brought us here."

The emigration of the better situated had disastrous consequences to the economy of the Jewish communities. In Beuthen, the belt had to be tightened to such an extent that the board, without giving me notice, asked me to see whether I could find a position in my homeland. My colleague, Professor Golinsky, was in his mid-fifties and, above all, a German citizen. Also, he was infirm of health. There was little hope that he might find adequate employment in another country. But it was thought that such hope existed in my case. Thus, contact was made with the board of the Jewish community in Copenhagen, with the aim of having me appointed to a position at home. My wife went to Denmark to sound out the board and was received with a measure of kindness and understanding. It was agreed that, in June, I should come to Copenhagen myself for direct negotiation.

I was, by then, thirty-six years old—exactly Dr. Friediger's age at the time of his appointment to the chief rabbinate. I had acquired experience rendering me versatile in all departments of the rabbinical vocation. I, therefore, went to Copenhagen with rather substantial hope that now I would obtain the office of Second Rabbi in the community, for which I had been too green and inexperienced in 1921. But, alas, the attempt failed again. The board did not feel that they should appoint a second rabbi against Dr. Friediger's express wish. Dr. Friediger was unyielding on this score, and all the board could offer me was a patched-together job as leader of the school for religious education, writer of editorials in the community's semi-official monthly *Jodisk Familieblad,* and *second librarian.* The Supreme Court barrister C. B. Henriques, who had become chairman of the board, would have liked to

oblige me and fulfill my expectations. But the other board members were deterred by the memories of the Lewenstein-Schornstein feud and, apart from their deference to Friediger's wishes, did not want to risk another theological duel. Their offer was unsatisfactory on principle, and very much so economically. Deeply disappointed, I wound up the final session with the full board and Dr. Friediger by saying, "Thank you for meeting me for this deliberation. But in the circumstances, I prefer to remain with the risks and the miseries of life in Beuthen." Whereupon I went back—to a nice reception by the community leaders in Beuthen, who may have been disappointed that I had not succeeded in finding a position with my Danish home congregation, but pretended not to be.

Well, my pride did not last beyond November of that year. The community's economy deteriorated further, and other factors began to interfere with considerable effect. Repeatedly, our children were molested in the streets. In one case, upon hearing one of my boys crying for help, I had rushed at the boys who had beaten him—with the dismal result that I had to slink away: The crowd attracted by the incident unequivocally sided against me and threatened me with the habitual threats against Jews on such occasions. The atmosphere in Germany got ever more poisonous. Once in a while, one felt as if one could hardly breathe. In view of all this, towards the end of the year, I threw grace to all winds and asked the Copenhagen community board whether their June offer still stood. The answer was affirmative.

It was bitter to break camp and part with a community in which we had spent such good and happy years. When we had arrived in Beuthen in 1925, ours was considered a position for life. During the following years, I had had many, often most flattering, offers of positions in other German towns and cities and in other countries. But my wife and I agreed that we were doing well where we were. And now, this dismal ending. Of course, there were farewell ceremonies, and farewell gifts. Many friendships have proved durable

ever since—for more than three decades. But it was a parting of ways with all the sadness of such an occasion. At the same time, it was, once more, a parting with the rabbinical vocation. I do not deny that it was a relief to get out of a Germany infected with Nazism—this wonderful country with its many marvelous people, hypnotized into commending themselves to criminals.

No doubt there ought to have been also feelings of happiness and gratitude that the journey led home to Denmark. But they were not present, at least not in the proper way. I felt as though I was about to be washed ashore like some piece of wreckage. I returned to my own fatherland as a refugee.

Part Two

Immigrant in My Native Country: 1934-1940

There may be some truth in the saying that clergymen—at least rabbis—are a queer lot. They are so accustomed to being in the center of ceremonies of the most varied kinds that they feel uneasy whenever, for whatever reason, they are less prominently placed. Once in a while, they may find it piquant to blend with laymen as a holiday adventure. I know rabbis who, on private journeys, make a point of finding a rear seat in foreign synagogues and then think that they have displayed a becoming modesty. Always, when I discuss the subject with others, I insist that I am the only really modest one. I prove my point by explaining how I never choose the *very* last row, since, as this habit of rabbis is well known, it only serves to attract attention. It always has the effect of inviting the suspicion that there is a disguised, or at least an "incognito," rabbi there, and admiration for the modesty of the Right Reverend. I, by finding a seat nearer to the center but still slightly to the rear of it, say unequivocally: "Don't pay any attention to me. I'm just a common, tedious Mr. Average." As you see, modesty aware of itself remains an intricate problem.

When in January, 1934, I returned home to Denmark, I had officiated for eight and a half years as the Rabbi in a German community. There, as in many foreign communities, they had the habit of placing the Rabbi on a dais, facing the congregation—in contrast to the Copenhagen arrangement with the Rabbi in the front row with his back to the congregants. Thus, for those eight and a half years, I had been able to see the congregation throughout the service, and in return had been under observation myself all the time. In the beginning, this had caused me a sensation similar to stage fright, but I had quickly become accustomed to this system.

On arrival in Copenhagen, I was at once assigned a permanent seat in the synagogue. It was not an inconspicuous seat at all, rather out front. It seemed as if the community was prepared to acknowledge the fact that I possessesed the title of Rabbi, even if I did not officiate. Nonetheless, it was underlined to me that the basic fact was that I was unassociated with the institution of the rabbinate. In actual fact it was a *deplacement,* followed up by my being clearly declasse with regard to my daily work. I was told, with insulting plainness, that through employing me, the community was not gaining a bean. The community could have carried on excellently without me, and it was merely out of compassion and pity that it had patched together various activities as a job, carrying a salary which provided less than the required minimum for a man with, then, four children; it would be up to him to find out how to complement this income. For a clergyman who had for years been rather a pampered and fêted personality, it did hurt to face the fact that a fifth wheel to a car was of far greater significance than the position so humiliatingly granted him now.

Here, some explanation seems called for of the temper of the Jewish community in Copenhagen by early 1934, a year after the Nazi seizure of power in Germany. I shall have to admit to the subjectivity of my judgment. This is so because every individual judgment is subjective, and also because I was disappointed, criti-

cally inclined, irritable, and more of the same. Nevertheless, now, more than thirty years later, I cannot but maintain my judgment as it was then: The Jewish community in Copenhagen in its attitudes regarding the tasks and problems of the time was hopelessly out of touch, provincial, and narrow in outlook. Clearly, the predominating sentiment was: The disasters in the outside world are no concern of ours. We are spectators, as we were before when evil occurred. During the mass flight of Jews from eastern Europe, the Danish Jews sat comfortably on the sidelines. During the horror and curse of World War I, their Danish native country had succeeded in preserving its neutrality.

What was happening now was an internal German affair, taken notice of insofar as the newspapers were writing a good deal—far too much, indeed, about it—and as a number of people after their emigration from Germany were staying temporarily in Denmark. But oneself was not *concerned* with it. *Oneself was outside*. True, when I first visited the Chief Rabbi, he had mentioned that the ill fortunes out there in Jewish Europe caused severe disturbance to his nightly sleep. But he had been honest enough to add that Providence had graciously taken him personally under his wing and placed him in this Denmark which enjoyed the time-honored conceit that her borders were closed to the adversities of the twentieth century.

In addition, the Jewish community had had a royal experience, royal in the literal sense. I here recount the double version circulating at the time. By the end of 1932, the community was busy with preparations for the one hundredth anniversary of the synagogue, which was to be celebrated in April, 1933. The unprecedented step had been taken to invite the King, Christian X, to attend the special service which was to be held, and the King had promised that he would be present. Since it was the first time in the history of Danish Jewry that a king was to visit the synagogue, enthusiasm was great and genuine. Then came January 30, 1933,

and Adolf Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor. Immediately, the German Jews caught the limelight. Herr Hitler did not conceal the fact that his hatred and murderous designs were directed against all Jews. Germany, after a few years' attempts at playing the role of a constitutional state, had with one blow transformed herself into a land where only brute force counted. The resulting complex problems confronting her neighbors were manifest. What happened now in Denmark was told in two versions, of which I beg, first, to tell the one which made its way through the world press, but which is nevertheless the wrong one. It was said that in court circles misgivings had arisen in connection with the King's planned visit to the synagogue. High and mighty Adolf Hitler might, upon learning of this, be inclined to frown—and one had better avoid any such thing. These considerations were mentioned to the King, who reacted by saying, "I shall show the world the way a king conducts himself." Whereupon the King had gone to the synagogue.

When all this happened, I was still in Beuthen. In addition to the local press and the German-Jewish periodicals, I read Jewish publications from many parts of the world. Everywhere, the royal utterance was quoted, and the King who had made it was praised as one who went his own way, a true prince whose moral and spiritual carriage overshadowed that of all other kings throughout history.

After my return, I learned the other version. I mention it last, because I think it surpasses the first one and because it also happens to be the true one. My source was the Supreme Court barrister C. B. Henriques, who was then—indeed, until 1946—chairman of the Jewish community. Misgivings in connection with the King's forthcoming visit to the synagogue after the ominous change in the political situation had arisen, not at court, but on the board of the Jewish community. C. B. Henriques had felt personally that, notwithstanding the King's commitments, he ought to be free to judge whether he should keep his promise or not. C. B., therefore, had requested an audience with the King and stated that the

Jewish community would show the utmost understanding if His Majesty were to consider it more appropriate not to attend the service in the synagogue.

And here, now, is the absolutely correct rendering of Christian X's reply to C. B. Henriques. The King plainly and straightforwardly said, "Are you out of your right mind, man? Now, of course, is when I shall be coming."

Personally, I greatly prefer this to the first version. I am fully aware that the first one has more style and seemed, therefore, more suitable for international use. But here in Denmark the second account will be felt to have more edge. The Danish King, certainly, did not have a Torgny Segerstedt's possibility of defining Hitler as an insult, but his charming imperviousness to the bragging madman was expressed frankly already in 1933.

Apart from this, the jubilee service to celebrate the synagogue's anniversary was a most dignified affair. The young precentor Leo Grabowski sang so beautifully that King Christian declared it to be his wish to have him transferred to *Kongens Nytorv* (the central square in Copenhagen, where the Royal opera is situated) right away, and Chief Rabbi Friediger produced the best sermon of his life. The King had been moved to state that the blessing was pronounced in the synagogue with the same words as in the church. One may hope that he realized the source from which the church got the text.

This whole event to a considerable extent had made the Jews in Denmark conclude that the evil fate which befell their fellow Jews in Germany—and subsequently in Austria and Czechoslovakia—concerned merely their sense of compassion and generosity, when means had to be raised to provide relief. There was no feeling of direct involvement in events. It caused them disgust to see the word "jew" appear in many newspaper reports and headlines. On the other hand, they were, to some extent, basking in the sympathy displayed by Gentiles towards their Jewish fellow coun-

trymen, which, whenever reports from abroad were particularly harrowing, could take the form of flowers sent to the synagogue or contributions to fund drives conducted by the community among its members.

So I disrupted the relative coziness prevalent in the Danish Jewish community in 1934, appearing like an elephant in a china shop with my personal experience of all the untoward events occurring or in the making, and with my familiarity with the wider aspects of things with which I had been in direct touch through my many years of activity in the larger Jewish world outside. Worst of all, I think, were my Zionist interests. I have already underlined that they did not reduce my Danish patriotic feelings in the least. This, today, is understood by every child. But thirty years ago, the Zionists in the Jewish community could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Perhaps there were some among the immigrated Jews, who were still considered rootless in Denmark. They, of course, might well be Zionists as well as Polacks. But among Jews of Danish origin, Zionism was rather a dirty word.

Among the tasks assigned to me was to write editorials and regular surveys of events in the Jewish world for the community's monthly. It goes without saying that these articles must necessarily reflect *my* views—I was almost going to say my personality—that they must be written in *my* language and formulated in *my* style. But, unfortunately, it was no less evident that I did not win friends in the community with what I wrote. Before writing the present memoirs I have read through part of my products from 1934 and the following years, and I am presumptuous enough to think they weren't bad at all. I feel the more entitled to this opinion as my critics thought so, too. C. B. Henriques, who was much later to say that he was an admirer of mine, then judged me in this way: "He speaks well, but he *writes too damn well.*" And that, of course, was not so very well. In an irrevocable way, during my stay abroad, I had become different from the rest. So I was to be looked down

upon, and to be treated accordingly.

As 1934 came to an end, I was forced to conclude that all my attempts to somehow make the grade with the Danish Jews had failed miserably. Any initiative originating from me was immediately stifled by the leadership of the community, spiritual as well as administrative. If I taught one of the precentors at the synagogue a new melody to one of the liturgical texts, a strict prohibition was issued to him against using it. If, with the greatest deference, I suggested that the synagogue presidium do away with some element of old rut, I was told to keep my nose out of what was no business of mine. There was no shortage of humiliations—some of which were of such a nature as to indicate virtual persecution. Rather often I felt as though I were drifting around alone on an ice floe, while everybody else was wolfing down ice cream.

The difficulty of my position was further accentuated when the extreme orthodox right wing in the community, which had originally grouped itself around Dr. Lewenstein after he got the sack, had in 1934 appointed a new rabbi, who was from Hamburg, possessed mighty rhetorical gifts, and whose name was Wolf B. Jacobson. In the orthodox group, my return had been viewed with highly mixed feelings. I was the son-in-law of Dr. Schornstein, whom the group had always fought, and (so rumor had it) lately I had made play with liberal currents in the religious field. The latter suspicion appeared confirmed by my open adherence to Zionist views. One of the specialties of Copenhagen orthodoxy was the unqualified rejection of every kind of Zionism. Chief Rabbi Friediger had reported to me his conversation with Rabbi Jacobson, when the latter came to visit him upon his arrival in Copenhagen.

According to this account, Jacobson said, "I have come to Copenhagen, not to fight *you*, but to fight the very dangerous Dr. Melchior."

When he reads this, Rabbi Jacobson, "Wolli," is going to smile, whether he admits or denies having ever said anything like this.

I am utterly indifferent as to whether he does one or the other. He is perfectly all right, and the friendship which has since arisen between the two of us remains completely unaffected by earlier controversies. I almost hope that he did speak as quoted, because I would not like to think that Friediger gave an incorrect account, and because one may learn from this example how happily misunderstandings may be cleared up before it is too late.

In a certain sense, I was dangerous. It turned out that I had the ear of youth, not merely in Copenhagen, but in the other Scandinavian communities as well. The youth organizations in the Scandinavian countries had created a union, which asked me to be main speaker at its congress in Oslo in the summer of 1934. On this and other occasions, there was considerable support from the younger circles in the communities for the ideas I was promoting. Not a rebel at all, I called for faithfulness to the Jewish traditions, for identification—if you want, critical identification. My opinion was—and it has remained unchanged to this very day—that one could and ought to respect customs which one personally considers outdated, as it can never be a matter for each individual to decide what is to be religious practice, and what not. In return for this concession in practice, it must be legitimate to introduce theoretically differing ideas.

It is, however, a fact that an updating of Jewish-religious legislation is impossible at present, because there exists no institution whose authority is so universally recognized that it has a mandate for such a reformation. Therefore, it was reasonable to work for the creation of such a body. And since it could be imagined only in Palestine—in view of Isaiah's pronouncement that "teaching is to emanate from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"—one had to contribute to Jewish rebirth on the soil of Palestine to be a Zionist. I feel conscious of having, through proclaiming this "gospel," helped create much of the Zionism which eventually was to spread throughout Scandinavia. That many of my proselytes

did not possess the moderation of their teacher is quite a different matter. Now as ever, according to my way of putting it, the fatherland ranks before anything else; and from the beginning I have pointed out that the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was bound, logically, to lead to a revision of all political Zionist ideology and attitude. I shall beg to return to that later. The fact is that orthodoxy considered my opinions to be heretical. Orthodoxy gets shivering fits from the word renewal. So, I was scowled at from that corner, too.

In the beginning of 1935, things seemed to lighten. Dr. Friediger went on a two-month trip to Palestine (which could, then, be made only by train and boat). He undoubtedly hoped that during that time there would occur no deaths in the community, and that no young couples would be too eager to get married to postpone their weddings until his return. These hopes were bound to prove far too optimistic. A community of seven thousand cannot carry on for two months without the services and guidance of a spiritual leader. There were several couples desiring to get married regardless of the absence of the Chief Rabbi. And death asked no permission at all to reap his harvest. A few days after Friediger left, the old and popular precentor Jacob Grossman, highly respected and beloved by me, too, passed away. It was unthinkable that he should be carried to his grave without a eulogy by a rabbi. The board of the community had no choice but to request me to officiate at this occasion as well as to handle all other spiritual tasks during the absence of the constituted priest. The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs was asked to authorize me to perform marriages which would be valid under civil law.

On the return of Dr. Friediger, this deputyship was discontinued as quickly as it had begun. But it had left its marks. The, unfortunately, numerous funeral addresses which it had fallen on me to deliver had, so to speak, drawn the community's attention to me. In a way, their impact had been sensational. For more

than a generation, there had been a succession of foreign rabbis, who had learned Danish but never had been able to speak that language without an accent. And now, suddenly, there was I, speaking normal Danish. It was odd, in a way, and some people felt that somehow it sounded wrong. They had become so accustomed to foreign accents that they thought these were the natural sound of religious talk. Fortunately, the majority felt differently about it. It was now widely held to be absurd to gag a rabbi who spoke in this manner. Without my being informed, about one hundred members of the community, among them people of high repute, petitioned the board that I be appointed Second Rabbi. Alas! Their effort was in vain. The letter which these people signed ended up in the board's capacious wastepaper basket.

By mere chance, I got an opportunity to take up quite a new activity. My work as headmaster of the school for teaching religious subjects—binding me to twelve weekly lessons—and as editorialist in the community's monthly, did not take up more than half my time. Even when I got an extra job as religious teacher to some Jewish families in Arhus (the capital of Jutland and second biggest city in Denmark), which were blessed with an abundance of children, I had plenty of spare time left. In a way, it was quite funny with this job. Every Monday I took the morning train for Arhus. On my arrival at 4:30 p.m., I began teaching—the adults participating in the lessons—and carried on until 11 p.m. At midnight, I would leave by night train for Copenhagen, without sleeper, but with change of trains before and after crossing the Great Belt—to begin with, the Little Belt as well—by ferry.

What wouldn't one do for an extra income of 100 kroner (fifteen U.S. dollars) a month! The funny part of it was that on my way to Jutland, I was a passive spectator at the play of ombre in which the crowd of traveling salesmen indulged who poured out into the provinces with the beginning of each week. At that time, it was unthinkable that traveling businessmen, wholesale

dealers, or representatives of firms should use other transportation than train and ferry boat. All the dear fellows knew one another and kept moving around from compartment to compartment, exchanging their hoary jokes and anecdotes, until the fifty-two-page hymn book was pulled out and teams formed up for the card play. These games were to sweeten the journey as well as the stiff evening hours at more or less impossible provincial hotels for those chaps, whom there was no reason to envy at all. As I said, I was an outsider, but in some strange way I was involved in the lives of these people. I knew all their worn puns, knew all about the barometric heights of their family lives. In a way, I was myself—on Mondays, that is—a traveling salesman, "selling religion." Not quite in the same way as the scoundrelly principal character of the well-known American novel—but still. . . .

I found time for numerous private lessons, particularly in Hebrew, and my pupils were both Jews and Gentiles. One of the latter, a young lady physician, Dr. Vera Ultsch, was extraordinarily apt. I prepared her for an M.A. in Hebrew, and we even read Arabic together. It is sad to record that she died very young, leaving behind her a world which seemed even more cold and poor after her death. But, before then, she had acquainted me with her cousin, the Reverend Hans Kildeby, who was then principal at the Hoptrup Folk High School in (Danish) North Slesvig. One day, I got an invitation from Kildeby to come to Hoptrup for two lectures—one in the afternoon to the students of the school on Judaism; and one in the evening to a larger assembly, on Palestine.

In retrospect, the day on which the two lectures took place stands out as a milestone in my life. The lectures were reported in a rather complimentary way in the local newspapers. At that time, it was something altogether new for a Jew to speak anywhere but within the framework of the community. Consequently I was taken note of not only in folk high school circles but increas-

ingly by many associations and organizations conducting cultural activities and lectures, which were ever on the hunt for speakers who might attract a crowd. Eventually, I was so much in demand that the interest of the board of the community was aroused. The ever more aggressive Nazi propaganda called for counter-measures, or at least for attempts in this direction. Originally, the community was inclined to follow a policy of walking as softly as possible. Even after the adoption of the Nuremberg laws in Germany, for "the defense of German blood," the watchword remained for Danish Jewry to lie low. For my part, I have never been in favor of arousing uncalled-for attention. On the other hand, I have always strongly rejected the idea of introducing the stillness of the cemetery to pulsing life. As everybody knows, a coarse block requires a tough axe.

But it was not only the Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda which needed a retort. In 1936, bloody disturbances broke out in Palestine between Arabs and Jews. Things like that had happened before, but only in short bursts of time. Now, it was terror and bloodshed with no end. As a matter of fact, it was not the native Arab population of Palestine who initiated or even desired hostilities against the Jewish settlers. The struggle was imported into Palestine by the potentates in the Arab countries, who felt disconcerted at the sight of democracy infesting the Middle East through the Jewish pioneers in Palestine. All that came into being there, in the way of social care and protection for workers, children, the sick, and the aged, was unknown to the feudal Arab states. The clever Arab politicians felt that now was the time to aim a few blows at England, who had the Mandatory *power,* but no less the Mandatory *obligation* to keep Palestine open to Jewish immigrants. This obligation was particularly important in these times of Jewish mass flight from Europe because of the ominous threats of the totalitarian powers. By betting on the Hitler-Mussolini team, and by threatening open association with them,

the Arab states held England in check. England permitted herself to reduce the immigration of Jews to such a minimum that shame at the memory makes decent Englishmen blush to this very day when they become aware how cruelly the fleeing Jews were let down by proud Albion.

