

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
HARRIS RUBIN
1847-1931

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SEVENTY YEARS ON THE SEA OF LIFE

A Gift To My Loved Ones

Translated from the Yiddish by
Benson N. Schambelan

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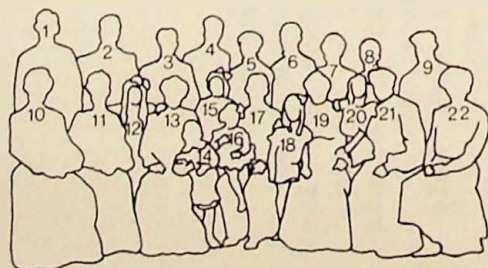
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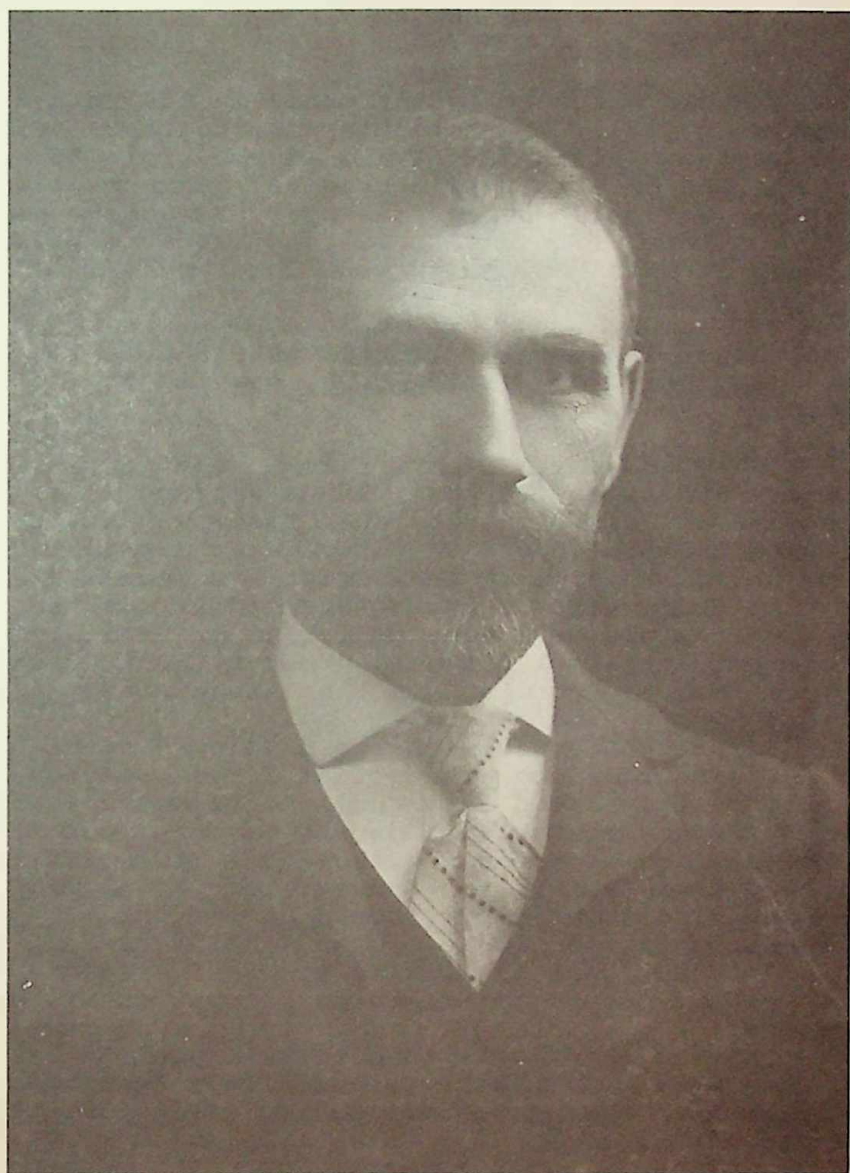
I would be remiss if I did not express my thanks: - to Beatrice R. Schwager for her help in the translation of certain portions; to Alice Rubin, Doris Kauffman and Diana Rubin for typing my hand written translation; to my son, Ike, for editing the final version; to Joel Rubin for his excellent handling of all the problems of design and production; to my wife, Beatrice, for her patience, help and encouragement; to all those listed below whose contributions have made possible this publication.

B.N.S.

Selma Creegan	Alexander N. Rubin Jr.
Shirley Dellheim	Diana Rubin
Ina and Stephen Ellen	I. Edward Rubin
Ben Fisher	Samuel B. Rubin
Joy and Seymour Gorin	Joel and Diane Rubin
Doris and George Kauffman	Seybert and Mildred Rubin
Mollie Kohn	Theodore Rubin
Bessie Leventhal	Beatrice and Benson Schambelan
Ethel Leventhal	Howard and Carol Schambelan
Emily and Wolf Levy	Isaac Schambelan
Rae Lowenburg	Morris Schambelan
Anne Mesirov	Deborah and David Seliger
David Reiskind	Dorothy and Ellis Sobol
Rosalie Reiskind	Estelle and Jerome Warshafsky
Edward H. Rosen	Elsa Weiner
Barbara and Dan Rottenberg	Phototype Engraving Company



Rubin Family picture taken about 1906. (1) Alexander, (2) Samuel, (3) Moses, (4) Isaac, (5) Leonora, wife of Isaac, (6) Nathan, (7) Rose, (8) William, (9) Nathan Leventhal, husband of Ida, (10) Miriam, (11) Becky, wife of Samuel, (12) Esther, daughter of Moses, (13) Minnie, wife of Moses, (14) Leon, son of Moses, (15) Rae, daughter of Moses, (16) Beatrice, daughter of Isaac, (17) Harris Rubin, (18) Bessie, daughter of Moses, (19) Rebecca Rubin (Grandmom), (20) Esther, daughter of Ida, (21) Ida, (22) Rae



HARRIS RUBIN
1847-1931

FOREWORD

Harris Rubin was born in Lithuania in 1847 and died in Philadelphia in 1931. He wrote his autobiography over a five year period, 1915-1920, giving it the title "Seventy Years On The Sea Of Life". The original manuscript was reproduced on a Yiddish typewriter by P. Tenenbaum and bound in book form. The book came to my attention in 1967. I translated it into English between October 1972 and March 1973.

After I had finished my translation, Rae Lowenburg, the only surviving child of Harris Rubin, gave me the following undated note:

"The manuscript of my "life" I had given to Moses - but since the terrible catastrophe that happened on July 31, 1920, when Moses was killed by his own automobile and I, to my great disappointment, outlived him, my manuscript was returned to me. At the present changed saddened circumstances it really would have been proper to write quite a different letter. I did not, however, want to change my original thoughts and left it the way it was. I only wish to add the following:

First that a new wish was developed within me.

I wish that everything that I have written should be translated into English. I would prefer that this be done by someone who masters both languages and is radically inclined. If possible, it should be typewritten and several copies made, and the Yiddish original should become the possession of the oldest of the "RUBIN" family.

I do not want my wish to be considered the duty of any one, I generally do not put duties on any one.

That is about all I had to tell you.

Good by! for ever.... and live a long happy life, as per the wishes of you loving and devoted father.

Harris Rubin"

I am proud to have played a part in making Harris Rubin's wish come true.

B.N.S.

BOOK ONE

Friday, October 29, 1915

For a long time I have been thinking that when I am freed of the burden of making a living, I shall write my biography. And since I am now completely free of conducting any business whatsoever, I have today begun. And while I have not played an outstanding role in education or business or any other field of human endeavor, nevertheless, if I can remember just a part of the events of my sixty nine years and if I can with my limited abilities report these events, I think it will be well worth the effort.

First of all, perhaps my children or grandchildren will read this and then will remember me (which is the wish of every person so long as he lives) and secondly this story can have some historical value, since the description of my youth will give a picture of Jewish life in Lithuania in the second half of the nineteenth century. I feel certain that none of my descriptions will be overdone because I have forgotten many of the details.

My parents told me that I was born September 7, 1847 (25th day of Elul 5607) in a house built of round crooked logs with a moss covered straw roof, a house which had only one room. It was located in an isolated area surrounded by a forest in the Vikomir district of the Kovno province of Russia.

My parents thought of me as a lucky child because my Bris fell on the Fast of Gedaliah (when one must fast) so they were spared the expense of preparing a meal for the minyan (10 men quorum) of Jews who attended my Bris. And in their financial situation, this was a great gain. (In passing I mention that my Mohel, the Shochet [ritual slaughterer] of a small town named Trife, was the father of the well known Dr. Meltzer of New York.)

My parents lived in my birth place until I was four years old. At that time my father's circumstances had improved to the point that he was able to rent a small tavern near a small road for which he paid 30 rubles rent a year instead of the ten rubles a year which he paid for the former place. My mother used to frequently tell me that two weeks before I was born the Poritz [Polish landlord] of the place where I was born seized the bedding because we were delinquent in our rent and that in childbirth she was forced to lie upon a sack filled with straw. When we moved to the second place, although I was too young to remember exactly, nevertheless it made such an impression on me that I thought it was a "palace."

Just as in my first home, this whole "palace" was only one room and the floor was bare earth, rough and uneven. And just as in the first place whenever we made a fire in the crude brick and clay oven, here too, the smoke remained over our heads and we were forced to keep the one door open until the dust and smoke of the burning wood were expelled. Nevertheless, this big room, about twenty by forty feet, with four windows, each about two feet by two feet (instead of the former place with only three windows, each only about one foot by one foot) with a long table and benches which almost filled the whole room (these were the facilities for the peasants who came from the two towns between which the inn stood, whenever they came to celebrate a holiday by getting drunk) was not in a forest but was on the open road where we saw real live people riding past and also entering the tavern, and since I had not seen anything more attractive or better, my young heart danced with joy over the change which had been made.