The Danish population was utterly ignorant of all this maneuvering behind the scenes and of all the Arab hanky-panky. Thus, there was a double challenge confronting a spokesman for the Jewish cause: Action was required against Nazism, which had won admirers, yes-men, and party-men in all countries, including Denmark. Attempts had to be made to explain to the Danish public what kind of game was being played in Palestine—to let them know that here, too, the root of all evil lay with fascism and in Arab flirtation with the usurpers.

In the main, it fell to me to handle this twofold task. It was rumored from town to town, even from village to village, that one could get hold of a Jewish lecturer who appeared well equipped to elucidate the current developments around Nazism and Arabism —perhaps even Jewish-Christian relations. The demand was increased by the fact that my services were available without any fee. The interest of the board of the community had resulted in its readiness to pay me 30 kroner (U.S. $4.25) for lectures in Copenhagen, 50 kroner for lectures outside the capital. There were no travel expenses, as I had monthly season tickets on account of my Arhus job. Subsistence money had to be my own contribution.

I think it is just to say that I performed a rather essential mission on behalf of the Jewish cause. My main subjects were those mentioned above, but I never produced the same speech twice. Every day brought so much news to add to the old themes that unlimited variation became possible. Even then, however, I dealt with issues which were only in a superficial way linked to current situations, but which were basically of an ethical nature.

This sort of thing was enthusiastically received by my audiences. They even put up with the length of my lectures, which lasted as long as two and a half hours, and I guess that some people came in the secret hope that I might come to a stop in the middle of the whole affair, simply on account of tongue failure. But as yet, no one has ever seen anything like that happen. *If,* some day, I should have nothing else to say, I can fall back on: "The Lord created heaven and earth in six days." That will always do the trick.

As one may well imagine, all this lecturing led to a great many strange and amusing incidents. I derive much pleasure from the memory of an evening in a ladies' debating society in Alborg, Jutland, where I was to speak on the subject of "Christianity-Judaism." I trod my path as carefully as the subject requires. I did not act as prosecutor against Christianity or as counsel for the defense of Judaism. While fully confirming my Jewish theological standing, I felt my purpose to be to *explain* Judaism so that Gentiles might feel the same respect toward Jews which I have always demanded of Jews toward Christians. It was clear that, on the whole, the audience approved of what I had to say. Especially, I noted on the front row an elderly lady who kept interrupting me with applause and incessantly nodded approvingly to me. When I had finished, she came up to me, by now wearing a rather sour face. "Listen," she said, "someone here insists that you are not at all a member of the Danish national church. Is that correct?"

"Beyond question," I said. "I thought I had made that perfectly clear." To which she replied, with a sneer, "You bet you haven't. Ugh, inviting such a one to speak to us!"

In the focus of my lecturing activities during that period were folk high schools and teachers' associations. In particular, the latter seemed important to me. I felt as though, through these teachers, I caught the ears of tens of thousands of pupils. Folk high school principals such as C. P. O. Christiansen, Uffe Grosen, Erik B. Nissen, and others sent for me regularly. At C. P. O.'s

institution, visitors from Germany were led into a large hall, where there was a giant painting of a motif from the Old Testament. "Serves them right," said C. P. O.—and christened the room "the chamber of horrors."

To the credit of Niels Bukh, principal of a high school of physical culture, I ought to mention that he had some young Palestinian Jews among his students. When on festive occasions he hoisted the flags of all nations from which he had students, the Zionist banner was among them. And I know how delighted he was to explain, whenever German tourists pointed at this flag, asking what it represented, "Oh, don't you know, really? This is the Jewish flag." I may add that Niels Bukh tried in general to be helpful to the Jewish cause. When there was a fund drive in the Jewish community to raise means to relieve fellow Jews in distress, Niels Bukh offered to hold one of his famous shows with his teams of well-trained young boys and girls for the benefit of the campaign. The proceeds were to be equally divided between the Jewish aid committee and the fund for the completion of the Grundtvig Church in Copenhagen. Bukh may have had an infatuation with dictators—in fact, he was wont to behave like one himself—but Jews owe him gratitude for his kind attitude.

A few happenings which remain in my memory might be told in simple terms. At the Social-Democratic folk high school at Roskilde (twenty-odd miles from Copenhagen), one participant in the general discussion declared that he entertained no sympathy for the Jewish cause. "We have got nothing against the Jews," he said, "we just don't like them." His further remark that one had always to be on guard against a Jew, because "he would be perfectly happy if he could only cheat someone out of an extra 5 ore (100 ore to the Danish krone) was received with loud boos by the audience.

At Toftlund, near Copenhagen, eight Nazi uniformed youngsters with high boots marched into the village hall after the lecture had

begun. They found seats on the rear row, which I disliked, since those wanting to create disturbances have a great strategic advantage there. So, I interrupted my address with the remark that such honored guests deserved the very best seats. They were so much taken aback at being spoken to directly that they did the silliest thing they could possibly do: They moved up front, where eight chairs were brought for them in great haste. The young gentlemen didn't croak throughout the whole helping I served them.

A charming experience at Gram (North Slesvig). The vicar there was the Reverend T. Philipsen, representing the most severe trend in the Danish church, but always cheerful. He had one day been seized by a psychopath of nationwide notoriety, compressed into a box in a car and kept there throughout the day as a "traveling prisoner," only to be released in the evening safe and well at his vicarage. The Reverend Philipsen had been without the slightest notion all day of what might lie in wait for him. But as night was coming on he had realized that he was back at Gram, since, still alone with his thoughts in his box, he had recognized the sound of "his own" church bells.

Philipsen had issued the invitations to the meeting with me over his own signature, and an audience of five hundred bore witness to his prestige in his parish. At the end of the meeting, Philipsen went beyond his accustomed ritual of thanksgiving. He rose to high oratorical effect, lifting his hands to pronounce the benediction prescribed for Aaron over the congregation and, in particular, "Dr. Melchior and his house." There remains only to add that Philipsen is now well into his eighties, and living in Fredericia. I presume that he is on the move a great deal, since they call him "the traveling Reverend." To the best of my knowledge, he is still full of vitality, and I am full of admiration for him and delighted with the questions he occasionally puts to me in his letters.

The really big lecturer's adventure came in the autumn of 1937.

I had been invited by the students' associations of Oslo and Trondheim to speak to each on one of their "big nights." In Oslo, there was quite a crowd. But there was really a large assembly in Trondheim. The lecture was called "Anti-Semitism in the Dock," and the audience numbered about one thousand when the meeting was opened in the large amphitheatrical hall of the student association building. I had been told that two professors, known for their pro-Nazi leanings, were going to be present and to participate in the general discussion after the lecture. One was the Danish-born professor Wieth-Knudsen, the other the chairman of the Norwegian Nazi party, Ragnar Skancke. Wieth-Knudsen did not put in an appearance at all, but Skancke was there, all right. I do think I was at the top of my form that night.

When one starts a lecture, one never knows quite how it's going to develop. One may have difficulty warming up. There may be disturbing factors: oppressive heat in the hall, people running in and out, and other things disconcerting to a speaker who uses no manuscript but tries to think as he talks. Anyhow, that night I managed rather well, particularly during the discussion and in my closing remarks—which are always an efficient weapon in the hands of an experienced speaker.

The other participants in the general debate seemed lame and tame. Largely, they fielded the standard Nazi lies, including a claim that one should seek to prevent any Jew from getting a foothold in an institution, firm, or anywhere at all. The theory was that, once he got there, he would see to it that all other positions were occupied by Jews. On my part, I could counter this with a bit of information which struck home. It was the fact that, when in 1925 I resigned from my position as headmaster of the Jewish boys' school in Copenhagen to take over as the Rabbi in Beuthen, a Gentile educator had been chosen as my successor regardless of Jewish applications for the job. Correctly and responsibly, the pedagogically best-qualified applicant had been ap-

pointed, and religious considerations had not been decisive. The conclusion was inescapable: Any claim that "Jews will always tow other Jews into any kind of enterprise" was silenced by the irrefutable fact that even a Jewish religious school had appointed a Christian headmaster simply because he was the most suitable.

The one person who did not request leave to speak was Professor Skancke. This surprised everybody, since he was the No. 1 man among the Norwegian Nazis, and since he had made it known in advance that he was determined to do his best to "kill" the lecturer. Amazement and bewilderment increased when Skancke participated in the tea party afterwards. And the really big sensation arrived when he asked to speak at the tea party and stated that he had to admit that he had learned a great deal that night that he had not known before. He intended now to reconsider his whole political attitude. All this happened Saturday night. On Monday morning, the Norwegian newspapers announced that the professor had quit the Nazi party and was expected to join the so-called Oxford movement, a forerunner of what is now known as "Moral Rearmament."

On this memorable evening it seemed as though I had won a victory over Skancke which was overshadowed only by the victory he won over himself. But alas! No victory whatsoever had been won! A few years later, when the Germans occupied Norway and Vidkun Quisling had become the self-styled Prime Minister, he sent for his companion-in-arms Skancke and offered him the position of Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Education in the Nazi government. Skancke forgot all his noble intentions then. Ambition made him grab at ministerial office and commit high treason against his country. I have often wondered whether—when at long last his death sentence was pronounced—he might have experienced retrospectively the vision of this evening at the students' association in Trondheim, when he had pledged that he would mend his ways, when neither he nor I had scored a decisive

victory. But the defeat was not his alone. He went down to the bottom in that deluge which washed over the world, and for which he shared the guilt.

As part of my activity of bringing the truth about the criminal Nazi regime to as wide circles as possible, I published in 1936 a small book with the attractive title *They Say That the Jews . . . .* In the most sober manner possible I dealt with the accusations which had been directed throughout the times against Jews and Judaism, and I proved to what extent they were shams. Generally speaking, both official Denmark and the broad layers of the population remained immune to the lures and threats of German anti-Semitism. But it was necessary to forestall as much as possible. After all, Hitlerism had its followers in this country, too, and many found much in Adolf Hitler and his regime to arouse enthusiasm. Not a few of the Danish sportsmen participating in the Olympic Games in Berlin, in 1936, came back with hardly hidden admiration. For many reasons, it was necessary to settle accounts with all the deceit on which the Nazi movement was based.

Of course, I would like to think that my general activities and, in particular, my book helped the Danish people keep their heads cool and their hearts warm in evaluating the Jewish problem. I am especially happy with memory of the visit to Copenhagen of one of the noblest opponents of Hitler's racial policy—or, as she called it, "racial madness"—Irene Harand, who came as the guest of the Association for the Prevention of Racial Hatred. One day I escorted her to the main post office. In a cable to Vienna she used the word "anti-Semitism."

The young lady official attending to her said, "What does anti-Semitism mean?"

Irene Harand was ecstatic, and in her excitement exclaimed, "Happy Denmark, where even the *word* anti-Semitism is unknown."

Well, I am afraid that most people did know the word, and

that rather many got it down the wrong way. But *the people,* the honest, decent people, did not fall into the Hitlerite abyss. In a decisive hour, still ten months before the outbreak of the new World War, the Danish people stood up to the first of the critical challenges it was to face.

This was in November, 1938. On the 17th of that month, a young Polish Jew, Herschel Grynszpan, had shot a secretary at the German embassy in Paris, Ernst vom Rath. The misdeed of the presumably demented assassin was immediately elevated to the highest level of importance by the Nazi government in Berlin. The crime was stated to be "the work of international Jewry." Therefore, all Jews within reach were liable to retribution. The proletarianized were to pay a penalty of a billion marks. The German people were made to awaken "spontaneously" at 3 a.m. in the night between November 9th and 10th. Spontaneously and with somnambulistic assurance, this German people—or what the Nazis termed "the German people"—fetched gasoline and kerosene cans, poured their contents on synagogues, and set three hundred of these afire. This so-called "cold" pogrom was, in real fact, the most burning and blazing in history. On top of this, tens of thousands of Jews were arrested and put into concentration camps. Officially, it was said that "as the Bible had spoken of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth [which it definitely has not] so, *we* shall take a thousand eyes for one eye, and a thousand teeth for one tooth."

The criminal and crazy way in which the Germans reacted to the misdeed of one man was everywhere outside Germany looked upon as an unprecedented provocation. The world public had not yet recovered from the tragic "settlement" under which the Sudetenland had been annexed by Germany. And now, this. The shock at German sadism reached even the papal throne and, wherever possible, the voice of protest was sounded. The German henchmen, on their part, couldn't care less. But it was important to interna-

tional morality that men now do away with the self-imposed restraint which hitherto had been prevalent in regard to what was called an internal German affair. It seems to me that Denmark was one of those countries reacting in the clearest and most unequivocal manner. *Kristeligt Dagblad* declared that the day would come when the ravaged synagogues would be rebuilt, and it would then be for Christendom to take upon itself the task of rebuilding. The fund collection undertaken by the newspaper for relief of Jewish misery is extraordinary in the history of Christianity. Unforgettable to me, too, remains Franz von Jessen's article in *Nationaltidende*. He stated, "There are times when the silence, which may seem necessary out of national prudence, must give way to the demands of self-respect and human decency."

Although it anticipates a good portion of history, I feel it appropriate to draw a direct line from the description of "the night of the broken glass"—the name under which the night of November 9-10, 1938—has entered history—and the twenty-fifth anniversary of these events which I spent in Bremen. I had been requested to deliver the sermon at the service on the Sabbath of November 9, 1963, when the dreadful events of twenty-five years earlier were to be commemorated. This service was attended not only by representatives of the spiritual and secular authorities of the city and state of Bremen, with the President of the Senate at their head, but by enormous crowds of citizens. It was broadcast over both radio and television. On this occasion, I evaluated the crime of 1938 and assessed its true nature, expressing the grief and the horror that such a thing could ever happen. Then I went a step beyond this, adding my conviction that on this night Germany lost the World War which had not yet begun. On the international stage, Germany thereafter was excluded from decent company. Even in the internal arena, there was a marked mental dissociation with the Nazi regime. The German people had no choice but to follow orders when those in power, who would not

hesitate at any outrage, hurled them into the throes of another World War. But these rulers had in advance, indeed in that very night, lost the struggle for the soul of the German people. It would have been most fortunate if this had happened sooner. The silence, the so-called discipline, displayed by the crowds witnessing the burning of the synagogues, was, no doubt, an expression of dread, of paralysis, of the awareness that an abomination was being committed in the name of the German people, and that the deluge which had been let loose was bound to inundate Germany herself.

The period from November, 1938, to September, 1939, was marked by fearful expectation. The question no longer was *whether* war would come, but *when.* Hitler, meanwhile, continued his "peaceful" conquests. In March, 1939, when the hour struck for Czechoslovakia, the avalanche of German hatred against the Jews, which had already buried the Jews of Germany and Austria, swallowed up the numerous communities of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia as well. Here in Denmark, one tried to keep up one's spirit and the skies of this country still seemed clear, although there was necessarily anxiety caused by living door by door with Germany. In August, 1939, Scandinavian Jewish youth met for summer camp and the subsequent congress in Trondheim. The congress was held in the town itself, whereas the camp used the site of a high school some distance from there. I remember one of the Danish youth leaders standing one evening, together with the high school's principal, Mr. Holdhus, on a hill overlooking the lovely, peaceful landscape, surrounded by mountain ridges. One of our people said to the principal, "This is where one ought to live, far away from the noises of the world. If ever war comes, this will remain a sanctuary. . . ."

Well, alas! When eventually the war swept into Norway, this district was one of those most cruelly struck. Altogether, one was wise to abstain from prophesying. The actions of criminals can rarely be assessed in advance. When decent emotional life is

crippled, logic, too, is paralyzed. Hatred and lies roamed and ruled the world. God kept His silence—a silence of set teeth, one would think. The free will which He had accorded to man had been used or abused and degenerated into licentiousness and the suspension of all restraints. *Evil* man had grabbed power—and just anything might happen!

The Obsessed: 1940-1943

When Adolf Hitler unleashed war upon Europe, he did it—as had to be expected—with the declaration that this war was "the work of the Jews." The Nazi propaganda recipe of "repeating a lie so often that it ends by ranking as a truth" had been applied with this purpose for a long time. Over and over again it had been asserted that the Jews were wildly set on inciting the "Aryan" peoples to war against each other. The more one could make the Aryans slaughter one another, the better the prospects of the devilish Jew to achieve the true goal of "international Jewry": world supremacy.

In September, 1939, I wrote an editorial on the subject in the monthly of the Jewish community. Writing had become difficult, because Danish neutrality imposed restraint and moderation on anybody making public statements. So, one could not use the proper term for the demented, the mendacious, the fraudulent in these Nazi claims. It was impossible to ridicule the pious Hitler-lamb haunted and hunted by the cruel Jewish wolf. One could

only—coolly and dispassionately—refer to certain facts. Chapters II and XI of Esaiah were quoted, as was the Talmudic proverb that "peace is the world's leaven"—the latter compared with the German saying that *"der Krieg is der Vater aller Dinge"* [war is the father of all things].

Above all, one could substantiate the fact that the Jews—apart from having to kill each other in all wars through the last one hundred twenty-five years—were, in some terrible way, the first and foremost victims of these wars. Germany had, after the Napoleonic wars as well as after the German-French war of 1870-1871, witnessed unbridled excesses of anti-Semitism. The same was repeated after 1918, when the Jews were declared guilty of having, with their sloppy humanitarianism, plunged the dagger into the spinal cord of the helpless German people. In Russia, things had not been one iota better after the lost war against Japan in 1904-1905. Unremittingly, all national disasters had been blamed upon the Jews. However, it ought to be noted that, in this respect, too, Denmark was a glorious exception: In 1864, there was not the slightest touch of pogrom after Denmark was overrun and mutilated by Prussians and Austrians.

In my editorial, I expressed the oppressive anxiety with which one was forced to anticipate the Jewish fate during and in the wake of this new war. In particular, casting the horoscope of three and one-half million Jews in Poland, the only signs in the stars were of tears and blood.

Well, after the blitz in Poland, the war seemed to stagnate. All attention was focused on the Finnish Winter War, which at the time seemed even more senseless than wars are always. Only when the bloody showdown occurred between Germany and the Soviet Union did the Winter War seem somewhat more comprehensible. As for myself, throughout the winter of 1939-1940, I was busy and preoccupied as usual. Particularly, lectures were in undiminished demand, and I met requests to the best of my ability. As late

as April, 1940, I had been invited to Norway once more, and had spoken both in Oslo and in Trondheim. I arrived back home on Sunday, April 7th.

Then came April 8th. The Copenhagen afternoon papers carried dispatches from Berlin describing German reaction to the news of reported British naval movements in Scandinavian waters and the mining of the approaches to the port of Narvik to disrupt shipments of iron ore to Germany. The newspaper stories were agreed that the German government watched events and "with icy coolness" considered the necessary countermeasures. Having lived in Germany for a year under Nazi rule, I was aware and apprehensive of the nature of these glacial German reactions. The 1933 boycott had been cold as ice. The flaming pogrom of 1938 had merited the same epithet. I was shivering at the news of the new German frigid wave, and it was mainly to subdue my fears that on this same evening I took my family to the cinema to see the charming picture *Ninotchka* with Greta Garbo. This brilliant spoof of Russian Communism to some extent diverted our preoccupation with Nazi temper and temperature.

It may sound supercilious but, as far as I was concerned, the news cables of April 8th to some extent deprived the events of the morning of April 9th of their sensational impact. They seemed to be the obvious consequence of the previous day's developments. Of course, I was as scared, as horrified, as much in despair as everybody else. I was not only Danish, I was Jewish. I knew more than most about the fate in wait for Jews in countries which had come under German rule or "protection." What was going to happen to "us" now? But regardless of this special fear, the predominant emotion in me as in Danish Jews in general on this April 9th was this: What about Denmark? What about our small, decent, delicate, gentle, quietly happy fatherland? What about the King? Yes, indeed, what about the King? How would the almost seventy-year-old King face this?

On April 9, 1940, at about 6:30 a.m., I was, as usual, on my way to morning service at the synagogue. The incessant noise of what appeared to be a great number of aeroplanes had been impossible to identify. After all, they might have been Danish planes on maneuvers. Or they might be British? Why, sure, they just might be British!

However, all doubts disappeared when on the way to the synagogue I picked up some copies of a proclamation which had been thrown from German planes. It asked the populace to accept the German "protection" without demonstrations. It was written in Danish and, in spite of the serious situation, it appealed to the Danish sense of humor because of its many misspellings—even in the headline.

I returned home to help my wife and children control their nerves. Over the radio, then, came the message of the fateful change in the position of Denmark, and we turned to the day's tasks, stunned and dulled, but compelled to pretend that the world was still standing.

Permit me—since it seems to me that this ought to be included in this account—to tell that, on my way to the offices of the Jewish community, I passed one of the bridges across the canals of Copenhagen. German soldiers were standing on the bridge and taking pictures of Christiansborg Castle, built over the ruins of the original fortress of Copenhagen and housing, among other bodies, the Danish Parliament and the Foreign Office. At that moment, C. B. Henriques, the chairman of the Jewish community, came along. I could more or less imagine his state of mind. And his first remark was enlightening enough. He said shortly, "They are taking our lovely country." His dark mood was further accentuated by a special situation in which he found himself. One of his law partners was to appear before the Supreme Court, but had failed to turn up at the office. C.B., therefore, had to take over the case. If one knows how often he used to extemporize even in his "own" cases, one can easily imagine how familiar he

was with a case which had not been his from the start. So he was on his way to the Supreme Court not knowing where he stood—with one thing, or the other. I assume that he requested a postponement of the case, and that, in view of the circumstances, the request was granted.

As the day went, with a million people rushing around for blackout curtains at least of paper, a measure of calm settled upon their minds. King Christian had set out on his habitual ride through town, and thereby set in motion a psychological chain reaction of vast importance. The whole Danish population—not least the small Jewish group—interpreted this gesture as some sort of proof that Denmark was not going to be an ordinary German protectorate. This seemed to be implied, also, in the proclamations issued by the monarch as well as by the government. There was a third incident which strongly impressed Jewish minds. In the evening (I think it was at 7 p.m.) there was scheduled a lecture on the radio, but the speaker had had to cancel the engagement. Instead, Professor Louis Fridericia was sent for to lecture on nutrition problems. Well done, on the part of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation! Fridericia was Jewish and had, for a number of years, been a member of the board of the community. Here, something happened which seemed symptomatic of the status of Jews in Denmark. In all the countries which had been invaded by the Germans, the Jews had right away been exposed to all the clever dirty tricks and outrageous cruelties which perverted brains were able to conceive. But in Denmark, life apparently was to go on more or less as usual. The King was the King, and the Jewish professor was a professor—and radio lecturer! Perhaps, then, after all . . . in the midst of the sinister atmosphere . . . perhaps, perhaps. . . .

Indeed, what did *we* know!

The board of the community immediately summoned all those employed by or on behalf of the community to deliberations

on the situation and on the attitudes which had to be considered proper or to be *demanded* in the prevailing circumstances. Supreme Court barrister C. B. Henriques, one of the ablest and most highly esteemed lawyers in the country, was chairman of the board. Managing Director Karl Lachmann, who had for a number of years been in a leading position in the West Indian Sugar Company, and who was now, among other things, a judge in the Maritime and Commercial Court, was its deputy chairman. Henriques was a masterful man of *forensic ability*. Promptly he would find the focus of a problem and, without delay, preoccupy himself with the solution which appeared to him to be right. Accustomed to a prominent position ever since his early youth, he had been spoiled by life, and was unaccustomed to being contradicted. His anger was easily incited if there was any hint that ways other than those envisaged by himself might be used. Karl Lachmann was among those very few able to make C. B. listen—possibly even follow. Lachmann was a *judge,* not only when he sat in the Maritime and Commercial Court. He possessed the genuine judge's sober mindedness. A slow, but thorough, consideration of pros and cons marked every word he uttered. During deliberations, he was attentive to every contribution even if it disagreed with his own opinion. Why, he seemed to appeal his own views to a higher court within himself! Therefore, his influence on C. B. Henriques was that of a highly efficient brake on a man whose intuition and flair in acute situations might well lead him rapidly astray. Danish Jewry got relatively safely through the years of occupation because of several factors. But to no small extent, the administrative leadership of the community and its art of navigation contributed materially to the successful outcome. Looking back over these years with their experiences and decisions, C. B. Henriques would be inclined to feel that "all considered, we were tremendously clever," whereas Lachmann would make the more cautious comment that "at least we did not blunder."

But let us return to the meeting at the Jewish community on April 10, 1940. In view of the many uncertainties in the situation, there could be no doubt of the necessity of the board's watchword calling for utmost restraint and circumspection in public conduct. If things were to develop so fortunately that the status of Danish Jews would remain an internal Danish issue, this would surpass all expectations. Of course, we were not permitted to say or do anything which might give rise to a debate on the subject or even complicate matters to the government in its demand that the occupying power respect this status.

To me, the meeting was bound to underline almost violently the ominous aspects of what had happened to the Danish people. For it was stated that Jewish lectures to the general public in Copenhagen and the provinces had to be discontinued. Well, maybe it was unthinkable anyhow. What institution or organization could conceive of inviting a Jewish speaker—i.e., me!—in the changed circumstances, in order to analyze Nazism, anti-Semitism and a few more nice isms? Moreover, it was decided to discontinue the publication of the community's monthly right away.

I guess that a great number of periodicals withered away during that spring month. *Jodisk Familieblad,* so to speak, was cut through by a pair of German scissors, or by fear of it. This, of course, was a loss to the readers, but it was even harder on me who, through my articles to this publication, had had at least a small addition to my meager income. Incidentally, one of the best articles I had written for a long time remained stuck on the rotary press. Funny as it may sound, it dealt with *British* lack of good sense in the administration of Palestine, and was now flattened by an ironic fate.

It goes without saying that the subsequent politically fateful years spelled extreme economic difficulties to me and my family. The community board was not disinclined to show understanding for the problems of my situation. Therefore, I was granted a monthly payment for handling its protocol dealing with instruments

of foundations, which had not been brought up to date since 1915. The word instruments of foundations adequately describes what it was all about. Every foundation, large or insignificant, set up within the community in the course of time, was accompanied by regulations with regard to grants, whys and whens and wheres, occasionally divided up into more paragraphs than the number of Danish kroner they yielded. As, for more than thirty years, no proper registration had been undertaken of anything in this field, there were bound to be mountains of paper to be checked, and miles of outpourings and tirades to be entered into the protocol.

Looking back, today, at the special relief work provided me by the board, I blush on their behalf as well as my own. For this, I had undergone twelve years of school, seven years of college, and twenty-two years' work as a priest, headmaster, and holder of other responsible tasks. I was used to writing my own articles and books, the results of my own thinking. Now, I was *copying* what others had thought up and formulated. It was an idiotic, soul-destroying job. To some modest extent, however, I did find a spiritual occupation. Forced by necessity, the culturally active organizations within the community agreed to cooperate on a series of lectures and study circles. The blackout limited the number of possible gatherings. I was appointed leader of the so-called "cooperative Jewish associations." In this capacity, I succeeded in keeping up an amount of cultural life. My hope is that participants in these activities who are still alive may be pleased with the memory of these meetings.

Weeks and months and years passed by. The Jewish population knew that it was living on a volcano, but the volcano seemed inactive. It need be no secret that, like seismographs, we registered even the slightest tremors in Denmark as well as in the wide world. We knew that from time to time the Germans tried to put the Jewish question on the agenda in Denmark. We also knew that no Danish government could be induced to make concessions to the Germans

on this point, or to encourage the slightest hope among the small Nazi groups in Denmark that German methods could be introduced in this country. Nevertheless, we anxiously watched every moment of tension in relations between Denmark and Germany, and when news reached us of the unbelievably cruel fate of Jews in the outside world, we were aquiver with sorrow and fear. But on the whole, we went on hoping for some miracles and for something to put an end to "the millenium" sooner than anticipated by the criminals ruling in Germany. It goes without saying that the entry of the Soviet Union and the United States into the war, the Battle of Stalingrad, and Mussolini's day of reckoning were events nourishing such a hope.

I must mention two personal developments. At an earlier time, I had formed a friendship with Rabbi W. S. Jacobson, who was employed by the orthodox separatist group in Copenhagen. Across all religious dividing lines, we were united in common concepts of many human problems. In the summer of 1941, we decided to cooperate on the publication of a book of Jewish contents. We both needed some spiritual or intellectual pursuit. He needed some fresher air than that blowing in the self-chosen ghetto of his group, and I had somehow to free myself of the grind called foundation protocols. Jacobson thought up the idea of a publication of some kind of Sunday meditations for Saturdays, in the form of short commentaries to the biblical texts read in the synagogues on every Sabbath of the year. Each of us wrote down some sort of short, one-page sermons related to each of these fifty-odd segments. We read and "censored" each other's outpourings. I also translated his contributions from German into Danish. I accepted always what he wrote. He was very pious, but also very human. And gentle piety and humaneness always are a noble combination. Occasionally, he found something to criticize in my small essays. He was aware that his very cooperation with me would earn him squint-eyed and scowling glances from his private flock, and he urgently

requested me to abstain from airing my minor hereticisms of the sort that are natural to more or less natural people.

To put it shortly: In November, 1941, the only Jewish book to be published in German-occupied Denmark saw the light of day. It is called *Glimpses of Judaism,* and it's not altogether a bad book. Its outward appearance is noteworthy because no publishing firm is indicated. (Of course, we could not ask any publishing house to dig its own grave by publishing such a book at such a time.) The contents are distinguished by the wealth of scriptural texts interpreted in a more than adequate manner. We advertised the little book in the periodical of the ministers' association, underlining the fact that it contained a good deal of religious thought which was acceptable even to Christian preachers—might even serve them as "raw material" for sermons of their own. I doubt that one single copy was sold to one single minister. The way the world is, people don't know what is best for them. Within the community, on the other hand, the book sold fairly well. Still, I think that few of those who bought it bothered to cut the pages or even read them. We had to satisfy ourselves with what mattered very much to us: opening a vent and providing an outlet for some of the thoughts filling our minds.

Apropos cutting pages and reading books—in Israel, this charming little anecdote is in circulation: A publishing house had published a new edition of the voluminous Talmud. An impressive number of sets was sold. It was welcome proof of the popularity which this classic of legislation enjoys even in our modern times. But there had occurred a misfortune—which may happen to anybody—in that about two hundred copies of one volume had a few sheets in them which had by accident run clean through the presses without showing any imprint. The publishers saw no choice but to inform retailers that customers were to be told, in case of complaint, that of course defective copies would be replaced. But after a whole year, not one complaint had been received. In my case, I

occasionally see *Glimpses of Judaism* on someone's bookshelf, but hardly ever with pages cut.

My co-author and I, with our last savings, had one copy beautifully—regulation, I think, it was called at the time—bound, and on December 31st I wrote a most humble letter to King Christian X and sent book and letter by messenger to Amalienborg Castle with the request that the King accept the book as a modest New Year present. It was my elder daughter, then fourteen, who acted as special messenger. She found herself in the enviable position of handing over the book to Queen Alexandrine herself, which awed her so much that, by her own account, she addressed her majesty as "your grace."

King Christian reacted to this little gift in a most remarkable way. On the following morning, New Year's Day, the mailman brought a letter, which was—including the address on the envelope—written in the King's own hand. With regard to the contents, reference to "the fire in the synagogue" pertains to an arson attempt which had been made, a few weeks earlier, by Danish Nazis against the synagogue. There was no great damage, and the arsonists were caught by the police and received severe verdicts. As is seen, the administration of justice in Denmark, during the second year of occupation, endured unintimidated by the Germans.

The King's letter, to me and those in the community who had the opportunity of acquainting themselves with the contents—obviously, at that time, general publication was not possible—appeared to be a reconfirmation of the King's kindness towards his Jewish subjects. After the war, it was publicized on various occasions. It is considered and characterized as a document deserving of a place in the history of the world. In particular it is considered unique that a king who, ten months later, on his seventy-second birthday, answered a turgid Hitler cable with five words—this was what caused the so-called cable crisis resulting in Dr. Werner Best being sent to Denmark—should personally write this cordial letter

to a Danish Jew. The original letter is hanging on the wall of our drawing room, and visiting Americans, particularly, are eager to lay their hands on it. Recently, I was offered $5,000 (U.S.) for it. But it is not for sale.

The other "event" was on a quite different level. In the spring of 1942, I was forty-five years old. I could see the time approaching when, at the age of fifty, I would have to take stock and see how long or how short a distance I had covered on my way through life. Deeply disappointed with the position I had managed to secure, I still felt that I had the energy for some sort of vaulting leap which might liberate me from the stranglehold in which I was locked by circumstances. But the attempt would have to be made soon. As things were, I was a rabbi without rabbinical office, an editorial writer without a paper, a speaker without a rostrum—a lot of negatives which might cause their man to atrophy.

In the course of the summer, I resolved to turn over a new leaf by embarking on new studies in order to take up a completely new profession by the time I was fifty. On my lecturing tours I had often been told how well I defended "my cause," and what an excellent lawyer I would have made. Also, ever since I had been an active rabbi, I had always found a special satisfaction in taking the side of "the little man"—particularly that of the accused, so often unjustly accused. The obvious solution was to register at the Copenhagen University as a law student and to take up studies to earn my legal degree by my fiftieth birthday. I wanted to be a barrister.

It was not far from thought to action. When I requested matriculation at the university, it was granted with a clause that I would not apply for support administered by the university. This, of course, I promised. I could so the more confidently as a number of friends in the community, who approved of my project, had promised and indeed provided some economic help. To those who understood nothing, and who had not the faintest idea of my difficulties in the economic sense or in the principal field of principle,

it was pretended that my new studies were some kind of spleen aiming merely at proving to my children on my fiftieth birthday that I was not yet completely senile.

So I ventured upon this new undertaking. My tutors were helpful all along. So were my "colleagues." Although at that time I had children as old or older than my fellow students, the latter accepted me in a decent manner. My fear of provoking direct dislike among the youngest, particularly during discussions when I had to offer my greater experience in life, proved unfounded. Many of the freshmen of 1942 are now in their early forties and occupy positions in the administrative, business, and legal professions, and I always enjoy meeting them and exchanging memories of those days when we shared our daily work and our aspirations for the future. To sum it all up, by the summer holiday of 1943 I had progressed in my studies to the point of planning to present myself for the so-called first-part exam by January, 1944.

It was not to be. The revolutionary events of August and September, 1943, put a stop to intentions of this kind, and further developments rendered definite the discontinuance of my legal career. Left from this year of study, somehow unreal in retrospect, is an amount of useful knowledge and understanding in a field difficult, but full of charm, colorful in its multiple variety, but appearing to be woven around a red thread of logic and sense. From my student years in Germany, I remember a proverb which was rather insulting to the legal profession: *Auch Juristen sind Menschen.* In 1942-1943, I was to learn that only genuine humans can become genuine men of law. . . .

And now, it was August, 1943.

Separate Status Under Martial Law: 1943

On Tuesday, August 24th, the "Forum" exhibition hall in Copenhagen was blown up. The building had been designated as an auxiliary barracks or a field hospital to German reinforcements; and the saboteurs of the resistance movement felt that, in the circumstances, it had better disappear. We had—and still have—our home right next door to the Forum, and a few of us were knocked to the floor by the sabotage activities to the very heart of Copenhagen. It took place at an early afternoon hour, and soon a pilgrimage of Copenhagen citizens to the neighborhood began. One hundred thousand people marched in a procession around the ruins like so many believers around an idol, and there was no end to the cheering of the crowd at the exploit.

I walked across the area myself and ran into a group of youngsters from the Jewish community.

"Many happy returns!" they shouted at me. "Isn't it marvelous?"

"Maybe it is marvelous," I replied, "but let's see now how well we are going to like the returns."

The returns did not make everybody happy. On the following

Saturday, the final breach occurred between King and government on one side, and the German occupation power on the other. Sunday, August 29th, became a milestone in the history of Denmark as the first day of the state of emergency. My wife and I that morning were standing at a corner window in our flat. watching German Black Marias race through the streets, stopping here and there, while German soldiers woke peaceful citizens from their sleep to carry them off to unknown destinations. We could not doubt that the Germans were arresting prominent Danish citizens with whom they wanted to settle some score, or whom they wanted to "neutralize." The Nazis had always favored the method of taking hostages, and now they had made up their minds to apply it to Denmark. It was obvious to me that one of their cars would soon stop outside our house, and that this would mean that my turn had come to be fetched. My book about the mendaciousness of Nazism, my countless aggressive speeches and addresses on the same subject, and much else, would have secured my place on the German blacklist, and now it was to be proved that, despite all my insignificance, I had advanced to the position of a prominent citizen in this one respect. My astonishment, therefore, knew no limits when the last car left our part of town, and I was still safe at home. Rarely have I experienced such contradictory sentiments. Should I feel relieved to be left alone, or should I feel aggrieved that my standing in society was so inconsequential that even the Germans would not attach any significance to me?

Well, I soon decided to disregard the insult and let relief take precedence. In the course of the morning, it was learned that, as far as the Jewish community was concerned, Chief Rabbi Dr. Friediger and his son had been picked up as the first victims, and that the chairman, Supreme Court barrister C. B. Henriques, and the chairman for the special board for the administration of the synagogue had both been arrested, too. In regard to Friediger, it should be mentioned that he not only occupied the Chief Rabbi's

exposed office, but that in 1937 when a trial was held against Danish Nazis, he had met the court's request for an expert opinion in a highly efficient manner and thus contributed materially to their being convicted.

Later in the day, the synagogue board held an urgent meeting, and I was told that they had resolved to close the synagogue completely and to cancel the daily morning and evening services. As the Chief Rabbi was a prisoner in German hands, I at once assumed the function of acting Chief Rabbi, and on Monday morning enforced the opening of the locked synagogue. This arbitrary action should have earned me a rebuke, but there was no one to tell me off, so I got away with this, too.

I have recorded the first weeks of the state of emergency and the subsequent events, as far as they directly affect the history of the Jews in Denmark, in a contribution to the large publication *Denmark under the Occupation* edited by Vilhelm la Cour, Ph.D. I therefore refrain from entering into detail here. I merely want to state that, as the days passed, uncertainty and nervousness increased rapidly among the Danish Jews. No doubt, the volcano on which they were living was showing signs of imminent eruption, and one was forced to face the fact that the protection provided until then by the King and government no longer could secure the position of Danish Jews. Nervousness grew to the verge of hysteria when, one day in mid-September, the offices of the community were searched by the Germans, who ransacked all papers in an attempt to find . . . well, what indeed? They were supposed to be after membership lists with addresses. If that was the case, they must have been disappointed, since the board of the community had foreseen this situation and removed the lists to a safe place. However, at the community secretary's private office, the Germans got hold of the registration protocols of births, weddings, and deaths. These books, the so-called counterpart-protocols, never came to light again. On the basis of this material, supplemented

by information supplied by collaborators of the Nazis, the Germans obtained a fairly complete index of the names of German Jews. The addresses they could find in the telephone directory.

C. B. Henriques, who had been released surprisingly soon—he was seventy-three years old and suffered with a bothersome illness—personally or through class associates maintained contact with the Danish foreign ministry, whose director general Niels Svenningsen, in the absence of a functioning cabinet, acted as the Danish government representative maintaining contact with the German grand mogul, Dr. Werner Best. Today, we know that Dr. Best had let himself into a good deal of double-dealing, trying to keep a mask of friendship and sincerity towards the Danish officials, presumably in order to secure an alibi for himself . . . just in case. Simultaneously, he was playing to impress those in power in Germany with his absolute trustworthiness as the executor of all the Satanic schemes devised in Berlin. Clearly, a man wanting to play this game had to lie incessantly. So, Mr. Best played this double game at home when he kept assuring and reassuring Svenningsen that the Danish Jews could feel absolutely safe—not a hair of their heads was going to be hurt.

No one can be reproached for believing what was, in this way, intimated by Best. On one hand, what was said was exactly what one wanted to believe. On the other, one was altogether unfamiliar with the type of official for which Dr. Best stood: the consistently lying one. So, Svenningsen believed what he was told by Best, and Henriques, in turn, trusted the reports he heard from Svenningsen. When others of us got confirmation via Henriques that the miracle from the previous phases of the occupation was to be continued, and that the Germans did not any more now than before want to risk the general mess in the Danish situation which might be brought about by a raid against the Jews, we could not help finding it unreasonable that there were some who would absolutely not be set at rest, and who would, at any cost, and

to the detriment of their own nervous systems, insist on painting the devil on the wall.

When, in retrospect, I confess having been among those who put their trust in the chain Best-Svenningsen-Henriques, and who told all the excited people I met to calm down (when the facts were to prove the pessimists right only too soon), I nevertheless cannot regret having been among those who helped others avoid the nervous breakdown which they might otherwise have suffered. It was said later that, if it had been recognized in due time what was going to happen, then it would have been possible to prepare and organize the mass flight better than it could be done in the actual event. This claim is incorrect. A decisive factor in the success of the rescue operation when it eventually took place lay in the very absence of organization and in improvisation. Had there been organization, Best would doubtless have proved that he was both willing and able to thwart the whole thing.

But admittedly, when in the evening hours of September 28th it became irrefutably clear that the attempt to deport the Danish Jews was imminent, there was an unavoidable shock. That very morning yet another calming bulletin had been received from the usual sources. But the day had not reached its end when the horrifying truth knocked at the door and demanded admission. The fearful fate which in the previous year had caught up with the majority of Jews in Norway—deportation to Auschwitz, at a time when notions of Auschwitz were still rather vague—seemed now to be lying in wait for the Jews in Denmark as well.

Hitler and Himmler had personally ordered the deportation. This is what the executive body of the Social-Democratic party was told by the German naval counselor, G. F. Duckwitz. The Danish Jews were to be caught in their homes on October 1st and 2nd and taken aboard ships already anchored in the port of Copenhagen. Their one hope, now, was not to be found at home when the raid was held. In other words, every family was to seek

cover somewhere, preferably outside the capital, and to await quieter developments when, after, say, a couple of weeks, the Führer would be told that his order had been carried out.

The Social-Democratic politicians Hans Hedtoft and H. C. Hansen (both were later to become prime ministers, but are now dead) went personally to C. B. Henriques. Alsing Andersen (former minister of defense, later president of the Socialist International, head of the Danish United Nations delegation, president of the special UN committee to investigate the suppression of the Hungarian rebellion in 1956, who died a few years ago) sent a secretary to my home, as it was felt that I would be in a position to forward information and directives to the general Jewish public.

H. C. Hansen later told a charming story about how he and Hedtoft were recognized in Henriques' neighborhood by an elderly lady who guessed that they had been to see him about something.

"Listen to me," she told the two politicians, "if you inconvenience that gentleman, you're going to catch it from me and everybody around!"

While it was now C. B.'s business to summon the board to decide on any possible and sensible administrative measures, it fell to me to inform the community. There was a special service in the morning on Wednesday, September 29th, as it was the Jewish New Year's Eve. At a very solemn moment, I interrupted the service and told the more than one hundred persons gathered at this early hour of the ominous developments. I called upon them to pass on the information immediately and to ask its recipients to become messengers themselves. In this way, the news would become known to the entire community within a matter of hours. Largely, this did indeed happen, and each person, each family, had to set out on the desperate task of sneaking away from homes and places of work of every kind and to find ways of contacting Gentile friends who might be willing to grant them temporary shelter.