When I was six years old and the time had come for me to go to the Heder [school] and since there were Jews in the neighborhood who had children to send to school and since our Jewish neighbors all used to come to our house every Saturday to pray, on a certain Saturday, after services, my father of blessed memory put a big bottle of whiskey and cookies on the table over which to recite a blessing and they addressed themselves to this matter.

Since there were six boys who could bring thirty rubles a semester (six months) to pay a teacher and since my father was willing to have the school in our house and to board the teacher in our house, they all agreed that this was a good plan and that a school would be started in our house, and even though the boys were of different ages and differing degrees of learning, this made no difference in a Jewish school.

That very week my father went to Vilkomir (the nearest town) and from there he brought an angry unfriendly Jew (the greatest virtue of a Jewish teacher at that time) and on the next day all the students came with their various books and bundles and costumes.¹

When our teacher was seated at the east end of the table and when the students were seated on both sides of the table near the teacher the school was ready. And as I said previously in my introduction that the main goal of my writing is to describe the former Jewish life in Lithuania, I feel I should give a description in general of the former Jewish school in Lithuania, its position in the intellectual framework of the order of study.

First, the teacher. The Jewish teacher didn't need a diploma from any authority. Any Jew who could read Hebrew fluently (virtually every Jew could do that) could become a teacher for beginners. One who could translate the Bible into Yiddish could teach even a higher class. And one who knew the Talmud could teach even a higher class.

But since most classes were mixed most teachers had to know Talmud. But it was not necessary that he be a great Talmud scholar. He did not even have to know grammar or writing. Grammar was really not considered Kosher by Jews in the Lithuania and Poland [sic]. There was a folk saying in Lithuania "I can neither study nor write, so I'll become a teacher."

And if anyone decided to be a teacher all he had to do was get six or seven youngsters who would produce fifty to sixty rubles a semester (six months), set up a shelf to hold the books of the pupils in the corner of the one room which served as a kitchen, dining room, bedroom, chicken coop and in cold weather also barn for the goat and its young, tell his wife to clear the table of pots and pans, take the baby off the table, tell the pupils to sit around the table, and this was termed a Jewish school. This was the physical aspect of the school.²

Now concerning the order of study. As soon as the youngster awoke from sleep at six or seven in the morning his very first act was morning prayers. The younger ones needed only to say part of the morning service but the older ones really had to recite the whole long morning service the same as adults with the exception that the adult did not have a teacher watching him and if the adult wished (and who did not wish it) he could do a partial service, but the student had to do the complete service because the teacher stood there with a strap in hand and watched so that not a single student would skip a single word or letter.

And if by chance, whether intentional or not, a student did skip a word the strap danced across his shoulders and with tear-filled eyes he turned back to what he had skipped and the other students waited until he reached the part of the service where they could resume the service together. And if another student made a similar error the procedure was repeated. And there were times when this would occur three or four times in one morning service. And finally, when we barely survived to finish the service, we had to recite ten or fifteen Psalms.

And altogether this would take two to three hours every morning and it was nine to ten o'clock before the worn out kids could have their poor breakfast which usually was a piece of black rye bread and herring, etc. (Naturally there were some kids who got a bagel or coffee cake or a piece of challah remaining from the Sabbath but there were few such kids and they were called rich kids.)

As soon as breakfast had been hastily swallowed we had to hurry back to school and then the heavy stuff began. First the younger children came and were instructed, each a half hour. Then the older children and finally the eldest. And when the teacher was finished with all of them it was all repeated.

By two or three in the afternoon the children who lived nearby went home for dinner [sic] and those who lived too far away ate in the school. And right after the meal the same thing which was done in the morning was repeated. And so the Jewish school youngster stayed in school from early in the morning until sundown, in summer; it was until nine or ten in the evening in the winter.

The greatest hardship was in winter. In the summer, the door, at least, was open. The sunshine dried out the room where the little prisoners were held all day. The chickens and the goat were outside. But in the winter it was frightful to sit a whole day imprisoned in a narrow, dirty stagnant room without air or light, without even having permission to play for ten minutes a day, but just continuously study, repeat, repeat, study, all the while feeling the tense and angry looks of the teacher, hearing the worst and coarsest words and insults and often receiving his blows.³

And after all these troubles and discomforts, at evening time when it became dark we had to sit around the table which was lit by one single tallow candle (which for each night one youngster would have to bring) and we would have to continue studying until nine or ten in the evening.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that a Jewish school youngster endured more than a soldier in the Russian Army. Nevertheless, when parents were forced to send their grown up sons into the army there was a world of anxiety and sorrow, while on the other hand, when these same parents sent their five or six year old to the school they covered him with a prayer shawl and carried him to school dancing with joy.

Now that I have finished describing the Jewish school in general I'll return to my school, i.e. the school where I began my first term. You will recall that we left that story when the teacher sat down at the table with his six students.

I think it would be interesting to know the physical layout of the "special" school because it differed considerably from the one which I have previously described and it had many other uses such as a saloon, a hotel, a restaurant, a slaughter house, a granary, and a shop. And instead of one goat sometimes there would be two or three goats and a couple of calves to feed. And on Sabbath it was a synagogue.

"How is that possible?" you ask. I'll soon make it quite clear. It will be worthwhile for me to make the effort to write and for you to have the patience to read because this explanation, which I will give, will enable you to understand that I am not in any way exaggerating the absurd, primitive conditions in which people lived not too long ago. Not in the wild regions of Africa, but in middle Europe.

It is a source of wonder that many of the people raised in these conditions were able to compare favorably with people born and raised under civilized conditions. In fact, many of the people finally obtained a high level of education. (For example, Dr. Meltzer whom I mentioned before grew up under those primitive conditions until he was about sixteen years old and he is today one of the greatest doctors in New York. And he is only one of many such examples.)

And now to the explanation.

It is self-evident that every human being needs to eat and sleep. And as I have previously explained, the tavern in which we assembled consisted of only one room. It is also self-evident that the cooking, baking, eating and sleeping were of necessity done in that same room. The great brick stove was in one corner and a small space near it was the kitchen. The upper end [the head] of the long table, the eastern side, was the dining room. (Almost a quarter part of the table was covered with a coarse woven cloth.) My father sat at that end and the family on both sides of the table. If there were guests or visitors, a larger part of the table was covered with the table cloth.

On the Sabbath the whole table was covered with a Sabbath table cloth and three brass candlesticks were placed in the center of the table over which my mother would pronounce the blessing. (The candlesticks would remain on the table until the conclusion of the Sabbath because it was forbidden to move them on the Sabbath.)

For sleeping there were, in another corner of the room, two beds; one, a wide one with calico curtains for my mother. The second bed, a narrow bed, for my father. The rest of the family slept on the long table and three or four on the long built-in benches (one rather long bench on one side of the room and a shorter bench on another side of the room). And that was our bed room.

But since every villager had to have three dozen fowl we needed a place for them. In summer time, naturally, they were outside and at night they were in the large coop which was attached to the rear wall of the house. But in the winter time, when it was too cold for the chickens even in the coop (the walls of the coop being lined with saplings) we had to have the chickens in the house also. All day they

meandered under the table, bench, bed and on the table, bench, bed. In all these places they were free to pick at crumbs, romancing and defecating (which last when it occurred we made haste to clean up as we saw it).

Sometimes it happened that there was a commotion on account of them, when my mother would leave some noodles on the table or bed to dry or would leave something else uncovered which chickens liked, they had a good time and there would be an outcry "Shoo, shoo," (which in the speech of chickens meant "get out in a hurry or you'll lose your heads").

This always happened in the day time, but at night the place of the chickens was in the "Katuch" or roost. The "Katuch" was a space of about one and one half feet high under the stove where chickens roosted at night in winter time, not only in Jewish homes, but also in the homes of non-Jews. In the morning a small child would climb into the Katuch to see if there were any eggs there.

Now I should explain the saloon and hotel aspect of our house which I promised to do and shall do so in full measure. I previously mentioned that we had a "Kretchma," a tavern, a place to get a bitter drop, a place where the peasants of the neighborhood would gather to sustain themselves and for the Lithuanian peasants to get dead drunk, to smoke strong tobacco, to talk about their pigs, to dance, to jump, to kiss each other and finally to fight among themselves. In short a saloon of which one would not be ashamed even in the Middle Ages. [I detect some sarcasm here.]

But "Kretchma" also meant a place where passing travellers could eat and stay for a night and not infrequently ten travellers would "comfortably" [sic] spend a night and sometimes even twenty strangers would spend the night. And where? Well, I'll soon tell you.

Anyhow, in summer time it was no problem. The better paying guests slept on the table and on the benches. Three or four slept on the warm stove. And if more space was needed we threw some corn straw down from the attic which we placed on the earth floor over which we placed some kind of a bedspread and a cushion for the weary head and it made an adequate bed.

And as for food, the traveller could get as much as his heart desired. The more well-to-do travellers who could afford to spend fifteen to twenty groshen [pennies] for a meal, ate with us. The other travellers would ask me to weigh off a pound of bread (which would cost two to three groshen) and for two groshen they could get a serving of sour cream or half a herring, and so, for about four or five groshen they could have a full meal. So you see we really did operate a hotel.

Now we come to the slaughter house. But to really make this understandable it will be necessary to describe the meat business of those times, especially the Jewish Kosher meat business.

In the larger towns there were butchers in regular meat markets. In the smaller towns there were regular butchers but no meat markets. The butcher operated in the house where he lived, which means he did his work in the same room where he ate and slept. But in the country it was quite different. In every area covering about ten or more scattered villages there were one or two business men who were better off than the rest of the people who were poor artisans and craftsmen and the man of business would not only obtain meat for himself but also for his neighbors. Since my father was the only business man and the most prominent man among his Jewish neighbors he took over the job of butcher in our neighborhood.