A few sought and obtained passage for Sweden right away. The vast majority were accommodated by Christian acquaintances, with whom they stayed until they managed to find a boat to Sweden. Of these, many were helped by the fantastic aid organizations, established and activated with extraordinary speed, which gathered the refugees and arranged their transportation to the embarkment points on the shores of the Sund and on to Sweden. If nevertheless the Germans succeeded, in the course of the evening hours of October 1st and 2nd in catching close to five hundred of the almost eight thousand Jews then in Denmark, there were several reasons for this. There were some Jews who, even at this time, simply refused to believe the reports. One of them beat his hero's chest and proclaimed like the Danish King Frederik III (1609-1670), "I will die in my nest." He was caught by the Germans together with his family. Others were too old or too weak to be physically or mentally fit to take flight. And—sadly, it must be recognized—some of the young Jews from Germany and other Central European countries, staying at farms all over the country to train themselves to become future pioneer farmers in old Palestine, remained without a chance to receive messages and warnings issued in the capital.

The flight of the Danish Jews across the Sund to Sweden, which hospitably opened her gates to the Danish Jews uprooted by the outrage of a foreign tyranny, forms a major chapter in the recent history of Denmark. The unique record in this deed of rescue must be bypassed in this account. Specialists have dealt with it after years of study and research in the mountainous material accessible. There has now appeared, in Jerusalem, a doctor's thesis on this chain of events. The glorious rescue, however, was to prove beneficial not merely to the Danish Jews. It is generally and, I think, justly held today that through these same events the overwhelming majority of the Danish people achieved the real maturity enabling them to conduct a true resistance struggle. It

seems an established fact that the same groups, thanks to whose admirable exploits the flight across the Sund was successful, found each other at that very moment and became united in a lasting effort against the foreign oppressors which was far more efficient than had been possible ever before.

Here I beg to make two points. One is that the many idealists who helped the Jews escape were not, on their own, able to transport them across the sea to Sweden. To this end, practical arrangements with people of partially different attitudes in pecuniary matters were required. This was fully justified. Those who carried us across often risked their lives, virtually always their boats. And, of course, there would be just a few among them availing themselves of the opportunity to earn some quick cash. Had we been able to use the regular ferry boat from the free port of Copenhagen to Malmo, the whole thing would have cost Dkr. 15,000 (U.S. $2,150). Now the price reached an amount of close to 15 million kroner (U.S. $2,150,000). Even today, the effects remain of this tremendous economic exertion, which a majority of the Jews could perform only by incurring debts. The creditors probably assumed that the Danish Jewish community would, in due course, recognize its responsibility in this respect. I am happy to note that this assumption proved correct.

The second point—the only one I feel it reasonable to mention in regard to my personal fortunes—is that my and my family's road and route led us, first, to the vicarage of Orslev, near Slagelse, fifty-five miles west of Copenhagen. There the perfectly wonderful Reverend Hans Kildeby put three rooms (virtually his whole residence) at our disposal. Later, our journey to Sweden was determined; we were to embark on the east coast of Falster (the island south of Zealand, on which Copenhagen is situated) and to reach Sweden at Trelleborg, near the western tip of the south coast of that country. We stopped over at the Bishop's palace at Nykobing on Falster, where Bishop Plum and his wife within a few days

entertained about one hundred and fifty refugees, providing them cover and food.

On Friday night, October 8, 1943, three boats put to sea from a place called Haesnaes. In our boat, there were nineteen persons —it was fit for four or five. The departure took place at 7 p.m. By daybreak the following morning, an idiotic skipper had used eleven hours to carry us to Gedser—the small town on the southern tip of Falster, whose port was the terminal of the main ferry route between Germany and Denmark. The fellow had never before done any real sailing, and we ourselves had to take over and make sure of a change of course: Gedser, after all, was teeming with Germans. An American called Flender, in his book on the rescue of the Danish Jews, reports that I, before taking over the wheel, knocked the skipper down and out with a straight right; this is the product of Mr. Flender's imagination. But, after cruising for a full nineteen hours, we did reach safely a small fishermen's village called Lilla Beddinge, on the south coast of Sweden. Shortly before our arrival, we ran out of fuel, but Swedish fishermen had observed us and rowed out to take us aboard. They had never before in their lives seen Jews or refugees, not to mention Jewish refugees. But through the radio and daily press they were informed of what was going on. They put us ashore, invited us to their homes, and displayed a cordiality and kindness which did not fall short of the helpfulness with which we had been sent away from home.

During October, 1943, about 6,500 Jews managed to cross the Sund from Denmark to Sweden. Later, twice that number of Danish Gentiles were to reach Sweden—some genuine resistance fighters, others less genuinely so. As the Swedish police advanced in its interrogations of them, there turned out to be a few hundred of the latter category insisting that it was they who had blown up the Forum. This is mentioned mainly for its curiosity.

The Danish Jews had once more found the old Jewish experience confirmed that evil times are most evil to Jews, that during an

"exceptional state of affairs"—the Danish term for "state of emergency"—such as the one to which Denmark was subjected, they were the most exceptional exceptions. Almost everybody else could dare to stay at home and weather the storm reinforced by a sense of solidarity and common fate. The Danish Jews had had to sneak away from their homes like thieves in the night, and now they had no access to their fatherland. In Sweden, there were light and tobacco and coffee—by then almost unknown commodities in Denmark. But all of us felt that we would have greatly preferred to stay at home with the darkness and deprivation. Still we were safe and sound, and this is the strongest impression on the minds of those whose lives have been directly endangered. The job at hand, now, was to settle for the time being, to find a place to live and a source of daily bread—before indulging in meditations as to when one might return home, how long the "millenium" was going to last.

One true story, though it sounds like an anecdote, from the landing in Sweden may fittingly conclude this chapter. It is the remark of a Danish Jew who at long last found himself safely ashore in Sweden, and said, "Now I understand why Denmark had to cede the provinces east of the Sund to Sweden in 1658. Because, if these provinces had still been Danish—and therefore occupied by the Germans as well as the rest of our country—*where should the Danish Jews have fled to?*"

There just may be something to it.

State-Employed Refugee Rabbi: 1943-1945

Thus, hospitable Sweden in the autumn of 1943 received about 6,500 Jewish refugees from Denmark. A small number of Danish Jews, mainly if they were married to non-Jews, remained in Denmark and actually were left alone by the Germans. A few single persons "went underground," changing names and residences. The more than one-hundred-year-old mother of the late prominent reciter of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales, Jacob Texiere, was transferred from a small Jewish home for the aged to a flat in the center of Copenhagen, where she went under the name—though not officially—of *"saboteur Jensen."*

Some Jews who had Gentile spouses were accompanied by them to Sweden. Many so-called half-Jews (persons with one Jewish parent) might, under the special German regulations for Denmark, have stayed, but preferred to cross the Sund. In one case, I met a one-sixteenth Jew in Sweden. When I asked him what had made him leave home, he replied that one could never know, and one had better be on the safe side. The passage across the Sund was close to one hundred per cent successful, although

a few did perish en route, and another small number were betrayed or otherwise ferreted out by the Germans.

There has been a lot of guessing at the reason why the Germans *permitted the flight to be successful.* Because this was what happened, and I do not have the slightest doubt on this point. The assumption that the success was due to the colossal stupidity of the Germans, and that they never noticed anything, in my view is as foolish as the notion of the Germans that the people in this country could be termed *die dummen Dänen* [the silly Danes]. Of course, the Germans knew perfectly well what was going on and, of course, they could have put a stop to it, had they decided to do so. So, the fortunate thing was that they did not want to. Certainly there was a group among them, the Gestapo, which was eager enough. But it was not strongly represented in Denmark. The other groups, the army to whom the Hitler regime had, by then, definitely become the target of aversion and passive resistance, and Best and his crowd—well, it may sound incredible, but was nevertheless true—did not want to have their debit accounts charged more than they already were. The army was not without a noble tradition and *was bound* to resent what happened. And Best was not without some presentiment as to where things were going. His dreams, probably, were already nightmares with visions of a settling of scores. So, fleeing Danes who fell into the hands of the *Gestapo* were lost. Other Germans closed both eyes, simply *did not want* to see anything.

Now, these 6,500 Jews dispersed over all of vast Sweden from Ystad and Trelleborg in the south to Oeverkalix (one hundred miles northwest of Haparanda) in the north. If the refugees had relatives in Sweden, they said so on arrival, and were permitted to join these relatives, even if they lived in Stockholm, Gothenburg, or Malmo. The rest of us were accommodated in some sort of camps, mainly summer pensions and rest homes closed during the winter season.

My own family wandered from Lilla Beddinge to Akarp Folk High School, halfway between Malmo and Lund, to Kristianstad, where we got some sort of quarters of our own, and finally to Malmo. In Kristianstad, we lived in a defunct kitchen in the cellar of a small hotel. It was so inadequate that the kind ladies from the local branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom coming to arrange a lecture appointment with me, cried with commiseration, depressed at the sight of such "highly placed" people like us having descended to such depths. We did not cry ourselves, but we were not very happy either.

There was little prospect of getting out of this ex-gas-kitchen, particularly because it seemed so very difficult to find employment for which I was qualified. When the Danish legation in Stockholm had established a refugee administration, I thought there was some hope. After all, 6,500 people would need a priest. Chief Rabbi Friediger had not been able to come to Sweden. He and his son, and all others who had been held in internment by the Germans at the time of the raid against the Jews, were taken directly aboard the ship which carried the deported Jews from Denmark to a German port on the way to Theresienstadt concentration camp. It seemed that my services might be urgently sought as the spiritual advisor whom the Danish Jews would so obviously need. In the first round, nothing came of it. Professor Stephan Hurwitz, who had been appointed to head the refugee administration, gave the reason for the negative answer (which he, no doubt, regretted very much). He said that, at least in name, the administration was financed by Danish state funds, and since, according to paragraph this and that in the Danish constitution, state funds might be used for the national church, but not for other religious denominations or communities, it would be unconstitutional to appoint me to serve as a rabbi. Thus, matters had not yet reached the point of temporarily suspending a *secondary* constitutional clause—whose implications might even be

argued for or against—although it was known that most of the *primary* clauses had been invalidated for the time being.

In short: In December, 1943, I obtained an appointment by the Stockholm Jewish community as the Rabbi to the Jews in the refugee accommodations. In the course of twenty-five days of travel every month, I was to "cover" the numerous camps with their thousands of Jews, providing spiritual advice, service, lectures, and lessons. "Wie macht man Hagel?" was, at the time when fire-insurance was still a novelty, the question a man asked who had suffered so many fires that he could obtain no insurance against more of the same, but was offered insurance against hail. Indeed, how was I to make hail, how to do the impossible in a country stretching over 1,200 miles from north to south, as was to be my duty according to decisions around a green table in Stockholm? What could be the value of lessons taking place, at best, once a month?

In the view of the old, very distinguished Chief Rabbi in Stockholm, Professor Marcus Ehrenpreis, lessons should be my primary concern. In the circumstances, he was my superior, and I was to report to him. Frankly, he was not a very pleasant man to deal with. His least appealing quality was a far advanced egotism. Perhaps it was not quite unfounded. The fact that he had, together with Theodor Herzl, signed the summons to the First Zionist Congress, made him sort of an historic personality while he was still alive. He could also boast a considerable literary production, since in a popular, but efficient, manner he had written on vital parts of Jewish history in Swedish. Much incense had been burned on his altar, because his use of the Swedish language was considered masterful. But the fulsome praise was, as one might suspect, exaggerated. Like any other foreigner in Sweden, he had let his manuscripts be checked by someone to whom Swedish was the mother tongue. "His" mastery of the language, thus, was not absolutely his own. He should rather have been complimented on his lively style, and his unquestioned dramatic flair, which were

noticeable throughout his descriptions. Altogether, to put it in a nice way, he possessed a great descriptive talent, which served him also in the rhetorical field. Although his accent, when he spoke Swedish, was not becoming at all, his congregation considered him an outstanding orator. With his patriarchal appearance and his impression of elevated remoteness from all he wanted to stay aloof from, he had become the grand old man of the Stockholm community. To me, to this very day, it seems inconceivable that this great man should have been afraid of me.

My reputation as a good speaker ought not to have discomfited a man of such standing. Nevertheless, this was exactly the case. He decided that the first thing I was to do when I was visiting a camp was to assemble the children and teach them. Service and sermon, even lectures, were to be exceptions.

I could not oblige Ehrenpreis in this. My most important task had not even been anticipated, much less mentioned. It simply consisted in *relaying greetings* from person to person, from family to family. In hundreds of cases, one Danish Jew did not know the whereabouts and circumstances of another—*whether* that other one was in Sweden at all, *where* he had landed, *how* his affairs stood. Just as medieval wandering singers were welcome wherever they went not merely because they could sing, but because they brought news of what went on in the world, so I was well received all over Sweden. It was less because of my ability to speak than because I just might know the answer to some question of a personal nature, or to some problem of principle or of practical arrangement, which had, until then, gone unanswered. In this way, I became advisor to bewildered and confused people in the camps, people who were now, due to the extraordinary accommodations, facing hitherto unknown problems. Many unpleasant characteristics, under these narrow living conditions, with no normal separating space between complete strangers and overdimensioned self-assertive urges went hand in hand with the dissolution of

established moral concepts and patterns of behavior. To me, having now literally become a traveling salesman in religion, there was a tremendous load of work in this "advisory" activity. If time permitted, most people would like me to lecture on some Danish national subject—and nothing else. Preferably no service—that was so very remote now! A majority of the Danish Jews rescued to Sweden, during the first few months after arriving over there, were still so stunned by the disaster which had befallen them that the miracle of their rescue had not yet dawned upon their minds.

As a matter of fact, I dedicated myself with much energy to my task, and I had the satisfaction that my visits to these Danish Jews, who were homeless in more than one sense of the word, calmed and consoled many among them. Meanwhile, Ehrenpreis remained sour and disagreeable in his criticisms of my way of handling the job, and the day arrived when I felt that the limit had been reached. Although a refugee, I had some self-respect left. Therefore, in March, 1944, I notified the Stockholm community that I felt unable to carry on with the tasks entrusted to me, and I made no secret at all of the reasons.

But on the very day when I had mailed this information to the community, the Reverend Poul Borchsenius, "the shooting saboteur Reverend" from Randers in Northern Jutland, accompanied me to Professor Hurwitz for deliberations on a complete reform in the field of spiritual services to the Danish Jewish refugees. The Christian Danes in Sweden (by then half as many as the Jews) enjoyed, through the refugee administration, the services of three ministers: Borchsenius in the Stockholm district, Marcus Kofod in Gothenburg and surroundings, K. L. Astrup in Malmo and South Sweden. The Jews had no one. The professor agreed that this did not make sense, and declared himself willing to take the matter up with the Danish minister, Royal Chamberlain Kruse. Within a few days, the two of them confirmed that, in the circumstances, the strict constitutional stipulations could not be consid-

ered valid. Thus, for the first time in their history, Danish Jews were granted a rabbi appointed and paid by a responsible state authority. Sadly enough, he was a refugee in a foreign land, but it was still a remarkable event. The letter of appointment, valid as of April 1, 1944, made it quite clear that I was not merely to be a "camp rabbi." I was to be religious minister to the Danish Jews in Sweden. The deputy chairman of the community in Copenhagen, Karl Lachmann, was living in Malmo, and he was the first one whom I visited in order to inform him officially of the news.

In his pleasant way, he chuckled and said, "I'll be damned if this isn't the first time you've been kicked upstairs."

C. B. Henriques, who lived in Gothenburg, was likewise informed by me in a letter, and he had kind congratulations as well. This appointment, he wrote, was an important matter to all Danish Jews, and was "bound to have consequences once we can return home again."

Incidentally, my new position entitled me to travel first class on the railways, which was in itself a valuable promotion in view of the many and very long journeys which my position necessitated. But my salary, too, was better than the one I had had as an employee of the Stockholm Jewish community, and there was even an additional monthly grant for each child that I still had to provide for. Out of our first five children, the three eldest were able to manage on their own, leaving two others to be supported at home. But yet another one, the sixth and irrevocably the last —a little daughter—was born in Malmo, on March 30, 1944. Thus, in a way, my wife and I had had her along with us, when in October, 1943, we set out on our dangerous journey.

The treasury of the refugee administration was, of course, immediately advised to take this increase in my family into account with regard to the salary due on April 1st. They were almost unaffected. Shortly before, the similarly state-employed administrator of the Tyringe camp, a Copenhagen lawyer called Heilbuth,

had conveyed the news that his wife had given birth to live triplets, so the treasury was, so to speak, shockproof at the time of my happy news.

Thus, I took up my new vocation. To the extent that I had counted upon support or cooperation on the part of the resident Rabbis in the Swedish Jewish communities, I encountered disappointment from the outset. They disguised their aversion to a colleague not quite as incapable as they might have wished him to be with the bigoted notion that, by intrigue, I had maneuvered my way into a position rightly belonging to Friediger. Some of them were inclined to classify me with the former "Rabbis of the Crown" in Russia, who, having been appointed by the authorities, lent themselves to the fight conducted by the government against the Rabbis chosen and employed by the communities. Others were more kind, including the always humane Second Rabbi in Stockholm, Kronheim, as well as A. I. Jacobson, also in Stockholm, employed by a private group. But on the whole, I was in terrible isolation. I was Rabbi without a congregation, without synagogue, and, worst of all, without one single theological book of reference. I was to preach twenty-five times a month. It was tough not to have access to even one single book from which one might steal one single idea for one single sermon. There was nothing to do but take a deep breath and go ahead as best I could.

Looking back on the subsequent year, it gives me great happiness to think that I was in a position to be of some help and service to quite a few people. As, gradually, the ice melted which had initially deep-frozen many minds, they became accessible to serious and positive impressions. Already with the approach of Passover—a very great holiday with deep roots in Jewish family life—a noticeable thaw was setting in. Hearts were opened, festering wounds began to heal.

It was of the greatest value to me that Precentor Grabowski from the Copenhagen synagogue was appointed to accompany me

and function at services all over Sweden, although it was mainly on account of him that I never dared repeat a sermon already held once. No one, not Precentor Grabowski either, should be able to say of me that I was hard up for subjects for my sermons. Apart from this, everyone tremendously enjoyed his outstanding voice, and his great efforts merited much appreciation. It was mainly due to him that there were very large audiences at all our services, which were attended also by many non-Jews.

To my great joy, Rabbi Jacobson of the "black" orthodox clique in Copenhagen, who had written *Glimpses of Judaism* with me back in 1941, was appointed my assistant rabbi. Officially he was employed as "assistant to the priest to the Danish Jews," since the legal and formal rules did not permit any other version. To "Wolli," the nickname under which he was known, and his small congregation a "rabbi" and a "priest" were not exactly synonymous. Therefore, his eyes and mind were set flashing when he read his formal letter of appointment. We got quite a good laugh out of it together, and there always remained full harmony between us in our common work. His special domain was the Helsjön camp near Gothenburg. Here, there lived two hundred, predominantly orthodox Jews, and Wolli, who had his and his family's temporary home in Stockholm, stayed at Helsjön as often and as long as his nerves could stand it. In the negotiations preceding all these arrangements—as well as a lot of others—the later Supreme Court barrister and deputy chairman of the Copenhagen community, Povl Melchior (an extremely distant relative, who to my great regret died a few years ago) was incredibly understanding and helpful. Also the heads of the refugee administration, first Stephan Hurwitz, then Sigurd Wechselmann, now prefect of Præstø county (Denmark is divided into twenty-two such administrative units), supported me in every way compatible with their status as Danish civil servants. Great services were performed also by my friend of many years, Erik Hertz. Unavoidably, I had to deal

with countless problems of a personal nature, insignificant from an administrative point of view, but vital to those concerned by them. Hertz was the regular, warmhearted, and faithful helper in all these matters.

So, I kept traveling crisscross all over Sweden, interpreting and expounding scriptural texts and issues to the Danish Jews. To the best of my ability, I endeavored to keep up the courage and spirits in those who had the worst of times. Included were those whose relatives had been deported to Theresienstadt, those most unfortunately situated in their Swedish environment, those worried lest their exile last for the rest of their lives. Sorrow and sadness had many faces; and grief, in many cases, knew no bounds. Gradually, thanks to both Danish and Swedish authorities, part of the camps could be shut down, and a certain normalization of life made itself felt. However, many unavoidably had no choice but to remain in camps and homes on terms of mass accommodation. Only at the end of the war could they recover their private lives—quite a few even later still.

In some of the small and medium-sized towns of Sweden, the communities made their small synagogues available for "Danish" service. Hälsingborg, Lund, Landskrona, Kristianstad, and Norrköping displayed such decent hospitality. In some places, no synagogues existed at all. There, we gratefully accepted offers to use Christian parish halls, cinema halls, and ramshackle huts of every kind. Occasionally, I had to use even beer cases as pulpits, which, in a way, could be rather inspiring. The three large synagogues in the three major cities remained closed to me. In Stockholm, I had to use a small private synagogue. In Gothenburg, I rented the students' association's assembly hall for a service attended by more people than they had ever had in the main synagogue. The Jewish community in Malmö helped us make possible special services on the high holidays in the autumn of 1944. They took place in a fully adequate hall in a local lodge building, of which

nothing negative could be said. But the synagogue—no! That was not available to the "state-employed" Rabbi.

Whereas the Rabbis in these three towns did not grasp that this state of affairs was improper and intolerable, it was gradually realized by the boards of their communities. Thus, negotiations got under way, first in Gothenburg where Rabbi Dr. Hermann Löb eventually got open to argument; later in Stockholm. Peace was concluded, and Danish services were held in the synagogues to tremendous enthusiasm of Danish and Swedish Jews and a good many Gentiles. Ehrenpreis deserves the credit earned by a person who wins the hardest of all victories: victory over himself. Without his vote of "yes," nothing could have been done. But he did say yes and personally attended the service we held in the large, beautiful synagogue at Wahrendorffsgatan in Stockholm.

At long last, the fortress of Malmö was ripe for honorable capitulation. By then, however, we were so close to the final and decisive turn of events in the outside world that religious care to Danish refugees in Sweden was also approaching its end.

It was now April, 1945.

On Thursday, April 12th, telephone and telegraph lines all over Sweden were red hot with the big news: "Tonight, at 9 p.m., the Danish Jews from Theresienstadt are going to arrive in Hälsingborg!" This was the message. It is necessary to point out here that the fate of the Theresienstadt deportees was the worry weighing most heavily upon the minds of us who had reached safety in Sweden. Step by step, it had become obvious that the Germans had committed crimes on a hitherto unknown scale in Europe. One did not suspect *how* total was the dimension of these crimes. It could not even be guessed that the number of Jews victimized by this most atrocious outrage of world history reached six million, but clearly there had been horrifying misdeeds incited by both malignity and despair. Despair, indeed, was the factor appearing to make possible the most terrible possibility of all. Were also the

five hundred Danish Jews in Theresienstadt to bear, at the last moment, bloody testimony to the triumph of inhumanity?

"Tonight, at 9 p.m., the Danish Jews from Theresienstadt are going to arrive in Hälsingborg." It was electrifying, it was thrilling. But was it true? It *might* be. Red Cross transports, under the management of Count Folke Bernadotte, had already brought deported Norwegians and Danes of other categories to Sweden. The miracle might happen to the deportees in Theresienstadt as well.

They did *not* come! I stood that evening, together with quite a number of others who had learned what might be going to happen, at the enclosure around the ferry berth in Hälsingborg. The ferry arrived. The passengers disembarked—ten persons, routine travelers. Those of us who were waiting looked at each other.

"Tomfoolery, of course," it was said. "The Germans are not going to give up this prey."

There was also a man, a citizen of Hälsingborg, who insisted that he alone of all was "in the picture." If I would see him the next day at his office, he would confide the secret to me. I was there at the appointed hour. The great man put on his remotest glance and spoke," Something is going to happen, but not so soon. For the first fortnight, the Jews will not leave Theresienstadt; I know what I am talking about." These were his words as pronounced on Friday, April 13th, at 10 a.m. This was the exact day and hour when the Swedish Red Cross buses reached Theresienstadt, and when Chief Rabbi Friediger, the leading personality among the Danish Jews there, was told by the commander of the concentration camp that the return of the Danish Jews was to take place NOW.

Well, we didn't know a thing. We had nothing but the great man's words. And since, as is known, the caliph's pronouncement is wisdom, we spread his message. In one sense, it was a tremendous disappointment. But on the other hand, it sounded more

logical, more trustworthy than had the lightning surprise, and at least more hopeful than anything one would have dared to imagine only a few weeks earlier. On the Danish side, the underground daily *Information* had caught on to what was happening concerning both the many policemen deported in 1944 and the Jews; but they had not found the last piece in the puzzle either.

In the morning hours of Wednesday, April 18th, my good friend Louis Meyer was in a position to give me correct information. For days on end, he had been waiting at the ferry berth in Malmö for the several hundred sufferers, including his sister and her family, to turn up. That Wednesday, he managed to secure an entrance ticket for me, too, to the otherwise hermetically sealed-off port area. And thus, he and I were standing on the breakwater in Malmö as the first ones to wave "hello" to the repatriates. It was an unforgettable moment. Crowded together, they were standing on the ferry, leaning over the rails, behind the portholes of the saloons, at bow and stern, staring full of expectation towards this promised land in whose sanctuary their friends and relatives had been living, while they themselves were in enemy hands. Never had this old Swedish ferry, whose hull should have long since been crushed to matchwood, been more beautiful than when, proud as some giant swan, it carried its precious load to the berth in Malmö that April 18th. We who were standing on the shore and saw and recognized one after the other of the passengers, now bade them the same "welcome" with which we had ourselves been received by Swedish fishermen and other decent Swedes. What was happening was so incredible as to seem unreal. And yet, it was no less than palpable world history. After twelve years, the "millenium" was in the throes of death. Humanity began breathing once again.

Gradually—we are still in the port of Malmö, on April 8, 1945—ecstasy began to recede. The ferry came alongside, people began disembarking, excitedly looking for a reception committee, a brass band, flags, and toasts. But, alas, there was nothing of the kind!

The whole thing had happened so quickly, the arrival had followed so headlong on the news that it was imminent, and it was so strictly forbidden to interfere in any detail with the Red Cross handling of the transport that, really, there could be nothing but the modest greetings of two deficient men. The disappointment among the just arrived was enormous. When they entered Denmark, they had been received like princes and celebrated as heroes. Here, when they met those closest to them, there was absolutely nothing. Believing Louis Meyer and me to be representatives of a committee of honor, they concluded that they had never seen a more wretched committee.

"Let me tell you this," one of the younger among them told me, "you've handled this affair most poorly."

One of the older ones joined him, "Compared with this, now, Theresienstadt was *something,* at least." It was hard having to listen to these reproaches, and it was wonderful, wonderful indeed. Imagine, there were the Theresienstadt people, alive and kicking, sticking out a mile! And they could grumble, and how! Hope was not only not dead, it was perfectly alive! It was intoxicating reality!

So, once more, communications were aglow all over Sweden. The Jews in Malmö, quick as lightning, were streaming to the port and thronging around the enclosures. At a pinch, one can embrace even with the eyes. This everybody did, while chocolates, tobacco, and tidbits were raining down upon the berth, and for a while, everything else was forgotten. Throughout Sweden, the happy messages echoed: "They're here, they're here!" The Malmö synagogue, at evening service, was blazing with festive lighting and, here and there, the cheers were interrupted by quiet prayer to the Lord, who had not forgotten His small Danish Jewish congregation, by thanksgiving to the Power above all Powers.

To the stylish stationmaster at Malmö ferry berth, April 18th was a day of trial. The new arrivals were to be transported in

groups and with ample supervision—well, frankly, to delousing—and back again. They were to be fed, and they were to have their names registered. Two special trains were to carry them farther north to temporary quarantine, one train to Strängnaes, and one to the vicinity of Halmstad. All this took somewhere between eight and ten hours, and all that time hardly anyone would listen to the poor stationmaster, who might have been justified had he acquired an anti-Semitic complex from watching all these Jewish busybodies who would do anything except obey instructions. But by midnight at least the Tylösand train was able to depart, while the other one was delayed so it could only be hooked onto the express train for Stockholm the next morning.

I traveled by that same train, as I was scheduled to speak at a joint Danish-Swedish assembly in the capital that next day. I don't even remember the original title of my lecture. Instead, I produced an eyewitness report of the landing of the deportees—of what one had said . . . and how the other had looked. . . . It was all one great exciting experience—in a way sort of compensation because we were absent from home when, at long last, the hour of freedom struck for Denmark on the evening of Friday, May 4th. For this, too, we shall remain ungrateful to the Germans—that we could not be together with our fellow countrymen at that happy moment. It marked the end of five years of darkness and gloom over Denmark.

Back Home—An Editor

Once the German capitulation was an established fact, the Danish refugee administration in Stockholm began evacuation plans prepared long in advance for the transportation home of the Danish refugees. At the same time ninety per cent of the officials serving with the administration were discharged. There could be no objection to this. My "fall upstairs" of March, 1944, was now followed by a fall in a more usual direction. All things considered, I could, for a change, feel happy that things were moving so. It was of decisive importance that, as soon as everyday life might follow normal channels again at home, there was a well-founded hope that I might achieve the position in the community to which, in the words of a great number of people, I would be entitled following my work in Sweden.

It is natural and necessary to insert a few words here on the historical importance of the return of the Danish Jews, and on the atmosphere in which it took place. It is known that the world noted and was overwhelmingly impressed by the help of large parts of the Danish people to the Jews during the critical days of the

autumn of 1943. The King and the nation have shared the homage offered, in this context, to the name of Denmark and all it stands for.

I think that there is a point here of which every Dane in the present generation should be conscious. No doubt, there are many reasons for the high reputation of Denmark in world public opinion. Hans Christian Andersen — and the Hans Christian Andersen film — is one of them. Butter and beer and chinaware and architect-designed chairs and the Little Mermaid also count —as does the rumor, the basically true rumor that the Danes are a kindly people, whose vast majority reacts in a polite and pleasant manner to any event and vicissitude it encounters.

But even the grand total of all this would not produce fame, would not turn Denmark into a country which, beyond having had an author of fairy tales, as it has been said, is herself a living fairy tale. Not even the changing of the guards at the royal palace or at the Tivoli would adequately explain the phenomenon. But October, 1943, does—the resolute and heroic efforts to rescue the Danish Jews does. Wherever one may have traveled through the more than two decades since, this exceptional contribution to the history of genuine tolerance is what has been pointed out as the all-decisive factor. This, too, is what attracts more tourists to this country than all museums and landscapes and seashores together.

Whenever I have been addressed on the subject—particularly during a sort of official visit to New York in the spring of 1963—I have expressed agreement, agreement definitely with Denmark's fame and, in a way, with the underlying argument. But, then, I have proceeded with my own contribution to the proper evaluation of the course of events with the following: All honor is due to the deed of 1943. In breadth as in depth, it surpasses any corresponding accounts from other countries. And the more people representing *Christian* Denmark throughout the world insist that

there is nothing at all to praise, that there was nothing to it but an outstretched hand to good neighbors and fellow men in distress, the more I, as a spokesman for the Danish Jews, will say: "Oh, yes, there is something to talk about: A fine chapter was on that occasion added to Danish history."

BUT! When all is said and done, one doesn't yet know anything really vital about a nation merely because, as the Danes did during those days, it sends its Jews away under the very nose of the enemy, and because it helps them reach a foreign country. *It just might be* that, basically, one was delighted to get rid of the Jews —even in such a decent manner. While many nations banished or murdered their Jews, Denmark rescued hers—and rid herself of them. The decisive proof, however, that the world's high opinion of Denmark is correct, is to be found in *the manner in which we were received, when we came back home.* It can be considered certain that there were quite a few rather worthy Danes planning a *nimmer Widersehen* [goodbye and let's not not meet again]. This is certain, and it is not altogether impossible to understand. The positions left by the Jews were occupied. Their evacuated homes were inhabited. Their deserted shops had been taken over by others. A quiet hope that those who had left would never claim reinstatement and take possession of their property again must have sneaked into some minds.

And then, suddenly, we were back, each one looking out for what was his. How was Denmark going to receive us in such circumstances? This was a question which very much preoccupied the minds of the Jews returning from Sweden. And it is Denmark's undying honor, *the truly great deed,* that the repatriates were met with a hearty "welcome home"; that there was a sincere, and not just a hypocritical, expression of joy at our good fortune; that many insisted that only now that the Danish Jews were back home was Denmark *whole* again. The stain cast by the occupation power on the Danish coat of arms when, in 1943, it declared the

Jews to have been "eliminated from Danish society," had at long last been washed away. Denmark had shown herself able to defend her Jews, and this provided a sense of cleanliness and pride. Sure, there were the very best reasons for Denmark's good name in the wide world: 1943—all very well! 1945—all-decisive!

Amidst all this greatness and glory stood "little me," and I did not feel too much at ease. There is no reason to waste many words on the fact that after the return my efforts in Sweden became the victim of a conspiracy of silence on all levels in the community. Once more, I was left holding the bag. The Copenhagen synagogue was rededicated in late June, 1945. It was natural that Chief Rabbi Friediger, who had lived through the hell of Theresienstadt, should occupy the center of the stage, why, the whole stage. But I felt it to be shameful, unjust, and bitter that not a shade of even the very smallest function was left to me. Two—exactly two—persons expressed the view afterwards that it was "odd and wrong" that I was not included in the program at all. But even these two felt that, if I had merely been granted some minor function at this one occasion, then the score would be fairly settled. In short, I had done my share, so I was free to get out. The board of the community felt, of course, that it had a problem on its hands: That problem was named Marcus Melchior. In particular, C. B. Henriques felt this way. It is always a sad thing to be a problem child, but most so, if one is approaching the age of fifty. I even had the worst of both worlds: To the outside, I was very much included in what was called the Jewish problem; internally, things stood as explained. It was too bad from the board's point of view that there was nothing left to be done with the foundation protocols! I had finished them off during the early war years, so now they had to knit their brows to try to invent something new.

It *was invented*—something to keep things afloat for yet another round. At the reinstatement of a Danish government in May, 1945, a Ministry for Special Affairs had been established, with a Copen-

hagen branch called the Central Office for Special Affairs. The institution was primarily to assist the returning refugees and deportees in their rehabilitation and general readjustment. At the very outset the institution got eleven thousand cases to deal with; and, of course, a considerable number of them were of an extremely difficult nature. Many Jews, in the hour of flight, had not just left their firms, workshops, etc., in the *temporary* care of others, but had actually deeded them over, often on most unfavorable terms. In many cases, the flats they had evacuated were not available. The municipal authorities in Greater Copenhagen had made most remarkable efforts, paid rent due so that part of the returnees could move right back into their homes, or sublet the flats (which was, for example, the case with my own apartment) on the basis of a settlement between the municipality of Frederiksberg (part of Greater Copenhagen) and my landlord, the architect Georg Ponsaing. In such cases, the restoration of the status quo ante was a matter of just a couple of months. But a host of people really came back and found no roofs over their heads. Beyond this almost common phenomenon, many had *personal* problems demanding individual consideration, and in the Central Office a staff of excellent people were occupied with relief to the problems of their fellow men. It could not be avoided that, when thus confronted for the first time with specific Jewish needs and wishes of a religious nature, they were bewildered by the particular nature of these issues. Therefore, an arrangement was set up by the Central Office and the Jewish community under which I was to serve as a kind of liaison officer between the two institutions: to assist the Jews when applying to the Office, and also to be advisor to the Office when it dealt with those seemingly most particular, often enough even most peculiar, cases.

Having always been moderate and inclined towards the center, in so many phases and aspects of life, I did not feel unfamiliar with the tasks confronting me. For a while, I got my own room

and reception hours at the Central Office, and I had the privilege of providing some help in the grievous circumstances of many. I want to quote this small passage from a report written by a department head, C. V. Andersen, in the monthly of the Jewish community, "The Jewish-religious interests often complicated the administration to the Gentile staffers of the Office. But thanks to the advice and the assistance provided by Rabbi Dr. Marcus Melchior, who is functioning as liaison man between the community and our office, all difficulties arising have found their solution." Most difficult was the problem of housing. The fact is that people who had spent twenty months in camps in Sweden, on their return to Denmark, in many cases faced a prolongation of camp life for another ten months. Unhappy are the memories of the sites and institutions through which 1,300 such repatriates had to pass, staying for shorter or longer times. Even on April 1, 1946, a hundred were still without a home of their own, and still exposed to the camp psychosis, taxing mental strength so greatly.

To me, there is no doubt whatsoever that many even among those who came relatively *most unhurt* through the years of disaster still bear the mark of their experiences, on their bodies and minds alike. That the same is true, and to a more serious extent, of those who *had the worst* of it, above all the prisoners of Theresienstadt and other concentration camps, goes without saying. The number of the victims of the Nazis is not complete with those who perished between 1933 and 1945. To this very day, people are dying before they ought to, as a direct consequence of the brutal attack against their life and health, which set its mark even upon the survivors.

Even before the Central Office wound up its activities in the summer of 1946, I had taken on a new occupation. A kind reader may remember that, upon my return to Denmark in 1934, I had been charged with writing most of the articles in a periodical published within the community, which had to be discontinued as of

April 9, 1940. As a gradual normalization progressed in the lives of the returned Danish Jews, and as people had an *address* again, there appeared a growing urge to have this periodical revived. The "old" editor, who had mostly handled the technical and administrative sides, and who had thus carried a considerable load of work, did not want to resume his position. Journalism was not really his line. Neither was it, actually, mine. But, still, the job did fall to me. My economic position was such that I could ill afford to decline when a self-appointed editorial committee asked me to sit down in the editor's chair of a new monthly. It was even to be bi-monthly now, and to have a new, more officious and serious-sounding name. As is known, the devil, when in need, will eat flies. I, in my need, became the editor who wrote as well as edited the paper, was the responsible and liable chief as well as the errand boy and its thousand-piece-band.

In a way, of course, it was a promotion. I was fetched from the stokehold and stationed on the bridge. But, to tell the truth, I was far from happy, neither with the editor's *title,* nor with the job. In Sweden, I had again been specializing in the *spoken* word, and most of all I had spoken about what was dearest to my heart. Now, I was to return to writing, I who had to take preliminary runs each time I was to move a pen, I who was a rabbi and not a journalist, I who had never produced a report of a fire or an election campaign, who had never been an apprentice at even the most modest newspaper. I had now to display the ability to make pronouncements on any event at home or abroad. In my new position, I was also to handle small details of a local nature which formerly I had been able to avoid. Indeed, there was nothing much to be cheerful about. Only one aspect seemed tempting and promising: that of being entrusted with the attempt to create a Jewish medium on a high level, one which might help mold opinions and attitudes, one which—to an extent, in contrast with its predecessor—would have to serve no interest but that of spreading the truth and could seri-

ously contribute to the vitality of the community.

Well, it did not work out as well as all that. There were faults on both sides. Neither the editor nor the readers were up to the demands of the situation. The editor could not forget about his degree in divinity and, as to the readers, a good number of them had not yet recovered the mental balance which had been so thoroughly shaken. Thus, not much was needed to cause irritation and give offense. The fact is that some of my articles, not always really bad ones, earned me more blame than praise. This made me feel that I was being unjustly judged, and I soon became a victim of disappointment and grief. Ever more, it would seem that I had to face a choice between carrying on as I had begun, with the prospect of making enemies out of all those who considered themselves wiser than I, or to place the periodical on the uninvolved level of disengaged reporting, which seemed to be the only alternative.

Then, unexpectedly, the whole thing went to pieces. In February, 1947, an issue went out which bore witness to my readiness to throw in the towel. My sole personal contribution carried no byline, and the whole remainder of the fat issue was so dull that I could tell myself, "Now, at least, they must be satisfied." Whether "they" were, remains a secret to this day. During the subsequent months, Copenhagen suffered a printers' strike with all its unsettling by-products. Our periodical was forced to lie dormant and, with some bitterness, I had to state the apparent fact that, if I had to be an editor at all, then all concerned were doing best as long as there was a printers' strike on. The next issue appeared only in August, 1947. By then, my name had disappeared as an editor and been replaced by that of Torben Meyer. Meanwhile, I had become the Chief Rabbi in the Copenhagen Jewish community, and the task of editing its publication had fallen into more professionally capable hands than mine.

One point remains to be made in the obituary for my performance as an editor: During subsequent years, people would ask

quite frequently "How can it be that he [i.e., I] blundered so much when he was an editor, while as a priest he is much more circumspect and actually represents us quite well?" The answer, then, is this: First of all, of course, I *deny* having blundered as an editor. I did things *my* way, and shame on whoever does them differently. Secondly, any task must be handled according to the special responsibilities attached to it. As an editor, I wanted to be a journalist, a theological journalist, by all means, but still just a journalist with the full rights and duties of a journalist. As a rabbi, I am supposed, as far as possible, to look beyond things that are *here today and gone tomorrow,* and which are the primary preoccupation of the journalist, and to work more quietly as a spiritual advisor to people facing issues of *eternal values.* That is the whole difference. The journalist may—why, he should!—occasionally venture into the field of disunity and *split.* The priest should always attempt to *gather* in his domain. Even though there are always people who reject whatever serves the latter purpose, the vocation of the priest is unaffected by this. Both, the journalist and the priest alike, avail themselves of *the word.* But whereas the journalist's words are printed black on white, the priest's invisibly transcend the air. In some cases they pass unheard by the ear. In others they enter into seeking or wounded hearts and bring light and balmy relief.

The way things went, everything came into its proper place. Torben Meyer got the editor's chair, I the pulpit. Evidently, it wouldn't have worked too well the other way round.

With these last remarks, I have somewhat anticipated the sequence of events. It is part of the story in hand that, by the spring of 1946, I was so much fed up with my silly life in Copenhagen that I applied for the vacant position of rabbi in Malmö. Now, not a bad word about Malmö! The old claim that Malmö has only two sights of interest—namely, the Cathedral of Lund (a small town about fifteen kilometers from Malmö) and the city of Copen-

hagen on the other side of the Sound—is such a concentrate of anti-Swedish prejudice that it doesn't count at all.

After all, a considerable number of Danish Jews found Malmö an excellent sanctuary in the years 1943-1945. It was said at the time that, out of the Danish Jewish refugees in Sweden, the intelligentsia found its home in Stockholm, capital in Gothenburg, and the remainder, quite suitably, in Malmö. Being myself included in "the remainder," I have never taken this saying very hard. Of course, the Jewish community in Malmö can compare with that of Copenhagen no more than the town of Malmö compares with the city of Copenhagen. But if the Jewish community in Copenhagen would not employ a forty-nine-year-old rabbi as rabbi, the obvious thing to do was to take Malmö into consideration.

Let it be no secret that the Malmö community handled the issue of my candidature in a most petty manner. Instead of feeling highly honored at receiving the application of a capacity like mine —which was how I saw it—as spiritual leader to this not overwhelmingly large community, they insisted on applying to me all formalities involved in filling the vacancy. Although they knew me thoroughly since I had lectured there scores of times, and had also participated in their organizational affairs, they demanded a trial sermon and trial lessons with their religious students and more of the kind of me—things which would have been perfectly in order in the case of a man whom they had never seen or heard, but which were totally unjustified in my case.