This is the way it worked. When my father wanted meat he went to one of the nearby peasant villages and there he would buy a sheep, a calf, a goat, a cow, an ox or sometimes a number of them. In the case of the small animals he would take them to the Shochet [ritual slaughterer] in one of the nearby towns. In the case of a cow or an ox he would arrange to have the Shochet come to our place. And when the meat was brought home where was it placed? Why naturally it was brought into our house. Even if there were ten pieces of it [sic] it was dumped into the middle of our house.

Around one of the ceiling rafters was a strong rope on which the slaughtered sheep or calves were hung and skinned. (Large animals were skinned in the chicken coop.) After the skinning the meat was carried out to a storehouse (a small dark room attached to the house). The viscera, stomach, intestines, lungs, liver, were put on the benches and the table until they were properly cleaned and sometimes they would remain there several days until the job was completed.

Now, what happens to the hides? In the case of the hide of a large animal it was quite feasible to hang it in the coop to dry. However, in the case of the hide of a sheep, a calf or a goat which had to be properly dried in a warm place, the only place was our home.

The hides were stretched by using thick cords prepared for this purpose and attached to the rafters under the ceiling. And the the house was decorated with ten or twelve wet hides. Well, the effect on the eye wasn't too bad because we didn't know anything about interior decorating. But the nose suffered. And if all this doesn't make a slaughter house, I don't know what a slaughter house is.

What's still missing? A storehouse. You are going to get the description of that.

Every villager quite naturally had a garden and we also had a garden in connection with our Kretchma, about two acres. When the fall arrived, the potatoes, beets and carrots were picked and put into bins in the storehouse and in the pit under mother's bed. And when the bins and pit were filled, a bin was made in one of the corners of the house and filled with potatoes. And this is not the end of the matter.

The Jewish villagers were also merchants and since my father was the most prosperous in the neighborhood he most naturally was a dealer in flax and grain which he bought from the peasants of the neighborhood. In the fall when the peasants did the threshing the trade was quite brisk for five or six weeks and the storehouse became filled and again the surplus was placed in the house until it was possible to transport it somewhere else. And this would sometimes take several weeks.

Well, now you've had the storehouse. I also enumerated a shop on my list. But here I must be a little brief because were I to describe in detail all the other work done in the house such as laundry, bread baking, fat rendering, candle making, linen weaving, matzoh baking, I would get tired of writing and you would get tired of reading.

However, I want to give a brief description of the laundry operation which was done every few weeks. A large tub was brought into the house. The soiled clothes were piled in the tub, wood ash placed on top, and then covered. Pots of water were heated on the stove; the hot water was poured over the clothes and then drained off and this pouring

and draining continued until the water ran off clear. The house became very hot and filled with so much steam that we could not see one another and the aroma was stronger than the aroma of the drying hides.

Fat rendering was also quite an operation. Twelve or fifteen geese were fed and stuffed for about a month and were killed about the time of Hanukkah in order that we might have cracklings for the Festival and also in order to have the fat for Passover. (For the cracklings and the fat dumplings which my mother made. I long for them even now. But for the plucking, skinning, salting and rendering of the goose fat in the same room in which all the aforementioned activities went on in the presence of the whole family, six fellow students several drunken peasants and some transient guests, I do not long.)

Only one day a year was set aside for making candles but the preparation for that day took as much time as did the work after that day. The tallow for the candles was obtained from the animals which had been butchered so you can imagine the odor that permeated the house when it was melted. The necessary contraptions for candle making took up the whole length of the house. It was necessary to melt and heat the tallow all day and no one could go near the two or three persons who were making the candles because this was traif (non-kosher) work. These two or three persons doing this work were, therefore, traif, their hands and clothes were traif, the stove was traif and half the house was traif. And after the work was done it was no small job to make everything kosher again. It would take too much space to describe all of this.

The flax operation, which I mentioned before, must also be omitted because it would take too much space but was quite a manufacturing job and it took several weeks. And this too was done in the same house.

Matzoh baking would really be worth describing because it was a very interesting episode in Jewish life at that time and perhaps I shall describe it at a later time.

Finally, the Synagogue. To understand this you should be aware that Lithuanian Jews could do without air, light, proper meals, proper clothes, but not without a synagogue.⁴ The Jewish villager who lived more than two thousand ells from a town [a distance which observant Jews are not permitted to exceed on Sabbath] got together in a central place for Sabbath and Holiday services. And that

center was our house for all the Jewish villagers who lived within two viersts (about 1 1/3 miles) of our house. Only on the New Year Holy Days and Yom Kippur did they go to the synagogue in a town.

To properly understand what I have written above I should tell you that all of this description was applicable to winter time and especially to the fall season. Summertime was quite different. The door and windows open, the fowl mostly outdoors, we used to sleep on the hay in the loft. Grain dealing and butchering were at a minimum. Then things were all right. (Even now I long for those days.)

But in the fall and part of the winter everything was all jumbled together. That was the season for harvesting our garden crops. That was the time for flax and grain dealing. That was the time when the peasants sold their excess animals to avoid feeding them through the winter. That was the time for preparing meat supplies for the whole winter. The butchering business was big and the whole house was in its full glory.

Now we shall resume our picture. It is a winter night, a heavy snow is falling. Near the wide black door, the only entrance to the house, there is much mud due to the snow brought in by each person who entered, especially the peasants with their boots.⁵ On the left side at the very end of the large stove are the shovel and the long implements used for inserting and removing from the stove the items of baking.⁶ And near the door the slop pail⁷ and on the right side a potato bin over which was a small window one foot by six inches (to give some light to the stove which was opposite).

And farther into the house was mud from the snow which each one coming in shook off his clothes. But this wasn't too deep. Between the potato bin and the table near the wall lay several carcasses of sheep or calves. People were in the house in addition to the eight people of the family; three or four peddlers, a couple of flax merchants who had spent the night, a tailor who was making a fur coat for my father, a shoemaker who was making shoes for the family, several non-Jews returning from the market who stopped in to refresh themselves and to warm their hearts with the bitter drop, all were moving about in the house.

Mother and grandmother were busy at the stove preparing supper and in the midst of this rabble hung a calf which father was skinning aided by a child who held a small candle to provide illumination.⁸ At one end of the table there were piled various parts of the animals. At another part of the table some peasants were sitting and drinking. Also sitting at the table is the tailor aided by a small tin kerosene lamp whose flame father watched in order to economize on the amount of kerosene burned. Nearby are some merchants playing checkers. And of course also sitting at the table are the school children and their teacher threatening with the pointing finger, cursing and beating us as he taught us God's law. I've now finished with my first school.

Up until I was twelve years old I studied under various teachers and in various schools in nearby towns. When I reached the age of twelve my parents decided to send me to a Yeshiva which was the highest hope for Lithuanian Jewish parents at that time. And at this point I must pause to describe the nature and character of the Yeshivas and their students at that time.

A Yeshiva had the same stature as a college or university because there were no higher institutions of learning. The Yeshivas varied in size. The Talmud was the only subject studied. The students were called "Yeshiva Bahurim" [Yeshiva lads]. The teachers were not called "Melamdim" [teachers], but rather "Roshei Yeshivas" [Leaders or Heads of Yeshivas], a title corresponding to Professor.

Only in a few cities were there outstanding Yeshivas. Some big cities had either small Yeshivas or none while some small cities boasted many and even large Yeshivas. Vilna had the greatest number of Yeshivas. Volozhyn had the largest Yeshiva in Lithuania. Vilkomir, not a large city, had ten or twelve Yeshivas with five to six hundred students. (My first Yeshiva was in Vilkomir.)

The synagogue, whose main function was to be a place for praying three times a day, was also the place where the ordinary citizen studied.⁹ They were also used as Yeshivas where students not only studied but lodged. (A further explanation will be given later.)

Rarely did a student pursue his studies in his home town, even if a good Yeshiva was available there. The reason for this was that the Yeshiva students had "eating days" and this requires an explanation. Previously I said that the students lodged at the house of study. But of course they also had to eat. And you might think they would eat in restaurants or boarding houses, but the reality was quite different.

Arrangements for "Kest," the "keep" of students, were made by parents of friends or trustees of the synagogue or by the sexton of the synagogue (for a few rubles). Various families either because of a sense of friendship or religious obligation undertook to feed one student for one day each week. Under this arrangement a student would eat with a different family each day, referred to as "eating days." Because of this custom of "eating days" families tended to send their sons to Yeshivas away from home, even though there were good and adequate Yeshivas in their own towns. Parents would have been ashamed to have their sons eating in the homes of strangers in their own town, but there was no feeling of shame even among well to do families if their sons took advantage of "eating days" away from home.

Another reason for sending students to a Yeshiva away from home was the opinion that students away from home would make better progress in their studies. As a matter of fact some parents sent their sons to Yeshivas away from home even though these same parents would provide "eating days" every day in their own homes for students who were enrolled in Yeshivas located where these same parents lived.

I previously referred to the fact that the students slept in the synagogue and this needs further explanation because you might assume that the students had separate dormitories as in our colleges today. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In the very same room where the students prayed and studied while sitting on long benches beside long tables until eleven or twelve o'clock at night, in that same room did these little soldiers of God lay themselves down on dusty straw sacks (which they had brought from home) and on frightfully dirty cushions and they covered themselves with the same kaftans [long coats] which they had worn all day. This was the bed for every night of the week.

If one were to walk in there in the middle of the night it might appear to be a barracks. Not so. In a barracks, even in the worst one, every soldier had a bed and had to observe a certain cleanliness and sanitation, but in the room I have described there was a frightful, indescribable uncleanness. The clothes and the hair filled with the third plague of the Haggadah and the skin covered with the sixth plague [Here the reference is to the ten plagues of Exodus, i.e. lice and boils.] and no one seemed to think it should be otherwise.

Now for a description of life for the typical Yeshiva student.

He woke up between five and six in the morning, because the bench on which he slept was needed by the adults who began arriving for their period of study or for reciting Psalms and for the morning prayers. If a student overslept he was sure to regret it because one of the adults or most likely the sexton would grab him by the legs and uncereemoniously drag him off the bench to the sound of sarcastic and abusive language. The poor unfortunate wretch had to obey.

The dressing did not take long, because he had slept in his shirt, pants, hat and socks (underwear was not known) and all he had to do was reach under the pillow for his "arba Kanfos" (small undergarment with four fringes), pull it over his head and pull on his torn boots (a Yeshiva student wearing whole boots was a rarity), and place his straw sack and cushion in the place provided for it, and pour a little water over each hand three times and rub a little water on his face (because his religion demanded it - otherwise he would avoid the water, and no soap was used). He rattled off a few prayers and immediately began his studies.

Within fifteen or twenty minutes each student was at his reading desk on which lay a large open Gemara [Talmud] and with a small candle in his hand began to study in a loud voice and with such fervor and zeal that it resounded through the whole study hall. Anyone who has not witnessed this really has not seen real enthusiasm.

This zeal and soul was especially evident when the adults were present (a couple of hours before and after morning prayers and the period between afternoon and evening prayers and extending after evening prayers) because

the students had their "eating days" with these adults and if a student did not display enthusiasm in his studies then that student would soon have no "eating days" and in a very short time that student would be expelled from the Yeshiva.

Now to continue with daily routine of the Yeshiva student.

After studying with zeal for about an hour or two, he joined with the adults in the morning prayers. He did not remove his phylacteries (only worn by boys above thirteen) when the morning service was concluded. He resumed his studies until about ten o'clock when he would proceed to the home where he had an "eating day." (Sometimes the trip back and forth took an hour or more.) Arriving at the house of the "eating day" he walked right in, knocking or ringing was not necessary. He remained standing or sitting with his head bent down and his hands buried in his sleeves (most students did this to hide their dirty blistered hands) until the lady of the house or the maid decided to ask him to eat (many times the lady of the house did not agree with her husband's decision to volunteer to provide "eating days" either because of stinginess or because of the untidyness of the student); and when at last, his eyes almost popping out of his head, he heard the lady speaking through her teeth, "Go and wash,"¹¹ Yeshiva boy."¹² He would wash his hands, say the proper blessing over washing the hands, and say the blessing over bread with obvious religious feeling in order to impress his hostess with his piety. (The reputation of a Yeshiva student depended on his scholarship and piety.)

He proceeded with the meal. If he were in a more well-to-do house he would eat in the kitchen, receive a couple of cheap bagels and a glass of milk which left him so hungry that it was not really worth the walk. If he were in a poorer house he would only get black rye bread with borsht (without cream or meat). But it filled his stomach in proper fashion.

He finished the meal, chanted the grace after meals with proper devotion, and off he would go, back to the house of study for a couple of hours of studying. Next, to "The Lesson" which was delivered by the head of the Yeshiva to his students until three or four in the afternoon when the students went for the midday meal.

Again he stood at the door like a poor soul, and again he washed his hands, etc. as before. But for this meal he usually got a picayune piece of herring with his bread and a couple of small dishes of soup (no meat). And after this "fabulous" meal where do you think he went? Right back to the school.

And now he really had to study. First, because he had to repeat and try to memorize "The Lesson" and secondly, because by this time the adults were coming in for the afternoon and evening prayers. And his studying continued until nine or ten in the evening. At that hour he went for his supper which was the best meal of the day. He then returned to school where there was some talk about secular matters such as ghosts and wars, and then to bed. Such was the daily routine except for Friday and Saturday.

Friday studies ended at noon. The meal of the "eating day" host was only in the morning. In the afternoon the students went to the Bath, mended their trousers and kaftans, read the weekly portion of the Five Books of Moses and then had supper wherever they had their Sabbath meal.

On the Sabbath there was very little studying. In the afternoon they slept and sometimes did a little strolling. Study was not resumed until after the evening prayers.

Now that you know what kind of a creature a "Yeshiva Student" was, I'm going to tell you what happened to me from the beginning to the end of the time during which I was a Yeshiva student.

At the end of the summer of 1859 when I was twelve years old, it was decided to send me to a Yeshiva to continue my studies. The joy and pride of my parents in having lived to enjoy such great satisfaction[nachas] cannot be described. To them it seemed that they had achieved the goal of their lives!

I remember, even now, how my mother showing me off would say, "Well, how do you like this Yeshiva Student." I, too, was more than just a little proud of my new status. When we arrived in the town for the New Year¹³ I took every opportunity to tell all my contemporaries that I wasn't just anybody but that I was an "about to be" Yeshiva student.

Not one slap did my father hand me when I left the Holiday services to go outside to discuss my new status with my friends. And it was no small matter for a boy as young as I to omit even one prayer on the New Year or Day of Atonement.

On the third day of Succoth [the first two days being Holy Days] my father, my mother and I arose at three A.M. to go to the town of Vilkomir to enroll me in the Yeshiva. It was a distance of thirty viersts (about twenty miles) and to make a round trip in one day was a very substantial journey.

I have said "we arose" but that is really not accurate. My parents arose because they had had some sleep. But I didn't have to awaken because I had not slept at all during the night. How could I sleep when I felt so lucky all night? Not only was I overjoyed with my new high status as a Yeshiva student but I was bubbling with the anticipation of seeing for the first time the town of Vilkomir about which I had heard so many wonderful things.

For instance I had heard that there were two streets completely paved, that there was a bridge eight hundred feet long, that there was a parade plaza where soldiers marched every day to music of a band, and other such wonders.

As a matter of fact there was much to impress me even before we had arrived in the town. Twelve viersts (about seven miles) before arriving in the town our dirt road became a stone road. The pair of horses, who had been pulling our wagon for eighteen viersts through mud reaching up to the axles, seemed to be a new pair of horses, as the wagon seemed to be moving by itself. A snap of the whip, a whistle, and the horses are running; our hearts are at ease.

At the side of the road were the telegraph poles and wires about which I had heard so much but now I was really seeing them. I asked my father if it was true that by means of the telegraph we could communicate with Petersburg in a minute and how was it done. My father answered that it was true that it could be done, but as to how, he said it was an act of magic and that pious Jews would not use it since pious Jews would have nothing to do with acts of magic.

Once on the stone road it took us only an hour and a half to arrive in the town. At first the houses were far apart but gradually the area became more thickly settled. The first thing that really stood out was the Catholic Church built on a hill, then the Russian Orthodox Church and several two story brick houses, one of which my father indicated as the home of the rich man of the town who was reputed to be worth twenty thousand rubles.

Behind the houses on both sides of the road were many streets on which were a jumble of houses, some large, some small but most of them were dilapidated and had straw roofs.

In the center of town was a market place around which were many stores with a variety of merchandise. There were many peasants displaying products they had brought and also Jewish women at small tables and baskets filled with fruit and baked goods whose aroma whetted my appetite. At home my mother would bake a small challah just for the Sabbath. All the rest of the week we saw only coarse rye bread. And here in the middle of the week I saw an unbelievable display of fine wheat baked goods!

Near the market place was the tavern-hotel where we drove in. My father unhooked the horses and gave them their hay and oats with me helping him. My father greeted some acquaintances with Shalom Aleichem and asked how things were going with them and explained why he had come to town, my mother and I taking pleasure (nachas) in his talk.

We then went to visit a relative of my mother who lived near the bridge which was to me an impressive sight. We were greeted as important guests. A whole herring and cakes were set out and we were invited to breakfast. Greetings were exchanged. Most of the conversation was about me. The hosts promised to give me an "eating day" contingent on my being a serious and hardworking student.

From there we went to the synagogue area¹⁴, passing through the Parade Plaza which I mentioned previously. The large synagogue about which I had heard loomed impressively ahead of us. We located the house of Rabbi Nahum Kadeshes, the head of the Yeshiva, and made our entrance.

Near the door where we entered was a small bed on which a baby about a year old was wriggling. (He is now the well known S.S. Bloom, my brother-in-law.) In the middle of the room were the Rabbi's wife and three daughters (one of them is now my wife, long life to her). On the wall opposite the door was an unpainted table and a bench (which was also used as a bed at night). Sitting on the bench a man in his forties, good-looking face, bright sparkling eyes, a long patriarchal beard, studying a sacred text, the head of Yeshiva Rabbi Nachman Kadeshes.

As soon as they recognized each other my mother warmly embraced and kissed the Rabbi's wife. (They were cousins who had not seen each other for a long time.) The Rabbi greeted my father and me with "Shalom Aleichem" and asked us to be seated. Greetings were exchanged and then down to the purpose of our visit.

The Rabbi asked me some questions about my studies, opened a large Gemara and proceeded to give me an examination. My heart began to beat like a hammer and my eyes began to fill with tears because I had never before seen such an impressive person. The Rabbi, seeing my distress, spoke kindly and reassured me, pointed to a particular section in the text and asked me to read it aloud. I looked at my father and although still nervous I managed to read and answer the Rabbi's questions and control my nervousness. To the delight of all, I was accepted as a Yeshiva student for the first class. (There were three classes in the Yeshiva at that time.)

However, our business was not yet finished. We still had to arrange my "eating days." The Rabbi's wife (my mother's cousin) agreed to take care of one day. She also mentioned some relatives who might offer some "days." My father mentioned some acquaintances who might provide some "days." And then began the wearisome round of going from one relative to another, from one acquaintance to another.¹⁵

A couple of these relatives and acquaintances were genuinely glad to see us and immediately agreed to provide "days." Others were not so cooperative. Well, we lined up four days in addition to the two we already had and that made six. But, even then there were seven days in the week. However, it was no great problem. We felt that we would later arrange for another "day," or failing that my parents

would send food for that seventh day. When we finished with all that wandering we went home that very evening. (The semester would not begin until the week after the Succoth holiday.)

The very next morning I hastened to the blacksmith's which was across the street from our tavern and gleefully told the blacksmith about my acceptance as a Yeshiva student. I even explained my achievement to the peasants who were in the shop who looked at me with a new respect as though I were already a Rabbi.