But I did play the game. If I must face a choice between pettyness in Copenhagen and pettyness in Malmö, the latter still appeared desirable to me. However, in the very last moment before the Malmö community was to choose among the candidates, I withdrew my application—for two reasons. One was that the board of the Copenhagen community offered me a rather satisfactory settlement in the economic field, so that at least I was able to support myself. Fairly wide circles in the community had

made it clear to the board that it would be utterly unreasonable to chase me out into the cold—i.e., to Malmö—and that something had to be done to make sure that I would remain in Copenhagen. The other was that one of my rivals for the favors of Malmö boasted an outward apparition which was far more than I could compete with. He was the owner of a really first-rate beard. Already early in my career, I had had to put up with remaining beardless rather than displaying the goatee which would have represented my maximum possibility. Of course, I was not ignorant of the handicap I suffered in any competition for a rabbi's position.

When recently I visited a Danish teachers' seminar in order to take up various religious questions with the students, I was received with obvious disappointment in my appearance. "Great God, doesn't he look any more peculiar," one student said vociferously to his neighbor. I, of course, caught on to the remark and introduced myself to my listeners with the charming little anecdote about the beardless Jew who was asked why he did not wear the classical male adornment, and replied, "When the day comes on which I shall have to face the court of Heaven, I prefer to be asked: Jew, where is your beard?—rather than: Beard, where is your Jew?"

Anyhow, nothing came of the Malmö business, and my poor wife was happy. It was a prospect she had never liked.

Apart from this, the year 1946 was to offer, at its very end, a very special experience. I was elected delegate of the Danish Zionists to the 22nd Zionist Congress at Basle in December. The journey from Copenhagen to Basle took thirty-six hours. There were hours of delay at Padborg and at Flensburg, and at this German railway station hungry children made threatening gestures at the express train passengers. The journey through Germany, my first since 1934, was a grisly and ugly experience. At the outset, it would seem that the bombed rail yards and urban districts should be a source of satisfaction. They bore silent but eloquent

witness that at long last Germany was suffering the fate she had prepared for others; that now, there was at least one desolate, homeless German for each man or woman or child upon whom Germans had brought misery and homelessness. But the satisfaction quickly gave way to disgust. Normal people—and I would like to think of myself as normal—cannot entertain happiness of a diabolical sort. Quite soon, *I just did not want to see any more.* German wretchedness seemed an inadequate and inefficient cure for wounds and pain.

The Congress at Basle was—once more—dominated by the personality of the great Zionist leader of the time, Professor Chaim Weizmann. He, as president of the World Zionist Organization, had conducted the political negotiations with England from the time when the Balfour Declaration had seemed to create a lasting engagement between Great Britain and the Jewish people, to the days when a weak and timid England, out of fear of Hitler and Mussolini, had sneaked away from the fulfillment of all pledges and from all voluntarily accepted obligations. He, Weizmann, was now called to account by his own constituents at a time when England had created the biggest of all disappointments to Zionism —when, after the war, she let the fear of Stalin replace the fear of Germans and Italians, so that Palestine remained virtually closed to Jewish immigration.

During the days of the 22nd Zionist Congress, the Jewish "counter-terror" in Palestine reached a new climax. Weizmann condemned it and insisted that one could not conduct the struggle for pure aims with impure means, and he recommended negotiations with England about a partition of Palestine so as to achieve the establishment of a Jewish state in at least part of the country. In poor health, and almost blind as he was, he countered all attacks on his policy. Indeed, he was one of the most fascinating speakers one can imagine. Distinguished, diplomatic, noble in thought and language alike, but also penetrating and shrewd, witty and power-

ful in his way of expressing himself, he radiated a magic which not even his political opponents, among whom Ben Gurion certainly was not least outstanding, could escape.

But it was all no good: Weizmann could not get a majority's support for a policy of patience towards Britain, and the Congress wound up in rather wild confusion. When, a year and a half later, the state became a reality, Weizmann was recalled to the top position. Ben Gurion became prime minister, and Weizmann "ascended to the throne" of the presidency. His name, indelible in Jewish history, was spelled out in imperishable letters. That it was Chaim Weizmann, man of science, man of ethics, untiring advocate of the spirit of conciliation, who was elected president of the resurrected state, is a clear indication of the intellectual and spiritual makeup of the state as well as of the unique esteem in which this man was held.

Among the delegates at the Congress in Basle, there were quite a few whom I had known during earlier stages of my life, as a student in Berlin, or during the many Beuthen years. Twenty-five years had passed since my studies, and in some cases, of course, it was not at all easy to recognize one another. But one of the friends from days gone by, the former Berlin lawyer Dr. Arnold Barth, who had in the meantime been promoted to the position of executive manager of the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Tel Aviv, I recognized right away. He was obviously without the faintest notion of who I was. At long last, something dawned on him, and he said, "Are you—are you, by any chance, Melchior?"

"That's it," I answered.

And then, he replied in this manner, "It ought not to be permitted to anyone to look *so much* like himself after twenty-five years that *for this very reason* it is impossible to recognize him!" I am telling of this incident because I have rarely seen anyone get out of an embarrassment in such an elegant manner. After all, many of us are regularly confronted with similar situations and

problems, and this seems an excellent example of how well it is possible, despite all, to handle them.

During my stay at Basle, I was forced to economize to such an extent (the Bank of Denmark, at the time, hardly possessed any foreign currency at all) that, although it was my very first visit to Switzerland, I was unable to see anything other than Basle. I was in Switzerland for three weeks without seeing even one mountain, and I often thought of the story of a Polish rabbi, who had also been to Switzerland, and who on his return started his account of the journey with these words, "Switzerland *would have been* a very beautiful country, if there were not so many mountains there." I was not very well off, since food prices in Switzerland were much higher than in Denmark, and I could eat my fill only thanks to the hospitality of a couple, both former Copenhagen teachers, who now managed an orphanage at Basle. I had good grounds for opening *my* account of my Basle visit in this manner, "The Swiss are a nation of watchmakers and overchargers." Since then, I have been in Switzerland so often that my opinion of the Swiss as a nation is not as superficial as it was twenty years ago. But it is still an expensive place—as it is *bound* to be wherever the nominal difference of exchange rates exceeds the natural difference of price levels between Denmark and the country concerned.

When one evening in January, 1947, I reported to a large assembly in Copenhagen on events at the Zionist Congress, Chief Rabbi Friediger sat in the front row in the audience. A few months earlier, he had been admitted to the National Hospital in Copenhagen for a medical check-up because of coughing and lumbar pains. He had been discharged from the hospital with the assertion that there was nothing seriously the matter with him. The way he looked that evening, pale, emaciated, and fatigued, it was evident that he had not been told the full truth about his condition. In fact—as was learned a few months later—he was suffering, and

had been for a long time, from a very serious disease, which was now destroying what remained of his strength. Friediger's innate, almost childish naivete, however, permitted him to remain happily ignorant of how badly undermined was his state of health. A basic, deeply rooted belief that Providence had chosen him for something out of the ordinary, and that he was predestined for unusual earthly happiness, which would in turn enable him to take a central place in the solution of great tasks, had suffered a severe blow when the Germans had dragged him off to Theresienstadt.

But he had been compensated to an extent for this disappointment by a subsequent sense of martyrdom. Amidst imprisonment in the concentration camp, he had received, through a visiting Danish delegation, King Christian X's personal greeting. And now, in the beginning of 1947, he had even been created a Knight of Dannebrog. Yes, indeed, he was still the chosen of fate, a truly happy man, and illness probably merely meant another phase of martyrdom, which would be overcome as had been the case with Theresienstadt.

To the rest of us, it was hardly believable that this doomed man could mobilize sufficient energy to perform most of the numerous duties of his office. At the end of March, 1947, he officiated at the annual confirmation of girls in the synagogue. For two hours, he had to almost incessantly preach, examine, and bless, and he was up to the challenge. On the two first days of Passover, April 5th and 6th, he preached at the solemn services, though he performed only with the greatest (and visible) strain. The following day, it was said in the community his physician prescribed for him absolute rest. Nevertheless, it seemed like lightning from a not altogether darkened sky when, on April 9th, his sixty-third birthday, he departed this life. For twenty-seven years, he had officiated in the leading position of the community, and he had—notwithstanding all that could be criticized on the

general and personal level—done so with much dignity.

A person's death almost always affects the survivors in such a way that, in the first moment, they are stunned into silence, whereupon they begin talking ever so much. Dr. Friediger's death silenced the community with its dread, made it speechless with sympathy with itself and with Dr. Friediger's family. At the funeral, there were short memorial addresses by the chairman of the community—which position Karl Lachmann had taken over from C. B. Henriques—and by the chairman of the separate synagogue board. The Bishop of Copenhagen, Dr. Fuglsang-Damgaard, spoke a few words at the grave. That was all—the close of an era in the history of the community, which had begun as an idyll in a quiet haven, but which had changed to dangerous navigation on rough waves. Throughout all this Friediger had worked faithfully, with outstanding diligence and a genuine will to do his best. As it is granted but to few men to live up to their notions of their own significance and importance, it may be said in good conscience that Friediger wasn't, either, bigger than the rest of us. There was nothing *inspiring* in his honesty. But at his funeral, his community honored him by turning out a thousand strong. Silently, it paid him its thanks for his toil through a lifetime.

Immediately after the funeral, talk was vigorously resumed. What now? How about the succession to Dr. Friediger? The community's elected body convened a week after his death. It was urgent to have the position filled, since almost every day brought duties and tasks to the chief rabbinical office. Under the statutes, it was this assembly which was to make the choice of such great importance to the community.

Chief Rabbi: 1947-

"He seemed born to trifles, and nothing that mattered ever became of him." Often had I thought of these words by the Danish poet Wessel. Years upon years had passed by. But I had remained static. Of course, the Swedish interlude had presented a challenge, but it had been only an episode. The best years of my life had been spent in the role of beneficiary of some sort of charity and with discharging a job which had been some carpet of rags, patched together from so many trifles.

Dr. Friediger's death in April, 1947, could not but open altogether new possibilities to a man who had—mainly on account of Dr. Friediger's determination—been reduced to life in the wings. Actually, the assembly of deputies, meeting on April 16th to find a successor to Dr. Friediger, had little choice. I had become, more or less, an inescapable necessity—an inescapable minor evil, some may have felt. Well, in some circles, the attempt was made to open up other possibilities.

The *Social-Demokraten,* the only daily newspaper able to maintain normal publication during the printers' strike, carried a report,

inspired from unfavorably disposed sources, that the position would be advertised vacant in the leading Jewish publications abroad. But it didn't sound probable. That, the way things had generally developed, a foreign Chief Rabbi might be preferred, who would first have to learn the language, and whose personal character was unknown, to a man who spoke Danish in a normal manner, and whose every fault (but also whose every quality) was common knowledge, was rather too grotesque even in view of the most untoward aspects of the local scene. In addition, rabbis had become scarce, even money could hardly buy any.

Nonetheless, there were some rabbis officiating in minor Scandinavian communities who thought that they had acquired tremendous popularity among the Danish Jewish refugees in Sweden and that now their lucky hour had struck. Suddenly they turned up in Copenhagen, as though their mere presence would assure them the coveted office. It did them no good. Before the meeting of the assembly of deputies, a majority of the boards of the community and of the synagogue had recommended that I be appointed to the vacant office. Deliberations led to the de facto, though not yet de jure, positive outcome that the board was authorized to enter into negotiations with me on the detailed terms for my accession to the position. The community's chairman, Karl Lachmann, at this meeting, most energetically and purposefully advocated my candidacy. He very much muted the fears of worried minds concerning the self-willed, eager-to-fight, keen Marcus Melchior by stating that he had the fullest confidence in me, and that he was absolutely convinced of my conscientiousness. And when one faction in the assembly put forward the suggestion that I be appointed the Chief Rabbi for one year (in other words, some sort of probation to prove how impossible I was), Lachmann flatly declared that when a man was fifty years old—I was to reach that age a month later—and his abilities had been common knowledge for many years, then one had either to take or to leave him.

Anything other than these two alternatives, he, Lachmann, would not even discuss.

The assembly was summoned for a new and finally decisive session on April 30th in the evening. In the meantime, a harrowing event had shocked all the Danish people. King Christian X had died on Sunday, April 20th, and it was natural that the passing away of the old King made everything else seem secondary in importance. In the Jewish community, everybody was fully aware that King Christian, through the fearless pride and strength of character he had displayed on so many occasions, had forever inscribed his name not only in the history of the Jews in Denmark, but in all Jewish history. It was sensed—and has since been fully confirmed—that the Crown Prince, now King Frederik IX, did not in any way fall short of his father; and spontaneously all the reverence and love which had so abundantly surrounded the late King was transferred to the new King. In this, the Jewish community was at one with all the Danish people. Particularly King Frederik's address to the nation immediately after he was proclaimed King bore significant witness to the fact that the change of generation meant no change of political system and line.

On Wednesday, April 30th, the funeral of King Christian was to take place and, as customary with all royal funerals, special memorial services were to be held on that day in all churches and houses of prayer in Denmark and, therefore, also in the synagogue. From my childhood and youth I remembered such ceremonies upon the deaths of King Christian IX and Frederik VIII. In 1906, Lewenstein had delivered the memorial address. In 1912, it had been Schornstein. Now had come the turn of the acting Chief Rabbi—that is, me. On Wednesday morning, at 10 a.m.—on the same day on which it was to be decided whether I was to "inherit" the Chief Rabbi's office, or to be written off once and for all—I officiated in a synagogue at a service attended by an audience of thousands. In the circumstances, there was a

risk of a confusion of motives and purposes, so that a speech intended to honor the memory of the King and to give thanks for his thirty-five-year rule might be abused as personal electioneering and propaganda. But the consensus after the service was that the solemn event had been conducted in the most appropriate manner. The strange coincidence of the events in the morning and evening of that day has always struck me as significant. With the accession of King Frederik IX to the Danish throne, a new chapter began in the history of the Danish nation. My election as Chief Rabbi which, after the previous negotiation and all other precedents, seemed no longer in doubt, opened a new chapter in the history of Danish Jewry. At 9 p.m., on April 30, 1947, this election was an accomplished fact.

The official inauguration took place at an evening service on May 27th. The large and beautiful synagogue was filled to capacity, when Karl Lachmann welcomed me to my "exalted office" and said all the niceties which are proper on an occasion of this kind. Thus, at long last, the moment had come when I was to take possession of the pulpit which has been mine now for quite a number of years. One doesn't find a fairer pulpit or rostrum anywhere in the world. It is an inspiration in itself. Of the synagogue, it might be said that it is typical of Copenhagen in the way in which it forms a synthesis between the stately and the intimate. (The same is true of the pulpit.) Admittedly, it is grandiose in shape and placement, but anyone standing there has a sense of direct contact even with those seated most far away. There are but a few exceptions to this rule. In its architecture, the synagogue is a basilica, a characteristic feature being double rows of pillars of great circumference. The seats immediately behind these pillars actually are invisible from the pulpit. It has always been said that in the assessment of the prices for stands, which provide part of the funds for the synagogue budget, these seats behind the pillars fetch the highest price, because there one may sit and slumber

out of sight of the priest on the pulpit.

So, there I was on the pulpit, delivering a relatively modest speech. After a few words to the effect that at any time I would have been content to serve as a loyal assistant to the late Chief Rabbi, I was compelled to state that what was happening now constituted a change of guard of real impact to the community. Referring to the speech, quoted earlier, made the day I was ordained as Rabbi back in 1921, to the effect that the Rabbi is placed between the living and dead, I declared my positive attitude toward all genuine tradition, but also my obligation towards vital life. At the age of fifty, I could no longer be termed young, but still I was standing *between the generations;* and to the young generation, I pledged continuation of the support which I had always been ready and glad to lend to it. A few days after the solemn inauguration, royal approval of my appointment was available, and right afterwards I could, in official audience, thank the King for having confirmed with his signature the most humble recommendation of the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs.

I had entered into an office which made excessive demands on its holder. More than ever, it seemed incomprehensible to me that Friediger had insisted, at any price, upon being Chief Rabbi without a second priest at his side. Certainly there were other rabbis in the community, compared to whom the Chief Rabbi's title could be said to lend him augmented authority. As I have told, right-wing orthodoxy has an organization of its own, and throughout the years has employed its own Rabbi. Also, among the other officials of the community one can find some with rabbinical training. But none of these, with the one exception of my teacher Josef Fischer, had been attached to the rabbinate. In reality, the Chief Rabbi had been his own Second and Third Rabbi as well. It was a matter of the greatest urgency to me to elucidate to the board of the community how unreasonable—indeed, how untenable—was this state of affairs. The simple truth was that

Friediger had had no choice but to leave some of the functions and tasks of the office alone. It was the same with me. No one can work more than seven days a week. My work day began—and still begins—very early in the morning. When, at 7 a.m., I take my seat at the synagogue for daily morning service, I have often been at my desk long in advance, and as a rule, my day ends only with the midnight hour.

Of course, I cannot be unaware of which side of my work has suffered neglect. It is that very Jewish school education which had enjoyed Dr. Friediger's warm devotion. I could not help feeling that, as long as the community had an adequate staff of fully trained teachers in its service, it had to fall to *them* to handle education. According to time-honored custom, the Chief Rabbi had acted as inspector-general of all teachers. But I have never wanted to descend to playing the role of bogey to our teachers of both sexes, who on the whole are responsible and well-qualified people entitled to personal expression in their pedagogical methods. Now, had I possessed outstanding talents as an educator, had I been particularly gifted as an organizer in this field—in both respects, my son Bent Melchior, Second Rabbi in the community since 1963, is greatly superior to me—then I might have done something about it. Actually, the organizational aspect had gradually developed into a central problem in a community which in the old days had been concentrated within a mile from school and synagogue, but which is now spread over the entire metropolitan area of Greater Copenhagen—many scores of miles.

All considered, it could only be natural for me to concentrate my efforts in those fields where they would be most meaningful and efficient. About this, I cannot avoid saying a few words.

The field which is called spiritual advice comes naturally to me. I think it is the obvious thing for a priest to take part, to the utmost of his ability, in the joys of the happy and the sorrow of the mourning, even if both occur on the same day. When, a few

years ago, I was asked to contribute to a symposium in one of the Copenhagen dailies under the headline "What Life Has Taught Me," I availed myself of the words of a rabbi who was once asked what was the most important thing in his vocation. He said: *"The most important thing is what is happening right now."* In all human life, there are moments when one delves into the past and its memories. This happens when one writes one's memoirs. There are also times when one thinks ahead and plans for the future. But it is wrong and dangerous to forget the present out of consideration for past or future. Above all it must be imperative that, when dealing with other people at any given moment, one complies with their just demand that one should dedicate all devotion and concentration to their experiences and problems. Only in this way can one speak at a funeral in the morning and at a wedding in the afternoon. Only in this way can one perform, if so requested, two, three, or four weddings on the same day. Every single person, every couple are entitled to one's utmost will and ability to make *their* ceremony truthful and beautiful. The last couple on any particular day should not be made to feel that they are just one more number in a series. To them, their wedding is the only one of the day, the only one which really matters. If I judge myself correctly, then I have managed to avoid a real danger lying in ambush on the priest's way. That is the danger of turning pro, of regarding other people as *objects by the dozen* of what one does or fails to do. Then there is the additional danger of forcing the kind of speeches upon them of which there are thirteen to the dozen. I, at least, am doing my utmost to give to each what is justly and unalienably his due.

This is particularly true of the deceased. I strongly feel the responsibility to the inanimate person, who has no defense against what notions occur to the chance speaker at his funeral in the estimates and judgments of his or her life. Certainly, memorial speeches have problems of their own. But they can be solved by

avoiding the pitfalls of either exaggerated glorification or brutal rebukes. The experience of many years in this field has taught me that the truth can almost always be said, provided it is said lovingly and reverently. I have been able to go very far in this direction. In a certain case, I have said of a miser that he was a miser, but I added that, had I suffered his hard childhood and youth, I would have been no different myself. The beautiful saying of the sages of Israel, "Don't ever pass judgment on anyone, as long as you have not been in his place," has always been a guiding light to me in functions of this kind. Since I have spoken at sixty to eighty funerals every year, it will be understood that there have been many difficult incidents to handle so that the final rites could be truly in honor of the departed and the bereaved family.

But spiritual advice is more than weddings and funerals. Countless are the visits which one pays in one's community to the ill and the healthy, the sad and the happy. Every day, one receives in one's study searching souls from among one's own community as well as from Jewish communities in other countries, and even from other religious communities and churches. When, occasionally, I jokingly call myself "Chief Rabbi of the Danish national church," I have in mind not alone the several hundred annual requests for lectures. I am thinking of the unending stream of Gentiles seeking me, personally or by letter, in the expectation that I can take care of their problems. Particularly whenever I have spoken over the air and succeeded in saying something which makes sense to listeners, the crowd of people asking for my spiritual advice grows visibly. It goes without saying that I do my best to be helpful to any person approaching me. But my possibilities are limited and, as far as possible, I try to teach members of other faiths that they ought to be able to find the greatest relief with their own priests.

It is debatable whether one can include in the work of the spiritual advisor all the dinner invitations which are sent to my

wife and me with the intention that I should make a dinner speech suitable to the occasion. As a rule, we go on the assumption that invitations on such private occasions are decent and sincere in their motivation. If the celebration is in any respect of a religious nature, we make a principle of accepting. And then, of course, I deliver the anticipated address. And if nothing else is gained, at least the others keep quiet as long as one's self is speaking.