On Simchas Torah the ninth day of Succoth, my father celebrated with greater joy than any other Simchas Torah (Rejoicing of the Torah). When the members of the congregation assembled for the Holiday service they joined together in a dance and even invited me to join them. And this was no small honor since I still had a year to go to reach my Bar Mitzvah (thirteenth birthday).

When the Holidays were over the time time for leaving home grew closer and closer my feelings changed completely. My former joy left me and a heavy sadness filled my young heart. Each morning I left the house early and cried in solitude. And my good mother must have done the same thing because I would see tears in her eyes. And how could it be otherwise? Although we had achieved our fondest hopes, the ties between mother and child, and child and mother, were going to be sundered and as the time for separation drew closer, when I would leave the warm, gentle arms of my mother, our pain was really terrible.

If my mother were a wolf or other kind of animal she would surely have torn to pieces anyone who would take her child from her. But since she was a human being she was able to hide her innermost feelings. And as for me, I was already enough of a man to have poisoned my mind with enough foolishness so that instead of protesting against this bizarre practice of separating a child of twelve from a warm home and loving parents, both my mother and I hid our feelings and outwardly appeared happy about it.

And if you, reading this, wonder how people in the nineteenth century could have acted in such a heartless absurd fashion, and if you would go so far as to say this is the same as people in ancient times using their children as sacrifices to their ancient gods, then wonder about this, that as this is being written (August 26, 1917) in the twentieth century, millions of young men of civilized nations have been slaughtered during the last three years in the frightful war in Europe.

At this very moment more young men are being killed on the battlefields of Europe than the letters of the alphabet which I am now writing. And why is this happening? Because of a despotic Kaiser, king, president fronting for a clique of capitalists who exchange yesterday's spilled blood for treasuries of gold. And it is sad to say that ninety-five percent of the masses consider the war a sacred cause and allow themselves to be slaughtered like cattle. And why is this? Because men of evil minds who have sold their souls have convinced the masses that this is God's will and the highest patriotism.

If people were to use their common sense about "ideas" the same as they do about their ordinary everyday actions instead of accepting as good everything said by newspapers, priests, rabbis and professors, then they would at last understand that it is the craziest kind of god worship to worship a god who cannot or will not conduct his world without the blood of millions of humans. To say prayers and sing praises to a god for providing more powerful guns to destroy more people is the most barbaric kind of patriotism.

In ancient times when mankind lived in primitive conditions, when tribes fought among themselves, it was understandable that the men would fight to protect themselves because defeat meant death or slavery, the life of a slave being worse than death.

But what sense is there in patriotism today, which requires the masses to sacrifice their lives? For example, what would the Russian people lose if they were defeated by Germany? (Remember that Russia was ruled by a despot at the beginning of the war.) And what loss would the German people suffer if they were defeated by England or France (both being more democratic than Germany)? And above all this, why has our own government involved us in this tragedy? To what purpose does our government send our children

overseas to be slaughtered? To what purpose do they take the last morsel from our mouths in high prices and taxes? To what purpose do they end our freedom to speak and think freely, a freedom about which we used to boast?

I know that the patriots would answer "For our land, for our language, our culture, our dignity and our tradition." But this is really senseless! My life and the lives of my children are dearer to me than all of this. All of this can go to the devil rather than to let the best of our young men shed their blood on the fields of France. I know that if the police were to read this, I would end my few remaining years in prison. Even the radicals (murderous patriots) reading this would say that I am a withered soul and totally lacking in poetic spirit.

But I am not making this public, nor am I writing for this present time. If by some chance my great grandchildren will read this (when hopefully the times will be better than at present) then my decaying bones will rejoice knowing that my great grandchildren will realize that their great grandfather in his seventieth year did not follow the same path as the thousands of wise men (men with donkey heads or black hearts) of his day, that he understood that the teaching and the ideas which these wise men taught the masses were no better than the ideas of the idol worshippers of ancient times and were very much more foolish than the ideas of my parents who took me from home and placed me where although I suffered greatly, it was their fond hope that this would make me a great man.¹⁶

Now, I'll return to my story, namely my arrival at the Yeshiva.

During the week after Succoth, I cried, dried my eyes, cried again and finally took courage and put myself at ease. The night before leaving, just as before, I did not sleep. But this time we arose before dawn and made ourselves ready for the trip, but this time it was quite different. The first time was like going to a wedding. This was more like going to a funeral. Father and mother were leading their little soldier with the long side curls to the service.

Arriving in the city my gloom and regret only increased. During the whole day which my parents spent in the town I did not leave my mother for an instant. Wherever she went, I went. But when the time came when they had to leave, they took me to the home of the head of the Yeshiva and gave me the following advice, "Be a good lad, study diligently, don't play pranks, obey the Rabbi, and all good pious people who tell you to do well." My mother kissed me and they left me.

If I were to say that I felt as though my parents had left me to my fate on an island in the middle of an ocean, I really would not be putting it too strongly. It is nearly sixty years ago and yet I still vividly remember my parents leaving me to return to their table and their acquaintances and only the day before it was also my table and my acquaintances. And I was left alone in a house of strangers, among strangers. My next meal was to be in the home of people whom I had not met and did not know.

Some tears rolled down my cheeks, but since I could not change the situation I headed for the school. As I approached the school I heard the loud noises of the students who were studying. As I opened the door I saw about seventy students (all older than I) sitting on benches bending over their large Gemaras [Talmud texts], all yelling, all "swaying," all making certain traditional hand and finger motions. ¹⁷

As soon as the students saw me their studying and yelling stopped and seventy pairs of eyes gave me a chilling "once over." Many of them arose, approached me, kidded me, welcomed me and examined me so closely that I felt like a kitten surrounded by a pack of dogs.

Luckily the teacher was present, so he came to my rescue. He gave some harsh words to the smart alecks who wanted to have some fun at my expense. He warned them not to annoy me and showed me where I could sit and study. Luckily my meals for the first day were at the home of the head of the Yeshiva and since his wife was my mother's cousin they were very friendly and this was a bit of balm to my embittered heart.

When I saw some students getting ready to go to sleep I picked out a bench in a spot which suited me and stretched out there. In less than ten minutes someone grabbed my feet and pulled, at the same time yelling, "Hey, Mr. Business Man, you're on somebody's Hazakah, which meant "claim."¹⁸ With tearful voice I asked what this meant. They explained it and showed me several spots which were available. I picked one and staked my "claim."

This spot was right in the front where the early morning arrivals sat for study and reciting Psalms. I can still remember the big, coarse, angry, bearded face and coarse voice of the blacksmith who roused me out of my sleep that first morning with belittling words, in order that he might have a place to sit and recite Psalms. Unconsciously I yelled "Mother." But almost immediately I realized where I was. I remembered the advice given to me to obey every pious person. And so with a sad heart and holding back tears, I began to dress.

The dressing didn't take long, getting into boots, putting on the "four corners" [the fringes], pushing the arms into the sleeves of the wide, long coat (Kaputa) with its "crease"¹⁹, and it was done. (The hat and pants were already on because we had to sleep with them on us. The hat could not be removed because that would be against the religion. The pants could not be removed because underwear was unknown.)

Next, to the water vessel to pour the "nail water." (That was the name for the morning ablution, which had to be done in accordance with religion in order to remove the uncleanness which had accumulated under the nails while we slept.) Then, to dry the hands and face on the one and only towel which hung near the door (This towel was changed once a week, on Friday.) and which was used by all the students and all those adults who came to pray three times each day, each time wiping their hands according to ritual. Next, I put my cushion and straw sack in the designated place, said a few short prayers and began my studies.

When the adults arrived for the regular morning prayers all the students joined them. And this lasted about one hour. After that the students returned to their studies along with a number of the adults who remained about an hour to study either a page of Gemara or a chapter of Hishna.

A short time after the morning prayers a woman came in carrying two baskets filled with good things, fruit, cookies made with buckwheat flour, and cooked beans and chick peas from which rose a steam through the napkins which covered them to keep them hot and other such things which we could eat without washing the hands.²⁰ Every student who had a kopek or a groschen ran to the woman to buy something to still his hunger.

When I first saw this, even though (as I now know) I was not raised in an atmosphere of extreme cleanliness, I was revolted by the dowdy, ragged appearance of the woman, by the dirty baskets and the dirty napkins covering the beans and peas, by the cookies which had been handled by hands covered with blisters and scabs. And I wrestled with the idea of whether or not I would buy anything. My hunger won and I approached the woman, gave her a kopek, stretched out my hands to act as a dish, and asked her to fill my hands with a kopek's worth of peas. I was in luck because the students didn't play a trick on me (by loosening my pants while my hands were outstretched) and stretching my mouth, I ate the peas from my hand with good appetite.

Between nine and ten o'clock the gang was getting ready to go to their "days." Those who were used to it were acting as though going to a dance. But for me it was the first time. I felt like a man who had been found guilty and condemned to hell (gehenom), because this would be the first time I would eat at a stranger's table. But who can withstand hunger? Especially a twelve year old. So I swallowed my pride and did as the others did. The first time it was difficult but little by little I got used to it. And I began to take in all the "advantages" of the student's life, including the third and sixth of the ten plagues of Exodus (lice and boils).

I spent three and a half years at the Yeshiva advancing through all the three grades. All I want to report about these three and a half years is that during my first year I celebrated my Bar Mitzvah at which I made a

speech (which my teacher had taught me) at a gala party which my parents had arranged. While this isn't very important, yet I want to report it because of an incident which I think it worthwhile to describe.

I have previously mentioned that the students studied in pairs, the buddy system, and of course I picked out a "buddy." My buddy was about my age and he came from an inn about eight viersts (less than five miles) from my home. The name of the inn was Levanesik, so he was called Levanesker.

After my Bar Mitzvah my buddy became very jealous of me. First, because of the speech which my teacher had taught me, but mostly because of the rumor that our teacher had decided that I would be a likely husband for one of his daughters.²¹

So when I returned to the Yeshiva for the semester after my Bar Mitzvah, he no longer wanted to be my buddy. And I soon found the reason for this. He began to get up earlier in the morning. He did not stop his studying even for one minute during the day. He would retire later than anyone else. In short, he earned the title of Matmid (a very zealous student). When I soon realized that he was trying to surpass my record, I would get up earlier than he and retire later than he until we were driving each other nuts.

At the beginning of this mad competition the Rabbi and the leaders of the congregation took great pride in our diligence, but as the Rabbi became aware of the fact that we were only getting three or four hours sleep out of twenty-four and that we were making physical wrecks of ourselves, he restrained us a bit.

Nevertheless, for two years we were Matmidim (zealous students). During those two years, not only did the two of us achieve a great deal in our studies, but a number of the other students were stimulated so that they also became Matmidim and our school achieved a great reputation in the town. There was not a single hour of the day or night when the sounds of studying students ceased in our school.

When my former buddy realized he wasn't going to excel over me in the competition, he became friendly again and we resumed studying together. However, he continued his attack in a more diplomatic manner. He played a few tricks on me which made me remember him for a long time. (I remember them even now, but of course with different feelings.)

One afternoon my buddy and I and several more students were walking along a street where we saw a large crowd standing around a large canvas tent. Over the door of the tent were some odd wooden figures and some Russian writing which we of course didn't understand.

But my sly buddy knew all about it. He said that inside the tent they did all kinds of wonderful stunts and tricks and that it was the talk of the town and that the admission charge was two kopeks per person.

Of course that was a little expensive for us and it was a big risk for us if the Rabbi ever found out we had gone in. The temptation was too strong for us to resist. So we decided to go on. My slick buddy said he had already seen the show twice so he didn't want to go in. We were a little suspicious about him, but we couldn't resist the desire to see the wonders in the tent. So we warned him saying, "See here, little pumpkin,²² if you ever tell the Rabbi about this, you're a dead man." He swore that he would never tell a soul. So we paid our money and entered the tent.

We saw such wonderful things that we were sure it was all done with magic. We saw small wooden figures [puppets] dancing, talking, telling stories. For the first time in our lives we saw a monkey and it was jumping through a hoop. We saw what appeared to be a head without a body, speaking.

These wonderful tricks made such a powerful impression on us that we paid our two kopeks again so that we could see the show a second time. Since all of this took only an hour, and since we had not seen anyone who knew us, and since we told no one about this great adventure, we thought we were going to get away with it.

But it turned out otherwise. The next day when we began our lesson, the Rabbi approached me and the other two "transgressors" with these words, "I've heard that you saw some great wonders yesterday which cost sixteen groshen and the evening prayers (because of the show, we had missed evening prayers). Tell us all about it, so that we all may enjoy it too." We dropped our heads in shame and all the other students had a good laugh at our expense.

"We are not guilty. The Levansker talked us into it." To which the Rabbi replied, "And if he told you to kill someone would you do it?" Whereupon, he took a good deep sniff of the snuff he had held in his fingers, wiped his hand a couple of times on his coat, and then delivered a few slaps to our faces while he expounded on the depravity of our transgressions and warned us about ever going to see the puppets again.

The marks of the slaps left our cheeks in a day or so but our embarrassment lasted a long time. In fact, it lasted through the rest of our stay at the Yeshiva. Whenever anyone wanted to tease us all they did was refer to us as "puppets." We, on our part, created a nickname for our accuser. We called him "Rusha" (sinner) because he had sworn that he would tell no one. He, however, swore he had told no one but that someone else had seen us and reported it to the Rabbi. The nickname did not stick to him.

However, another incident happened which convinced me that my buddy was the one who had betrayed us.

On a very hot day when I was studying with my buddy (with whom I had again resumed studying), I suddenly said, "I sure would like to take a dip in the river." (A Yeshiva student was only permitted to go bathing in the river once a week (on Friday, in honor of the Sabbath). So my buddy said, "Why not? Go ahead and when you come back I'll go for a dip too." With this assurance from him, off I went to the river, stripped and took a few dips. I dressed hurriedly, squeezed water out of my long side curls (so no one would know I was bathing) and quickly ran back to the Yeshiva.

There I found myself in deep trouble. My buddy, the Levansker, told me that the Rabbi discovered my absence and had forced the Levansker to tell him where I was. The Rabbi gave me the same treatment as in the incident of the "puppets." On this occasion I could not control my anger toward my buddy, so as soon as the Rabbi left my buddy and I started fighting, first with words and then with fists.

Because I was stronger and more agile than he, I gave more blows than I received. But he was trickier than I. He scratched my face, and because of this I remembered him a long time. A Yeshiva student with a scratched face was in deep trouble. It was like the "Mark of Cain." A Yeshiva student was supposed to spend all his time in study and prayer and because of this he earned his "eating days." For a Yeshiva student to engage in brawling like an ordinary working boy resulted in the Yeshiva boy losing many an "eating day," so a scratched or battered face would mean many days of hunger.

When I began my fourth year at the Yeshiva and had just reached my sixteenth birthday, I became friendly with a fellow whose home was in Vilkomir (where my Yeshiva was located). He had spent two years studying in Vilna which was the biggest town in the Jewish community of Lithuania.

When I asked him why he did not continue his studies in Vilna, I heard the following monologue. [sic] "Isn't it rather ridiculous for my parents to feed a different student every day in my home while I am away in Vilna eating in homes of strangers, suffering all the other privations of being away from home?" I said, "You are correct. But don't forget that your family is doing a mitzvah [good deed, i.e. religiously meritorious] by feeding that student who is away from home. And it is no mitzvah to feed their own son, even non-Jews do that."

"My father laughs at such mitzvah and if he could, he would destroy the whole stupid custom of eating days. (His father already was "enlightened.") As a matter of fact, my father opposed my going to Vilna, but I was so anxious to see Vilna that he acceded to my wishes, but after being there two years I realized my father was correct and under no circumstances would I want to be a student away from home.

"However, I sure wished my father would send me to the Rabbiner School.²³ Those students dressed in uniforms like officers sure look good, no side curls, speak only Russian, live the good life. And when they finish their studies they get a government job with good pay. What a contrast to the Yeshiva student who lives a miserable existence and only one out of a hundred amounts to anything, if he is lucky enough to make a good marriage, while the other ninety-nine remain paupers all their lives."

When I heard this monologue a shudder went through my body. To me it was frightening that a Yeshiva student sitting at an opened holy Gemara in a holy synagogue would dare to voice such impious words. How did he dare to say that to be a student at the Rabbiner School who looked like a goy (non-Jew), who talked like a goy, who it was said even wrote on the Sabbath, could be better than to be a Yeshiva student who studied God's Torah without which the world could not exist.

At that time it seemed to me the greatest blasphemy. I looked fearfully at the ceiling fearing that a rafter would fall and kill my friend for uttering such talk. To my chagrin at that time I noticed he remained strong and healthy. I separated myself from him, fearing that some kind of trick would somehow put those unholy ideas in my thoughts.

For an appreciable length of time I kept away from him, but my caution wore off. His words began to bore into my mind and more and more and little by little we became friendly again and I became a frequent visitor at his home.

In the library were a number of Hebrew books which his father read. At first I took a dim view of these books because the authors were considered heretical, Yitzhak Baer Levinson, Mordechai Aaron Ginzberg, Abraham Mapu, Kalman Shulman and others of the same ilk. But after a while I began to look into them. The trouble, however, was that I didn't understand them. A Yeshiva student was not supposed to understand Hebrew as a vernacular. But I heard my friend's father speaking Hebrew and this was enough for me to begin to understand, to open my eyes. And my friend had a sister about my age, a lively girl who opened my heart. And so, that winter my mind was topsy-turvy. My

piety and zeal for study were considerably and noticeably lessened. Naturally my Rabbi saw this. He lectured me, reported me to my parents, made threats. All to no avail. They lectured and moralized and I remained unchanged.

At the end of that winter when I went home just before Passover I told my parents that I no longer wanted to study in Vilkomar but only in Vilna. "Only Vilna," shouted my father. "Is Vilkomir now too small for you? I understand you, young man. You no longer want to remain where we can still have our eyes on you, where we can observe all your "good" deeds which you have been doing lately. You want to be free as a bird, to do whatever your heart desires far from home."²⁴

My mother with good sensible talk tried to dissuade me from going to Vilna, saying that in Vilkomar she was able to visit me once in a while but that if I went to Vilna the distance was so great that I might not be able to come home for a visit even between semesters (six weeks in the fall and four weeks in the spring), and that her heart could not stand the pain of longing to see me. And in addition to this, she said that Rabbi Nahum (my teacher) had picked me to marry his daughter Rebecca (Rivka)²⁵ who was a very fine girl.

"For that reason alone I want to leave Vilkomir," I said, "because all the students tease me and call me Rivka's groom and they call her Hirsh Leib's bride and I am fed up with it. And in addition to this I've outgrown that school. If I were to spend three or four years in Vilna where the largest Yeshivas are located I would probably be ordained as a Rabbi (Semicha)." That did it! The highest goal in the lives of my parents was to have a son who would be a Rabbi. So I achieved my desire. My parents agreed to let me go to Vilna.

My good mother immediately got busy preparing provisions for the journey. Some cheeses, shirts, socks and two dozen rolls were all packed in a white canvas bag and my mother and father accompanied me to Vilkomir where they made arrangements with a coachman²⁶ who was going to Vilna and they gave me a few rubles for my expenses. At the end of the third day after leaving Vilkomir we arrived at an inn in Vilna.