Talking of speeches, I might just as well admit at once that, of all the functions of the vocation, sermons attract my main interest. Despite the prolonged periods during which this activity has been denied to me, I have always felt immediately at home when stepping onto the pulpit. Doubtless in the course of the years I have rid myself of the influence of all other models and found my own style, or perhaps my own styles. Admittedly, when I took over the pulpit in the Copenhagen synagogue, I had no easy time of it. To my predecessor Danish had been a foreign language, and he could not help using the somewhat stilted and artificial language which was considered necessary for sermons when, about 1920, he was learning Danish. It was another unavoidable and inescapable fact that his vocabulary was somewhat limited, and limited to the most high-sounding words and expressions. Over the years, the community had grown accustomed to this. Since May, 1947, a normal and natural language has been spoken from our synagogue's pulpit. Not a vulgar language by any means, but a language without any ointment or other articles from a pharmacy. The word of Grundtvig, "Thus, speak truly of matters big and small, and *plainly* of all that is elevated," has always appeared to be imperative to me. In the Jewish sermon, the interpretation of the Scriptures has always formed a vital ingredient, and I have certainly paid the greatest attention to this aspect. But the decisive point to me has always been to bring the Lord's word alive and to present its application to the debate and to the issues of the day.

I have done as much as I can to keep my audiences awake during my sermons. It has never disturbed me very much that some people will sit down to sleep even before the beginning of a sermon. After all, everybody has habits of his own, and the need for God-pleasing slumber may arise in some just at the very moment when the priest starts speaking. But it discomfits me when someone dozes off in the course of the address; and I am forced to blame myself whenever this happens.

In this connection, the meaning has been important to me of a story which I heard from a colleague in Upper Silesia. A rabbi became uneasy because a certain man always fell asleep during the sermon. One day he gave that man a snuff box and said to him, "I have noticed your difficulty staying awake while I am preaching. Now, take this box. Whenever you feel that your tiredness is about to get the better of you, take a pinch of snuff, and you will easily stay awake."

Whereupon the man said, "You know, Rabbi, you just put a pinch of snuff into your sermon, and then the whole congregation will stay awake." Consequently I have never been afraid of tightening my grip on the attention of the audience and of adding a point here and there which contains such an element of surprise as to, so to speak, catch the audience napping. Now, as is commonly known, the element of surprise is close to the sense of humor in modern man, and I have to admit that it does happen once in a while that the congregation is *amused* during a sermon. Of course, it is necessary to apply the brakes as soon as they have been released. Since I have managed to do so, it has actually never been claimed that I caused offense to anyone. To the contrary—in the course of time, what was bound to happen did indeed happen: The community has accustomed itself to my way of preaching, so much so that there is some feeling of disappointment when occasionally the pinch of snuff appears to be missing.

Altogether, I am against the stereotyped sermon. My extem-

poraneous use of words is unlimited to such an extent that not only do I preach without any script, but I never prepare even special sentences for any sermon. I mention this, because some people have suspected that I don't prepare at all. Once I was asked point-blank when I made my preparations, and I replied, *"Never—and always!"* In true fact, never in my life have I rested from this pre-occupation: to collect material in preparation for the five or ten or twenty forthcoming sermons, speeches, and addresses. Whatever I see, hear, read, or experience is, to me, material for the approaching sermons and lectures. When I listen to the rhetorical efforts of others, my mind is busy thinking ahead along the lines indicated by the speaker. Independent associations keep opening vistas to possibilities, which may be put to good use on some appropriate occasion. This may be the only professional characteristic about me, since it provides me the background which is the indispensable precondition for any speech. Particularly, in this way I obtain the ever-ready cargo of knowledge which is the secret of the good speaker. In other words, it is best to have more knowledge on one's subject than the allocated time permits one to dispense. This is the safeguard of freedom in the use of the word.

I have often made radio speeches with a manuscript. As at least twice the number of words which can be spoken in "live" addresses must be fed into the microphone, because the audience is busy only with its ears and not with its eyes, and as the exact number of minutes for completion of the business in hand is always fixed in advance, it may be a risky business to try anything else. In this way, the six lectures I gave in 1962, in the framework of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's so-called "Sunday University," could appear in print right after the broadcasts were completed. On the other hand, I always conduct interviews and "fireside chats" over the radio without written notes of any kind. The same goes, perhaps paradoxically, for instances when I have appeared on television. In the spring of 1964, there was a television broadcast

from my home of an account of one of my favorite books, Exupery's *The Citadel.* When ten of the fifteen minutes, which the broadcast was to last, had passed, a technical mishap was discovered, and the whole thing had to be repeated. It caused quite some astonishment among those present that the words fell quite differently than in the first round, and that many new turns of phrases replaced what had been originally said. My radio *sermons* are without a script. Anyone wanting to listen to a sermon has no choice but to accept the terms of the preacher, including his pace. As far as the radio is concerned, I am fortunate in having a voice with microphone appeal. The mike exposes the quality of any voice, is the enemy of that which lacks a certain quality, the ally of the one which owns it.

Of course, radio and television grant the speaker uncounted listeners. On the other hand, the audience remain anonymous. How different this is from the "live" word of the sermon or lecture face to face with the audience. If such direct contact is established between the parties, one may feel at least at the end of a lecture that speaker and audience have become acquainted.

It is not unknown to what extent I have been used, and abused, as a lecturer all over the country. On the average, I am invited to appear in this capacity in about four hundred instances every year but, of course, I can comply with only a fraction of these requests. If I make every effort to go as far as I possibly can, with due consideration both to the obligations of my office and to my health, then I do so because I consider it absolutely necessary to acquaint the population in Denmark with what Jews and Judaism actually are. The misconceptions of the Hitler era as well as the inherited complexes which are ever present in people's minds are, I feel, something that must be fought to the best of one's ability. This is how it all started and, whenever I have been speaking about my religion, *neither* have I been *defending* Judaism, *nor* have I been attacking any other faith. My own religion is on too high a level

for me to debase it by defending it; other religions are on *too high a level* for me to venture to attack them. My task has been to explain and to contribute to enlightenment. At the same time, I have never hesitated to call historical outrages by their proper names, and I have never been afraid, in open discussion, to give as good as I got.

In the course of the years, I have specialized, to some degree, in lectures on ethics. Some of these have become national scourges and rank as oratorical hit numbers. But the subject is large enough to permit incessant innovation, particularly when the ethical problems can be related to current events. Through this activity I have been able, though more *indirectly* than in more specialized lectures on strictly defined subjects, to serve as the spokesman of my community to the surrounding general population. Perhaps this is the very field where I have made some modest contribution to cultural life in Denmark. I was flattered when a recently elected member of the board of the community defined my work by saying that, thanks to me, relations between general society in Denmark and the Danish Jewish population are conducted on such a *distinguished level* as is now the case. If this be true, then the twofold toil of many years with a demanding task internally and the promotion of relations with the outside world has not been in vain.

I must acknowledge that the title of my office—Chief Rabbi—has been a valuable support for these efforts. It is with a certain melancholy joy that the fact is recorded that such a title *carries* its man along and lends weight to his words. Once in a while, people are wildly enthusiastic about something I say and consider me to be one of the wisest men they could meet. The sad thing about it is that I put things quite as well and actually was quite as wise before I ever acquired the shining title. But then there were not so many who noticed all this. And if anybody did, what I had to say made no great impression.

To this very day, public enthusiasm for my efforts is accompa-

nied by untiring criticism. Oddly enough, this attitude is most marked within the Jewish community. I am the last one to feel that criticism of my elevated person is unjustified. Only the man who does nothing does not *commit blunders*. Only the man who says nothing can altogether avoid *talking nonsense*. Among the many hundreds of public speeches I deliver every year, obviously some are better than others. But the critics often reach "inverted" conclusions. They may, for instance, reject a sermon simply because it is too good, just as they may praise one for the very reason that it is more mediocre; in other words because, to put it bluntly, it is on a poor level. The interesting point is that, among Jews, the critics are ever ready to jump, ever prepared to turn out. The most rabid ones among them *never* produce anything but criticisms. Any positive and successful effort renders them icily silent, but any stumbling over a subordinate clause finds them immediately active.

In the course of time, I have to a certain extent entered into the consciousness of the general Danish population. All major newspapers in the capital and in the provinces deal with my person regularly, and it isn't much different with the weeklies. But certain special occasions matter more.

The editor of the Sunday edition of *Politiken,* an important Copenhagen daily, was asked by a reader if a responsible person ought to beget children in the age of the atom. The question was passed on to me. My detailed reply in the affirmative, together with my reasons, was quoted in the press all over the country. I even had a good press.

For the sixtieth actor's anniversary of the grand old man of the Danish theater, Poul Reumert, an article on the master was needed for the program booklet of the Royal Theatre. Poul Reumert has for many years honored me with his friendship, and the head of the theatre knew about this through Reumert's wife, the wonderful, unforgettable Anno Borg. So he called me on the telephone and asked me to write the official anniversary article. After some hesi-

tation, I agreed. It was an article which, I venture to hope, pleased Reumert, and which was to prove greatly important to me, since it earned me such warm royal recognition that it seems to me that the evening when King Frederik thanked me for it counts among the fairest experiences of my life.

On May 4, 1964, a speaker was wanted for the celebration of the anniversary of the liberation from German occupation at the regional headquarters of the Danish armed forces in the southernmost part of Jutland. So, I delivered this address.

Three weeks later, the artisans' guild was to celebrate the presentation of diplomas to journeymen who had distinguished themselves at their exams—as mentioned at the beginning of the book—an annual event attended by the King and Queen. So I delivered the festive address to the artisans that year.

Occasionally I wonder that the priest of the Jewish community can be used for such a varied repertory. But my wonder always is replaced by deep pleasure and gratefulness at living in a country where it is considered natural to entrust this very priest with these very tasks.

Leo Baeck

While I entertain a certain hope that I will be able to perform my duties for some time yet—there is no age limit for officials in the community—it would be senseless to disregard the fact that I have reached superannuation age. As far as my health is concerned, I have fared better than most and, looking at myself in the mirror, I think that I look jolly youthful. When, in 1962, I reached the age of sixty-five and became eligible for certain favors and advantages granted to the aged, I thought to myself that in the future I had better always carry a birth certificate or passport around in my pocket. Who would ever believe that I was sixty-five? But one of the great disappointments of life has been that nobody has ever contested the credibility to my claim that I am as old as I am.

Now as I approach the milestone of seventy, there may be good reason to look back as I have attempted here. In particular, there seems to be good reason for grateful consciousness of the wondrous turns of my life, of how fortunate I have been—all worries notwithstanding—in the private as well as the public part of my career.

Out of the events of the last twenty years—the period during which I have served as Chief Rabbi in Copenhagen—I want to mention a few important ones before concluding this account.

First of all, the encounters with Leo Baeck. Who, then, was Leo Baeck? In my estimate, he was the greatest Rabbi in our lifetime—the Rabbi of Rabbis. He belonged to the liberal trend in Judaism, in other words a trend contrary to my own. But he was admired and beloved even in wide traditional Jewish circles. Having held positions as the Rabbi in Oppeln, Upper Silesia, and Düsseldorph, Westphalia, he in 1912, aged thirty-nine, was appointed to an office in Berlin, where the numerous Jewish priests without envy admitted that uncontestably he ranked as the uncrowned prince among them. Already in 1904, he had published his really outstanding work *Das Wesen des Judentums,* but he remained an untiring author and lecturer.

In the course of time, he was to occupy the chairman's post in a number of the biggest German Jewish organizations, including the "Allgemeiner deutscher Rabbinerverband," where conservative and liberal Rabbis had found a common platform. At the time of the Nazi usurpation of total power, his reputation was so solidly established that he was placed at the head of the body which was to conduct all official negotiations with the authorities, the "Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden." When I was Rabbi in Beuthen, he, in his capacity of Grand President of the German district of the Jewish B'Nai B'Rith lodge, showed me much kindness and expressed feelings of gratitude towards me for a trifle. Meanwhile, he was penetrating the minds of the Jewish and non-Jewish public as one of the great theological and spiritual geniuses of our times. Simultaneously, our personal friendship grew gradually. In his vast literary production, he had proved himself a master of thought and style, and his language was not too artificial to be *understood even by laymen.*

With this remark, I beg to refer to a marvelous remark by that

other Jewish philosopher, who, together with Leo Baeck, was an outstanding spiritual leader of German Jewry, Professor Martin Buber. Buber, who died recently after having continued as a vivacious teacher at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem until his late eighties, was linguistically far more difficult to "digest" than Baeck. When in 1947 he visited Copenhagen as a guest of the university here, I asked him if, after having exchanged his professorial seat at Frankfurt on Main with another in Jerusalem, he had achieved full mastery of the Hebrew language. And he replied, "Not yet enough for me to be able to express myself unintelligibly."

In January, 1943, Leo Baeck, who was by then seventy years old, had been deported to Theresienstadt. The about forty thousand Jews in the concentration camp considered him their unchallenged leader. With his fearlessness and indomitable spirit, which often reached the dimensions of heroism, he became the ideal and great consoler and comforter of all the camp inmates. This did not prevent the Germans from hitching him like a horse to a carriage, whose other horse was a Gentile professor of philosophy, and from letting the two drag granite boulders from one place to another, unload them, reload them, and drag them back again to the starting point. Baeck was asked later if it was not utterly intolerable to him to have his human dignity trampled underfoot in this manner. With his somewhat cool and yet singularly stirring voice, he answered, "As a matter of fact, we were doing very well. We discussed Plato and learned a good deal from each other."

Leo Baeck survived the war, but he refused to leave Theresienstadt as long as there was one deportee left who might need him. The whole of the Jewish world—with the possible exception of the extreme right, which can never forgive a man a leftish position—felt that Baeck's eventual rescue was a divine miracle amidst the prevailing unfathomable horrors. Legend began spinning its web around the person of Baeck: He seemed almost superhuman, some sort of "human angel," as he was called in a publication of world-

wide circulation.

Despite his advanced age, he took up the task of reconstituting some of the crushed and dismembered organizations and institutions whose President he had been in their German shape, and which he wanted to resurrect on a European basis—now that European Jewry had been so disastrously decimated. Thus I had the opportunity of participating in numerous conventions of rabbis which were held under his leadership in France, Belgium, and Luxembourg. And thus, he—who now lived in London, though he traveled almost constantly through wide parts of the world—visited Copenhagen as the guest of the Jewish so-called Denmark Lodge, when in 1952 we played host to the congress of Jewish lodges in Europe. Anyone who met him here was spellbound by his personality, at once both gently quiet and powerful. He loved to stress the paradoxical aspects in Jewish concepts of faith and life. God —so distant, yet so close; man—the creature, yet ingenious creator. Baeck himself was distant in his elevated line of thought, and still so very near to all of us in his warm understanding of his fellow beings and his never failing humanism.

In November, 1956, at the very hour when he had signed his name to a just completed book, he lost consciousness, and soon afterwards met a merciful death. It was among the highest distinctions ever awarded to me that I was called to London to deliver the main address at the memorial service for him in the West London Synagogue on the day the initial week of mourning for him expired. His daughter, Mrs. Ruth Berlak, who is living in London, when asked whom she wanted to speak on this occasion, had said, "Of all European Rabbis, Melchior in Copenhagen is the one who was closest to my father."

Ben Gurion

The outstanding universal Jewish event during my period of office in Copenhagen was the resolution of the United Nations on the establishment of the State of Israel (November, 1947) and its realization (May, 1948). Whoever has an ear for God's footfall in history, could hear it here—whoever has an eye for the Lord's slate pencil when it speels out His will, could see it here.

The story of the State of Israel, its creation and development, is no part of this account. I must confine myself to a repetition of what has already been said so often: Our Jewish generation has witnessed the greatest holocaust in history, but it has lived to see its greatest miracle as well. I have—to date—visited Israel eight times, from four weeks to five days. Every single time it has been "the really great experience"; above all, the opportunity to observe the dynamic strength with which the rebuilding of the neglected country has been carried out in all fields of life.

Without entering into detail with regard to the following issue, I would like to state that, as far as party affiliation and organization are concerned, I ceased being a Zionist on the day of the procla-

mation of Israel. This is so because I took the Zionist program literally. It said, as may be remembered, "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law." In the hour when the State of Israel became a fact, "the program" was more than adequately accomplished. Fine dialecticians, of course, may insist that this is not at all so. They claim that the "state" is nothing but the frame which is to contain the "home" still to be built. That is their business. The fact remains that they have had quite a problem redefining Zionism in such a way as to keep the Zionist organization alive. My dissociation from the somewhat artificial neo-Zionism, however, in no way detracts from my love for Israel and from my warm theoretical and practical interest in all that concerns this state and its people. Also since Israel's birth, I have remained its unofficial and unsalaried ambassador to the Danish people. In countless lectures all over the country, I have, without having been engaged as Israel's spokesman, been her champion and her defender wherever she was attacked. I am not modest enough to renounce the right to state that I have contributed vitally to the creation of the good will felt for Israel by the Danish people.

As things have developed, I consider it essential to stress two points: the unalterable belonging of Danish Jews in Denmark, and the necessity of securing the future of the Danish Jewish community exactly as a Danish Jewish community. Any other concept or formulation of our status is so ideologically and realistically unacceptable that I was duty bound to voice objections to David Ben Gurion, then Prime Minister of Israel, when he visited Denmark as guest of the Danish government in September, 1962, and expressed a contrary opinion.

Ben Gurion, the true creator of the State of Israel—the legendary, brave, and wise statesman—is a thousand times greater than I inasmuch as I can't expect to be remembered by many a year's time after my death, whilst the name of Ben Gurion will enter the

history of all times—and particularly the history textbooks, so that in a thousand years' time, unfortunate students will fail at their exams if they are ignorant of his name.

But above all, Ben Gurion is a politician, and when politicians get out of their depth, there must be someone around to haul them back ashore. This is what I had to do, when in Copenhagen in 1962 Ben Gurion stated that all Jews—including Danish Jews—ought to emigrate to Israel, both because they could no longer maintain their existence elsewhere, and because they could not trust the kind attitudes of their surroundings to last anywhere. This record of his, no doubt, had been played by Ben Gurion in many lands, and of course there are places where this was highly appropriate and useful. In Denmark, which had witnessed 1943 and 1945, it was just as awfully jarring.

But my rebuttal to Ben Gurion, which was, incidentally, most urbane and deferential, was played up as a big sensation by the Copenhagen press, and for a moment it seemed as though a major conflict might ensue between "the king of Israel" and the "partridge in the mountains." But Ben Gurion was enough of a politician to concede me my freedom of speech, and since then he has repeatedly sent me his "warmest greetings."

I cannot leave it unmentioned that a local group of "patented genuine Zionists" dissociated itself energetically from my attitude and, by informing the whole outside world, pilloried me in an utterly unjustified manner. Their claim that I had brought dishonor to Danish Jewry by an assault upon their saint, was completely unfounded. Quite apart from the fact that my stand was supported by 90 per cent of my community and by 100 per cent of Danish public opinion, I was praised in Israel for courage displayed, although my name had been mentioned by the Israeli radio in a derisive manner. At the same time, it was dismaying that many American organizations and individuals paid homage to me in cables and letters and declared me to be the only Rabbi in the

world worth his mettle. Plainly, many of them seemed to have gotten the whole thing down the wrong way and misunderstood me, as if I had joined Nasser in his desire to see the entire State of Israel wiped off the map. Thus it appears that there are Jews who feel that way—for motives different from Nasser's, but still. . . .

As far as I am concerned, I feel attached to Israel by countless ties—three of them are as many of my children who have decided to make it their home—but I shall never refrain from speaking up whenever anyone ventures to confuse the feelings and sense of responsibility of Danish Jews towards Israel with our feelings and responsibilities towards Denmark.

The Ben Gurion-Melchior affair—which so little affected our personal relations that Ben Gurion went out of his way to show kindness towards me when, on the day after the newspaper sensation, he was received in the Copenhagen synagogue—led to a crisis in my life. I saw no way out of making the carrying on of my office conditional upon an unequivocal declaration of confidence. This was obtained, and most of those involved at the time have long since let the whole matter sink into oblivion. But there are some in whose minds it lives on, presumably as a not very delightful memory.

Foreign Relations

In my book *Judaism in Our Times* I dealt extensively with the relationship between Danish Jewry and its environment. I shall not repeat these things here. I merely want to point out that, during my tenure of office, I have continued and stressed a line which, in fact, has been followed in Denmark for many generations. For instance, my grandfather, L. M. Wallach, who, as mentioned previously, served as the Rabbi in Faborg during the latter half of the last century, enjoyed tremendous popularity with the local population. He was called "the *Vicar* Wallach," on the assumption that one priest was as good as the next one. This is a good illustration of the friendship which has existed since olden days between Jews and Christians. Far from disrupting this, the disasters which Nazism brought upon Denmark have served to strengthen it. Of course, I am aware that there are people who place themselves outside this friendship. They make themselves heard once in a while, but they are of little interest, in part because they are few, in part because they are petty—petty-minded persons, to whom, generally speaking, one would show too much honor by dealing with them.

During my tenure, it has become a matter of course that Christians and Jews visit each other on the solemn occasions of the respective religions. Time and again we have had the bishop of the diocese of Copenhagen as a guest of the synagogue and, in return, I am invited to be the guest of the cathedral at the ordination of newly appointed bishops and, on festive occasions, to the prayer houses of other denominations. Wide circles have taken note of all this with sincere pleasure. But, of course, there are always those who cannot accept this development. For example, repeatedly my presence at the bishop's ordinations has served as a pretext for angry readers' letters to the newspapers. Both the Bishop who extended the invitation, and the invited Chief Rabbi were, in such cases, hauled over the coals by orthodox elements in church and synagogue. We, on our part, were always agreed that we had better take it all calmly and not permit ourselves to be deprived of the right to handle our mutual relations.