I began my studies at "Sadorski's (KLOIZ) Synagogue and School on Taterese Street (Vilna people will know where that was). At first I found my studies difficult because the students were older than I, some being over twenty years old. A few rubles which I gave the sexton made things easier for me. I made a special effort to get into this particular Kloiiz because the students here did not have "eating days" which was the case with students in other Kloiizes. Here the system was that the sexton and his wife made regular rounds to certain households in the town and collected money, bread, flour, groats, potatoes, etc. with which they fed the students every day except the Sabbath. On the Sabbath each student ate at a selected household.

Every morning and every evening all the students sat at a long table and we were served herring, bread, groats with butter (or other fat). On Friday morning we would get hot rolls made with dark flour along with moldy butter.

Of course this was not free. Each student paid the sexton two or three rubles a semester for his work (and a certain amount of this money of course was retained by the sexton) and of course the student who paid more received a larger piece of herring, a fuller bowl of groats, and I was a part of this favored group.

We had a separate room for sleeping and compared to what I had in Vilkomir this was a veritable Garden of Eden. I was free at last from "eating days," from groans, and even from study because in Vilkomir we were under strict supervision of our Rabbi and the leaders of the synagogue who were constantly driving us to advance in our studies. But here in Vilna we were free as birds and completely without supervision.

The Rosh Yeshiva (the head of the Yeshiva) was selected by and paid by the trustees (Gaboim) a set sum every week out of the tuition paid by the students to the trustees and the trustees managed to collect more from the students than they paid the Rosh Yeshiva.

He was a young man named Joshua Lang. He would come to the school at 2 P.M. every day except Friday and Saturday. Quickly he would sit down at the table and any students who were

present also sat down and if half the students were absent he paid it no mind. He quickly rushed through a page or two of Gemara and didn't seem to care whether any of the students listened or not. The whole thing lasted about an hour, and off he went.

Just as our Rabbi didn't seem to care what his students did, so too the trustees didn't seem to care. This Kloiz was a bit aristocratic and the trustees were rather well-to-do and they seldom came to daily services, only to sabbath services. During the week only a small number of elderly and poor people attended services and none of them remained to study. So we only studied about an hour in the morning and an hour before nightfall when people were around for the morning and evening services. The sexton, because he was paid by us, didn't bother us and the result was that Sadorski's Kloiz was an institution for the lazy and shiftless supported by people who thought their good deeds would buy them a place in the world to come. (What a poor investment they had made.) I, a pious and zealous student, landed in that kind of school.

Perhaps things would not have turned out badly but for the fact that it was 1863, the year the Polish rebellion was going full blast against Russia, and Vilna was the center of Russian might to suppress riots. The Russian tyrant Miraviov was the Governor General and he ruled the Poles with the greatest cruelty. Hardly a day passed without a hanging or a shooting in a public square called Lukuskes, or deportation of a group to Siberia.

Every few days regiments of soldiers arrived from St. Petersburg. Often, generals and colonels would lead parades after returning from a slaughter of the rebels in the forests, and they would usually bring back a half dozen tattered hungry Polish captives.²⁷

As Yeshiva students we were familiar with the teachings of the Gemara, (1) that the law of the land must be obeyed, and (2) the thoughts of the king may not be questioned, and as a regular part of our services every Saturday we would pray for the well-being of the Czar of Russia, so it was quite natural that we were Russian patriots. And since we had plenty of free time, we were regular witnesses to the cruel events.

One day we would see a hanging or a shooting of a few revolutionaries, on another day we would witness a regiment arriving or leaving or parading after a slaughter of revolutionaries in the forest. Sometimes we would witness two or three of these events in one day.

Since great crowds came to see these happenings we students tried to get there early in order to have a vantage point to see the hangman and his victims close-up or to get close to the parade. This activity of ours killed six days of the week. On the Sabbath we were not permitted to do this, so we visited with students from other Kloizes.

That's how I spent my summer in Vilna. All the promises I made my parents were forgotten. Had I remained in Vilna much longer my life would have taken an entirely different path. But at the end of the summer I had to leave Vilna because the government insisted that all non-residents must have passports, and since my parents refused to send me a passport I went home, arriving there before Rosh Hashanah.

When my parents saw my hair as long as my side curls (like a Dansker Cossack), the visor of my cap pulled down over my eyes (like the young dandies), when I insisted that the tailor making my coat for the Holidays cut a slit in the back (forbidden by strict practice), and finally when my father told me to get on with my studies (Hazerin)²⁸, there was a real explosion when I said that I really didn't think it worthwhile to continue with my studies because I would rather be a business man than a Rabbi. Then my parents realized what Vilna had done to me and they decided then and there that there would be no more going away from home for continued study. They wanted me to return to R. Nahum's school but I was adamant in my refusal, because I was embarrassed about returning there.

So it came about that I continued my studies in my home town of Vilkomir but at another Yeshiva. No "eating days" for me this time. My father arranged quarters for me with a friend of his and also sent me from time to time supplies of bread, meat, potatoes, cereal, etc. which were prepared for "us" by the servant girl who worked in that house.

I say prepared for "us" because another Yeshiva student lived there, he to whom I previously referred who is now the well known Dr. Meltzer of New York. His family also sent him food so the servant girl prepared food for both of us and we ate out of one plate and slept in one bed. (And now, people think he was born a German aristocrat!)

I attended this new Yeshiva only a couple of months because the Rosh Yeshiva became seriously ill and gave up teaching for the rest of the semester. In that same winter Nathan, son of Rabbi Nahum, was seriously ill (Nathan Bloom is brother of my present wife.), so I again visited there and resumed my friendly relations and studied there the rest of the semester. And that ended my stay in Vilkomir.

In the spring of 1864 when I was 16 1/2 years old, I went to a small town Onyxt, about fourteen or fifteen viersts from my home, and I resumed my studies, but this time without a Rabbi. This practice of solo studying was common when a student had arrived at the status of being "half a scholar" (Lamdan) who no longer needed a Yeshiva. I really didn't know enough to study on my own, but I didn't want to be in Vilkomir. And since my father would not hear of me going far away from home after what happened in Vilna, I had no choice except to start studying on my own.

This place was quite suitable for me because (1) there were two large Yeshivas there with quite a number of students, some Kest sons-in-law (young men supported by their in-laws while they spent their time in continuous study), some children of well-to-do parents and other ordinary students, and (2) it was near home.

Every week my father brought me food from the local market (because here I did not have "eating days") and frequently I would go home for a visit. (It took me about two hours.) I studied more there than in Vilna, but my zeal for study and my erstwhile piety were waning.

When I had spent about a half year at Onyxt I met a young man a little older than I who had already spent one year at the Rabbiner School in Zitomir and who planned to return there as soon as he could clear up certain obstacles. He, of course, was filled with the spirit of Haskalah which was beginning to enter our Lithuania. We became fast friends. He really was the first person to give me the first push out of my old ways, not because I was an impressionable young man, but because of serious thinking.

He criticized the very fundamentals of religion. At first, I argued against his views. But he had such a glib tongue and his arguments were so strong and logical that little by little my heart and my mind began to agree with him. The most impressive argument was about the senselessness and purposelessness of the life and striving of the Yeshiva student. I decided that I must go to the Zitomir Rabbiner School.

While it was easy for me to reach this decision, it was entirely another matter for me to carry it out. My decision was quite firm, but one important element was lacking, an element still difficult to obtain, money. I thought of asking my father for money but I felt certain that his answer would be a few slaps, period. I even thought of stealing the money, but I decided that was not the job of a Yeshiva student. So all I did was sit in front of the open texts I was supposed to be studying and indulge in fantasies about attending the Zitomir Rabbiner School.

While I was indulging in my fantasies, my parents were indulging in their fantasies. As I was now in my eighteenth year they decided I ought to be married. The result of their fantasies was action; the result of mine, nothing.

On a certain Sabbath which I was spending at home my mother said, "Son, tomorrow we're going to Vilkomir to see about a bride for you. You are soon going to be eighteen (may you live to one hundred and twenty) and you should have been married long before this."

At first I was a little mixed up about this proposal. But after a little reflection I decided my parents would swing me into it because this was the custom in Lithuania at that time and I also began to have doubts about going to the Zitomir Rabbiner School. My lack of money presented many obstacles to going to Rabbiner School. On the other hand, getting married opened up vistas of the Garden of Eden, a gift from my father-in-law, a watch, a fur coat (such was the custom), a gift from my father of a wedding outfit and boots and galoshes, and after the wedding Kest and a few hundred rubles as dowry, and in addition to all this, I wasn't kidding myself, I would be getting a young wife. So I agreed to go see the prospective bride. Since I was the oldest my parents pushed this business because they wanted grandchildren before they got much older.

My father sent an invitation to his three brothers to join us on our trip to see the bride. At first I couldn't understand why it was necessary for my uncles to be involved in this inspection. I knew they were experts on flax, cattle and horses, but as to brides, well, their wives were only so-so. My mother soon explained, "If everything is as has been reported, there will be an immediate engagement, and for such an occasion we would have to have some family present."

My three uncles arrived the evening before we were to make the inspection trip. We had a sumptuous dinner that night. Everyone who came in that evening, friend or stranger, even the peasants, everyone was treated to a drink and some refreshments. Everyone was informed of the reason for the celebration. The Jews said "Mazel Tov". As for the peasants, those who were unmarried even though much older than I, looked on me with envy. Those who were married expressed wonder that a young squirt like me was getting married when their boys of that age were still tending cattle and sheep in the fields. No one paid much attention to what mere peasants said.

Bright and early the next morning my father and my three uncles made ready for the journey. The horses were given a better feeding than usual, the axles were properly greased, the wagon was well packed with straw, hay and oats, and three horses were hitched, a troika, a stylish way to travel. My mother, my father, my three uncles and I got into the wagon and sat with our feet under us. A snap of the whip, a whistle, and we were off - to see the bride!

As it was the beginning of winter, the road was hard, smooth and icy but free of snow. We had three good horses, recently shod so they would not slip. The youngest of my three uncles was a warm and friendly person who carried a bottle of whiskey with him. My mother provided refreshments. And this is a trip which is still vivid in my memory, even though it was half a hundred years ago.