Matters are somewhat more complicated with the Israel mission, which operates in a not too aggressive manner in Denmark, but which must necessarily be regarded as a rather odd business from the Jewish point of view. On the other hand, we cannot prescribe to Christians how to construe Christian ideas and doctrines. Our opinion is that the Israel mission is based upon a misconception of to whom Christian missionary activity ought to be directed. But we cannot in due fairness claim that Christians should adopt this opinion of ours. We do know positively that people of this very mission were supremely brave and extremely helpful to Jews in October, 1943, although it was then not at all a matter of rescuing or touting Jewish souls, but purely a matter of physical rescue. On top of all this, the chairman of the Israel mission in Copenhagen, the Reverend Henry Rasmussen, is altogether a man of humane thought, a man of tolerance, with whom friendship comes easily. Actually, one cannot help admiring the perseverance shown by him and his assistants. They know that their prospects of getting any-

where with their mission is so small that it isn't even visible in a microscope. And yet they carry on! To that, one must raise one's hat.

Also my views on the German-Jewish relationship have been set out in detail in *Judaism in Our Times*. But I am inclined to tell about one personal experience. In October, 1957, G. F. Duckwitz, who had after the war been promoted to German ambassador in Denmark, told me that he had recommended that the German president, Professor Theodor Heuss, award me the German Order of Merit, 1st Class. He hoped that I would accept the decoration. I found the situation somewhat uncomfortable. If I did accept, I would become the target of the attacks of many people, just as Leo Baeck and Martin Buber had been in similar circumstances. If I refused, I would show unkindness and ingratitude to the very man to whom Danish Jews owed their rescue to such a great extent. As may be remembered, it was Duckwitz who was the source of information on the forthcoming deportation which was the starting point of the whole successful rescue operation.

What does one do in such a dilemma? I said "yes, thank you," but asked to have the whole affair postponed until April, 1958. Then, the 125th anniversary would take place and be celebrated in a big way. If I were to receive the decoration on this occasion, it would seem to be the institution rather than the man that was honored, and the whole thing would be taken more lightly. Duckwitz agreed. But then, in March, he suddenly got his transfer orders back to Bonn, where he was to take up a highly important post in the foreign ministry. As, therefore, he had to leave Denmark sooner than expected, I had no choice but to receive the order without the planned connection with the synagogue jubilee. Everything went as expected. The readers' letters, those dear readers' letters, promptly arrived on the editors' desk and irritated souls were able to give vent to their resentment of my behavior. Fortunately there were others who felt differently about

it all, and in whose judgment I deserved to be thanked because I had had the courage to break the ice, or at least to attempt to break it.

On this whole issue, I want to make a general statement that, by taking upon myself at that time the task of the Danish Chief Rabbi, I entered into an exposed position, responsible both to the community whose leading clergyman I am, and to the general public which takes quite an interest in this office and the man who fills it. If one takes responsibility upon oneself, one ought to be able to live up to it, even when the weather gets rough. One must have the right and the duty to show the way, even a new way, and one cannot leave it to others to decide one's course.

In accordance with this, I refused to participate in the hysteria which broke loose when criminal elements smeared swastikas on the synagogue in Cologne on Christmas eve a few years ago. Of course, Jewish nerves were worn so thin that they reacted violently, or at least excitedly, to an outrage like this. But, I felt, whoever holds responsibility is obliged to keep a cool head. To condemn the government of a country and to condemn a whole people because some demented individuals commit crimes—that must be *too* unreasonable. Every nation has its fools and its criminals. You can almost determine the proportion of these cases to which a people is *entitled.* It is certain that the fifty-five million people in West Germany are not all saints. But, gradually, they have acquired for themselves the right of all nations to claim to be judged by the best, and not by the worst people they produce. The urge to paint swastikas is morbid, but it sticks up its head occasionally everywhere; just as yo-yos, marking rings, and other fads have their regular seasons. We have had incidents of this kind in Copenhagen, too, but made no worldwide situation out of them. Obviously, it would really be something if it were trumpeted throughout the world that now the best of all peoples, the Danish people, had turned anti-Semitic.

Nor should it be forgotten that, in the last resort, the swastikas on the synagogue walls in Cologne were directed not against the Jews, of whom there are hardly any left in Germany, but against the then federal chancellor Konrad Adenauer. He had attended the inauguration of the synagogue which his government had rebuilt in Cologne, and on this occasion had spoken great and forceful words about the fellowship of righteous people of all faiths which provides the only hope for a better future. The swastikas were intended as a reminder to Adenauer. The same Adenauer whose internal policies are irrelevant to this book was a good and helpful man to the Jews. He made a great personal contribution to the passing of the law on German reparations to Israel and to the Jewish communities. When one of his cabinet ministers noted, with all signs of horror, that the German reparations were going to considerably exceed original calculations, it was Adenauer who retorted: If the *amounts* are so big, then it is because the *crimes* were so big. Independently of Ben Gurion, but simultaneously with him, I have, therefore, said that I refuse to identify Adenauer's Germany with that of Hitler.

A few weeks after the mentioned decoration, I was created a Knight of Dannebrog. King Frederik was so gracious as to receive me in private audience at his residence, and to present the decoration to me in person. On behalf of my community, I have always been glad and proud of the way in which the King of Denmark honored the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community.

G. F. Duckwitz's successor as ambassador to Denmark died soon after his arrival here, and was replaced by Dr. Hans Berger. Dr. Berger had been a judge in the days of the Weimar Republic. When Hitler had usurped power and enacted the Nuremberg laws, Dr. Berger had no mind to pass sentences by these laws and retired from public service. After the war, he joined the legal department of the foreign ministry and subsequently was promoted to the coveted position as German diplomatic representative

in Copenhagen. Soon after his arrival, Dr. Berger paid an official visit to the Chief Rabbi, a gesture worth some attention. His visit was the beginning of a warm and sincere friendship between us. One may search far and wide without finding a finer man, a more noble personality, than Dr. Berger. One thing is that he is a believing Catholic. Another is that he is a gifted diplomat and jurist. Also, he is at home in every field of culture. He has full mastery of philosophy, literature, and art. Beyond this, he is a connoisseur of wine of the first rank. This, maybe, is natural, if you are born in the Rhine country. Above all, like Duckwitz, he loves Denmark. Those in the know are well aware that during his years here as representative of the federal republic, he was Denmark's good friend and assured cordial attitudes towards us on the part of the German government.

In November, 1963, Dr. Berger was transferred to The Hague —it is the fate of diplomats that they are cast about like chessmen on the board. This did not mean the end of the friendship between the two of us. I have visited him in his residence when I was lecturing in Amsterdam and The Hague. I have visited him after his most recent promotion to the post of head of the German president's bureau, and I look forward to future opportunities for the conversations, so instructive and enriching, which, during Dr. Berger's Copenhagen era, were conducted on subjects close to both of us—the Catholic and the Jew. The friendship between the ambassador of new Germany and the Danish Chief Rabbi is dealt with here at some length, because it indicates the development which has taken place in one of the most difficult fields in our lives.

One of my wife's and my really great experiences was a trip to America in March, 1963. Over the years, we have had a large number of American guests at lunch or dinner in our home, predominantly rabbis, and above all rabbis from New York. The five and a half million Jews in the United States have more than

two thousand rabbis. Of these, eight or nine hundred are in New York, where the Jewish population is estimated at over three million. As the redoubtable colleagues set out on their tourist trips to Europe, we had, as I have said, the privilege of seeing quite a few of them in our home. Eventually, the leaders of the New York Board of Rabbis felt somehow indebted to us, and one day we received an invitation from this organization. It was a somewhat strange invitation. It said that, in March, 1963, we were invited to be its official guests, with the hotel, food, and sights provided by them—on the condition that the Jewish community of Copenhagen would accept the invitation to provide us with the plane tickets.

To cut a long story short, we left for New York on March 10, 1963, and returned on March 21st, as I was to officiate at confirmation in the synagogue a few days later. It really turned out to to be an official visit, almost a state visit. When we arrived in New York, the Mayor and the Chief of Police were represented on the reception committee. We were driven the twenty miles from the International Airport to our hotel in the center of the city with a police car as our forerunner. It had the task of assuring our unimpeded passage regardless of "red lights." A detective in mufti was included in the entourage.

We had half an hour to dress, because immediately afterwards I was to deliver a festive address at a giant dinner attended by fifteen hundred persons. To begin with, of course, I was forced to believe that the dinner was in our honor. This was not actually the case. It so happened that on that particular evening—we had arrived in New York at 7 p.m.—a fund raising drive was to be opened for the erection of an "international synagogue" at the airport. The desired proceeds of the evening were half a million dollars so as to make means available to start building, and it was my task to speak in such a manner that the half million would be forthcoming. Which indeed happened! Let nobody think that

this was achieved because I spoke well—I can't do that at all in English. Actually, I was successful because my address was *short.* When I had carried on for about ten minutes, the poor audience thought that this was merely the introduction. With a groan (they had already been listening to hours of speeches) they moved in their chairs in an attempt to find a posture in which to survive the next half hour. To their indescribable surprise, I concluded right then—with the remark that there had been words enough, and that they had gathered for more tangible purposes. When the fifteen hundred ladies and gentlemen, having overeaten ever so little, realized that the address was over and done with, enthusiasm knew no bounds and, grateful at having escaped so cheaply, they paid dearly.

Our hosts were unique in their attentions and in their inventiveness in the performance of their duties as hosts. For each day they had prepared a schedule of twelve to thirteen hours, with visits to organizations and institutions; with receptions, lunches, and dinners; with speeches and lectures—to be given by me—and much more. We were received by Mayor Wagner, who said it was the great privilege of his life to have met us, and who presented us with a pictorial album of New York with a dedication in handwriting and gold print. We were received by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who, meeting us, understood, at long last, why he had ever seen the light of day, because this meeting was the greatest event in his life!

One of the ten days was set aside for a visit to Washington, where we had lunch at the Israeli embassy, and afternoon coffee at the Danish embassy—both with more moderate language used than in New York. The Danish embassy, on the initiative of the Danish foreign ministry, had also attempted to bring about a visit with President John F. Kennedy. Unfortunately, the President was away on his travels on that day, so I had to console myself with his heartfelt regrets that he was unable to make my acquaint-

ance.

On the day before we returned home, we visited the large section of New York called Queens. It turned out that the citizens' president in Queens had decided that this particular day was to be named "Chief Rabbi Dr. Melchior Day." All advertising pillars carried posters calling upon the population to welcome and honor us in every way. To our regret, we never had a chance to appear in the streets. A diploma commemorating the day was presented to us at a ceremony at the town hall of Queens and, of course, there was a tremendous general atmosphere of "privilege and pleasure" throughout. Hans Christian Andersen could have gotten a whole fairy tale, or several, out of the way we ate and talked ourselves through those ten days. Late in the evening of March 20th, my wife and I collapsed into the seats of the airplane which was to carry us home, tired and having had our fill, but undeniably covered with honors and well supplied with diplomas and privileged assurances that, if we had not existed, the world would have been a dark and somber place and life not worth living. Our return, in every respect, brought us back down to earth. But it had been great fun. Fun—and, in many respects, a magnificent experience. We had lived through memorable days. We had been able to see with our own eyes the splendors of New York, and the most splendid about New York, "The Board of Rabbis."

Twice during my tenure of office King Frederik and Queen Ingrid have attended solemn ceremonies in the synagogue. The first time was in October, 1953, when the Jewish community, on the tenth anniversary of the rescue of the Danish Jews through flight to Sweden, thanked the Danish people for the deed, which world history will remember forever. The second time was in April, 1964, when we celebrated the one-hundred-fifty-year jubilee of the Magna Charta of Danish Jews, the decree of March 29, 1814, which granted the status of full-fledged citizens to the Jews of this country. It has been mentioned previously that King Chris-

tian X had been the guest of the synagogue at its centenary in 1933. Now the Queen came too. When *Nationaltidende,* a daily newspaper whose publication has been discontinued some time between the two events, in an interview asked me about this particular aspect, I jokingly said that this was the first time that a Danish queen had visited the synagogue "at least since the days of Queen Margrethe." Since Queen Margrethe died in 1412, and the modest very first stages of Jewish history in Denmark began under the rule of Christian IV (two hundred years later) I thought that the journalist was up to the joke. But this proved not to be the case. *Nationaltidende* bought the remark at face value, and sold it to its readers in the same manner. It remains to be added that no readers' letters were received from historians to correct the error.

In the Jewish community, the visits of the royal couple to the synagogue have rightly been considered first-rank events. This feeling has also been expressed in my sermons on these occasions, both of which were broadcast in full over the Danish radio. In 1964, I thanked the King and Queen for their efforts during the war for the Danish Jews, adding that we knew more about the gratitude we owe them than we had known in 1953. These remarks spurred some of our honorary champions at cantankerousness into action. They blamed me for producing "royal incense," I who was normally a "sober and reasonable" person. "What's the good of this sort of exaggeration?" they asked.

I want to say this: There was not the slightest hint of overstatement in what I said in this sermon. What we know today, and what we knew too little about in 1953, is of what crucial importance was the attitude of our present King (as doubtlessly that of the Queen) toward the stand his royal father took during the days so critical to the Jews. Everybody knows that Christian X, amidst all the illness he had to endure during part of the years of the occupation, was in need of support of the policies he con-

ducted, and for which the whole world justly paid tribute to him. It is the immortal merit of King Frederik that he provided his father such support. The memory of King Christian X is in no way diminished by the statement of this fact. And, as far as I can see, one-sided glorification of a former king at the expense of his successor is unfair and doesn't make sense. I therefore reserve my right and, indeed, feel obliged to put things the way they are. I did so, with due emphasis, during my visit to the United States. It should be recognized how lucky Denmark is that King Frederik is his great father's proper heir and equal: a noble, sensitive, and right-minded king, whose abilities to be, while a ruler, also an outstanding man have undoubtedly been taken note of by the world at large. *C'est tout!*

New Forces

As things have developed, the chief rabbinate in Copenhagen has become some sort of "department store." I have always recognized that my community had priority on my time and strength. But, as far as possible, I have made myself available to other circles, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. It is my conviction that I have served my community and promoted its true interests through these activities, too. Apart from the numberless Danish organizations which have requested my participation in events and affairs, I have to the best of my ability been at the service of Jewish bodies —occasionally even to other religious denominations—abroad. I have helped Jewish communities in Germany in a pinch, and I still do. The Jews living in Germany are in no comfortable position. This is so, in part, because they live on the ruins of the grandeur of the past. In part, it is because they are under attack by Jewish bodies who will not tolerate the principle of Jews living in Germany. In my view, once they are there, they should be assisted in conducting their community activities in the most efficient manner possible. The question of whether a new chapter may be

opened in German-Jewish history lies outside this context.

Norway—above all Oslo—is dear to my heart. By a strange whim of capricious fate, I was to inaugurate not merely the synagogue of Oslo in 1920, but more than forty years later, also the community center there. Between the two, I had officiated at the unveiling of the memorial plaque to the six hundred members of the community who perished in Auschwitz. There also exists an informal, but very real, agreement between the chairman of the community, captain, wholesaler, etc., Harry Koritzinsky, and myself that I can always be sent for whenever the Oslo community, which for a number of years has had no rabbi of its own, needs a man to take care of vital issues in this field.

For many years, my wife and I spent our summer holidays so near to Copenhagen that I could always be reached over the telephone, should the need arise, as it did, on the average, every second day. But in 1955, I got strict orders from my doctor to seek for the sake of my health a different climate from the domestic one. For the first time, we went to Lugano for four weeks. This forced the board of the community to agree to the installment of a man who could deputize for me. It was the good fortune of the community that among its teachers there was a qualified man, Rabbi S. Friedmann, who was willing to assume, and seemed to me to be capable of handling, functions which could not be postponed. In this way Friedmann has replaced me during absences abroad, and he has done so in a tactful and dignified manner. However, a regular appointment was ruled out by his age.

In 1958, it was possible to persuade one of my sons, Bent, then twenty-nine, to take up new studies in order to obtain authorization as a rabbi. Right after matriculation in 1947, Bent had begun law studies at the Copenhagen University, but he discontinued them when, in 1948, he registered as a volunteer in the war which was forced upon the new State of Israel with the Arab neighbor countries. He as well as my eldest son Werner David,

who lives in Israel, and the elder of my daughters, who had volunteered as a medical corps nurse, got through the war unhurt.

Bent resumed his studies in 1949, but he married young and had to try to make a living. He used his Jewish knowledge, comprehensive already then, and his adequate Hebrew to take a position as a teacher in the community. He soon proved in possession of such a genuine pedagogical talent that the children seemed to rally around him and to be inspired by him. At a teachers' congress in Geneve, American-Jewish educators, too, noted his remarkable gifts, and they suggested that he go through supplementary training in America so as to qualify for a leading position. Here, however, we interfered. If he were to undertake additional studies, it ought to be with the wider aim of a full theological education. Bent agreed. In the late summer of 1958, he moved to London, which is closer to Copenhagen than New York in more than one sense, and took up the study. His wife and two kids went along with him, and the whole team—even increased by a third child—returned again in October, 1963, after Bent had passed the final rabbinical exams at Jews' College in London, with excellent results.

Thus, the Jewish community in Copenhagen at long last lived to see the day when it could get relief for its sorely overworked Chief Rabbi, and above all new strength for itself, in the shape of a Danish-born, full-fledged Second Rabbi, young enough and willing to lead, for a few years, the life of an heir presumptive, and not—as perhaps some others might have done—with a daily prayer that the old may soon drop out, so that the young may inherit the realm. It was a great day when, in November, 1963, Bent was, at an unforgettable ceremony in the Copenhagen synagogue, installed in his office. It was a great day to the community, to Bent, to his father—and perhaps most of all to his wonderful mother, a rabbi's daughter, a rabbi's wife, and now also a rabbi's mother. During the years which have passed since then, the young

priest has grown with his responsibilities. The succession in the community seems to be secured. The way things are, there are few Jewish communities in the world which find themselves in such fortunate circumstances, indeed, in such *happy* circumstances as does the Jewish community in Copenhagen.

Certain sad emotions infiltrate other feelings during the writing of one's memoirs. One is—though still active—conscious of the fact that the time is approaching when one is to be gathered in. The vital issue, then, must be whether one dares to hold that what is thus relived in memory is worth being recalled. As we advance into later years, we can all say that we have lived. But have we been alive? During the months when this book was written, I have asked myself time and again: Has my life up to now been a worthwhile experience? I don't find within myself the humility to answer this question by anything but a clear "yes." In truth, mine has been a rich life.

When in 1947 I was appointed to the office which I have filled ever since, a dream from my youth came true. Although I may have committed mistakes here and there, perhaps it may be said that, in general terms, community and priest have suited each other well—almost as though they had been made to each other's measure. This estimate is not disproved because some consider me absolutely impossible. If these people only knew what I, in turn, think of them, they would have to conclude that the outcome is a draw. To the rich aspects of my life—whose private part I have not spoken much about—belong the splendid women and men I have met along my way. Among them should be counted my comrades of the Frederiksberg Rotary Club. When I joined it in 1951, I acquired a half hundred friends, who have, individually and collectively, added further richness and inspiration to my life. By all means, they decided to punish me for a minor transgression by making me president of the club in the Rotarian year 1963-1964. But they tolerated me kindly during my term, and applauded

when, in July, 1964, I handed on the chain of office to my successor. (It has never become clear to me what was the real meaning of this applause, whether it expressed satisfaction with my efforts, or relief that I was stepping down. That the latter just *might* have been the case goes without saying if one ponders the motives behind the applause which is so often heard, when a speaker leaves the rostrum.)

Time is something strangely relative. A wait for a bus of a couple of minutes seems like eternity—and all the time *ahead* of us most certainly has the character of infinity. But if one looks back upon the past, days, decades, and generations shrink to the dimensions of periods and episodes—so little as to be hardly worth mentioning. Still, even the past includes minutes which were the equivalents of ages. It may be that good days went by at missile speed, but bad ones dragged on like snails. I can't help feeling that some of my years counted twice. Also, it should be considered that what has been told here is but an extract from a much bigger whole. Every man, atheist as well as believer, has an urge for eternity. Let, thus, the past be however transient, if one has the hope of a future one also has the hope for eternity.

I believe in a future. I believe in a future for mankind, which is foolhardily jaywalking on the brink of an abyss but which will recover its senses while there is time, and sentence itself to continued life. I believe in a future for Denmark—our beautiful, lovely Denmark—a future of "a thousand years," as our poet has it, not merely in retrospect, but for days yet to come. I believe in a future for the Jewish people, whose spokesman and protagonist I have been over so many years and in so many different situations—this Jewish people which has endowed the world with the essentials of those spiritual and ethical values upon which it stands and will always have to base itself, this Jewish people whose mission it is to be mankind's arsenal of the weaponry of nobility of spirit, of truth, right, and peace. I believe in a future for my

community, the Danish Jewish community, which will live if it chooses to, if it will be able *to be alive* and up to those things given it by Providence to observe and preserve. I believe in a future—and, therefore, in eternity—for my self. With six children and, so far, eleven grandchildren, our stock will not so soon become extinct. In later descendants there will be something alive of the mother I have given my children. To some extent, some of myself will be there too—at least through some copies of these notes, which may descend to later generations.

I would like to wind all this up with a few words from the song used at the annual end-of-term celebration at the Jewish school in Copenhagen:

> Here a word, you young generation,
> before the end of school—
> weighed on the scales of eternity,
> a life is but a matter of minutes.
> But no specimen will die out
> which keeps the faith with the laws of life,
> *because from the seeds of strong generations*
> *the woods of the future will grow strong.*

(continued from front flap)

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