It was only a short time after the Polish riots. The government had set up inspection stations along the main roads. All travellers had to stop for interrogation by the gendarmes and state their names, route of the trip and purpose of the trip. When the gendarmes were told we were going to an engagement party and that I was the groom, they burst out into

such wild laughter we all thought they were crazy. They made some ribald crude remarks about me and let us proceed.

My parents and uncles dismissed it all with the remark that "that's what you can expect from gendarmes!" As for me, this incident had an altogether different effect. I began to think that perhaps gendarmes had more practical sense about living than my parents. I began to think about the Rabbiner School all over again. I began to hope that my intended in-laws would not find me acceptable²⁹ (even though the natural impulse for normal people is to be approved by others).

The physical appearance, the economic status of the prospective groom had no weight at all in deciding on acceptability. The all important test for a Yeshiva student's acceptability was his scholarship. For this purpose a scholar was invited to test me. I passed the test, the engagement was concluded.

I remained at the home of my intended in-laws until my fur coat (the engagement gift) was fitted and finished. Do you think that I would be able to spend some of this time with my intended? God forbid! That was for the son of a shoemaker or a tailor, but not for a Yeshiva student. All we could do would be to exchange glances stealthily and occasionally exchange some innocent words when no one was within earshot.

When my fur coat was finished, I went home. Without any delay, I went to Onyxt and made an appearance at the school where I had been studying. Outwardly modest, I was inwardly quite proud of my new coat and my new status and enjoyed receiving the good wishes (Mazel tov) of all who saw me.

My engagement took place the early part of 1865. I continued my studies at Onyxt during the rest of that year. At the beginning of 1866, I stopped going to Onyxt. I remained at home. My wedding was scheduled for the month of Adar. [This is the month which precedes the month in which we celebrate Passover.]

As the date for the wedding approached I began to have increasing doubts about the whole matter. I began to think about running away from home and going to the Rabbiner School

in Zitomir. But the big difficulty was that I had no money. I came to the conclusion that the only way I could get any money was to steal from my father.

At this point I was impressed with the statement in the Talmud that one transgression leads to another. The only time I could get at the money would be on the Sabbath. Since it was a serious transgression to handle money on the Sabbath, my father would put his money under the straw of his bed on the Sabbath. So to accomplish my plan not only would I commit the transgression of stealing, but I would also be guilty of the transgression of handling money on the Sabbath.

At this point in my life our household had been divided into two rooms so that my parents had a bedroom. So on a certain Sabbath while my father was reciting Psalms, I went into the bedroom, quickly found the large canvas pouch, hid it under my long kaftan and went to the bath house³⁰ which was located at the base of a hill not far from our house.

There I counted the money. It was 300 rubles. Not for an instant did I contemplate taking all the money. I would have reduced my parents to poverty. I started to think about how much I would need and while I was deliberating about this I began to have second thoughts about the whole idea. So I returned all the money to the place where it had been. Everything remained status quo. My parents continued to get ready for the wedding. I continued to think about the Zitomir Rabbiner School.

When only four weeks remained until the date set for my wedding my parents left on a visit to my intended in-laws to see whether they were ready to put up the dowry, the clothes for the bride and the bed linen which it was the custom for the bride's parents to provide. Our home was in the charge of my paternal grandmother, her daughter and the daughter's husband who unfortunately was a cripple. I thought this would be a good time to make my get away since it wouldn't be difficult to elude them. But the cursed problem was still the lack of money. I had accumulated by petty thievery from my parents about 20 rubles. I planned on taking all of my clothes including my new fur coat, my idea being that I could sell off some of the clothes, especially the coat. And this was what wrecked my plans.

I couldn't just walk out with my clothes so I said to my aunt that I was going to hang them in the attic where they would hang a while in the fresh air before I packed them for the wedding. Then, when my aunt was busy with her tasks, I went up to the attic, packed all the clothes in a large bag and left the attic. From that point, I hoped to run to the nearby woods, then to the next village where I would arrange for a peasant's wagon to take me to a road where I would get transportation to a town and from the town to Zitomir.

But "Man proposes and God disposes." My aunt had been told to keep an eye on me. When she had finished her tasks she went up to the attic to see what was going on. She saw neither clothes nor me. She ran out into the street yelling at the top of her lungs to the blacksmith who was nearby that I had run away. He jumped on a horse and caught me before I reached the woods. I foolishly said, "Keep the clothes but let me go." I got nowhere with this. He brought me shamefaced back home where I was kept under a careful watch.

When my parents came home they were told what their brat had done. First they thanked God. Next they thanked the blacksmith for saving them from a shameful embarrassment. Then they gave me a good lecture, kept me under close scrutiny so that I felt like a prisoner and in less than four weeks they were dancing at my wedding.

My wedding marked the end of my hopes for a different kind of career. My parents and my wife's parents were happy that they had lived to see their children joined under the "chuppa" and they hoped they would soon be grandparents.

Did they give any thought to how their children would make a living? Of course not. That they left to God. It went without saying that God was good, that he provided food even for a worm under a stone. He would surely provide for their children.

I lost all my ambition, stopped being concerned about my future, relaxed in the easy life provided for me, and like a condemned prisoner enjoying his last meal, gave no thought to the future. After the wedding, I lacked nothing. Truly it could be said conditions were very good with me.

Early every morning I arose from a bed not much better than the hard bench of the school. With my beautifully embroidered Tallis [prayer shawl] bag and Tefillin [phylacteries] under my arm I went to the Kloiz for morning prayers.

When I wrapped myself in the large new Tallis and put on the large Tefillin I was filled with an indescribable feeling of well-being. After the prayers were concluded I spent some time in study, chatted a while, replaced the Tallis and Tefillin in their bags while reciting by heart some Psalms and returned to my home.

There I was greeted by the warm loving faces of my wife and mother-in-law. A good breakfast was on the table, a big improvement over the breakfast of the "eating days". After breakfast I would return to the Kloiz or sometimes I would go to the home of Rabbi Nahum with whom I became friendly again after my wedding. There I usually found some men of my age who were Maskilim [followers of the new Enlightenment], students of the renowned school of Lillienblum, with whom I had interesting discussions.

When it was time for lunch I went home to enjoy a good one prepared by my mother-in-law who of course thought I had spent the entire morning in serious study. After lunch I did really return to the Kloiz where I really did some studying. Then there were afternoon and evening prayers which were followed by some more study, and shmoosing until eight or nine o'clock. Then it was time to go home for dinner.

After that my wife and I would go to our room. I would read a Haskalah book in Hebrew which my wife and her parents thought was a book of sacred study. My wife would do some domestic work or read a book of stories. My in-laws sat in another room taking deep pleasure out of this, because they thought I was engaged in deep serious sacred study. They looked at the clock on the wall wondering if it were too early to put out the fire which would mean their son-in-law would have to stop his study.

This empty and trouble free life lasted two years. But by then I knew that my father-in-law could no longer support me, my wife and my child who had already arrived, and that he would not be able to give me the balance of the promised dowry, and that I had lost in a business venture that small part of the dowry which I had received.

Each day I grew to dislike him more and more. From the very beginning I disliked him because of his coarseness and as time went on I began to dislike him even more because he was disappointed in me because I did not come up to his expectations.

This situation deteriorated to the point where I would not sit at the table with him except on the Sabbath. Remaining in that house was like being in Gehinnom [Hell] I realized that I must find a way to support myself and I felt unlucky and helpless. I was like a cripple, one without hands or feet. While it was true that there was nothing wrong with my hands and feet I used my hands only to move food from the plate to my mouth or to hold a book. I used my feet only for strolling or to show off my agility in jumping a fence. But to use them to earn a meal, I knew nothing.

The only way I could think of to free myself from eating the "bread of shame," the Kest, which I took from the hand of a man whom I disliked intensely and which bread had come to have a very bad taste in my mouth, the only way was to lease a bit of land from my father for the few rubles which I still had left and live with my parents.

So I returned to the home of my parents where I had first attended school. My parents' home had been modernized. Conditions had changed. It used to be my home. Now it was my parents' home. My father used to order me to study and to do certain things. Now I was an adult and my own man. In general my parents were good to me and my wife. My mother was especially kind.

The summer came. Through the door and the window poured a sea of light and warmth and the pleasant aroma from the fields of rye which surrounded the inn. I spent some of my time helping my father. I read some Haskalah. I went strolling. I did some riding in the area. I bought a cane for 15 kopeks and I used to stroll with it to visit a neighbor, a Maskil [follower of the Haskalah] who lived two viersts away. Sometimes I would go to Triop the nearest town, about five viersts distance. Whenever I got a new book I'd put it under my arm, take my cane and go into the fields of rye or to the small wood or to the orchard of the Polish landlord and sit and read. In general the life of that summer was pleasant and enjoyable.

Here I end a specific period in my life and a new period begins. It is a new period for two reasons. First up to this time my life really was child's play but from this time forward my life was a sea of troubles, each trouble greater than the preceding one, a sea in which I swam with ever increasing strain for the next fifty years. Secondly, the events I have described until this summer had historical value and were events and happenings which thousands of others raised like me experienced. My main purpose in this story up until now was to present the historical picture so that my grandchildren might learn how so-called civilized people lived, where they lived, what ideas and concepts they held, how they raised their children and the results of that upbringing.

The story of this new period of my life will be more personal and have only incidental historical value. The basic cause of the difference in my life is due to the fact that my father, like thousands of Jewish fathers in Lithuania, was primarily concerned with life in the world to come rather than with the problems of life in this world. The problems and difficulties which I was to experience were more pronounced than those which were experienced by many of my contemporaries. It seemed that a very special bad luck [shlim mazell] pursued me.

Because of this bad luck I've had some doubts as to whether I should write the rest of my story. However I've decided to go on with it, first because it is not written for general publication but only for my children and grandchildren, and secondly because it is a way for me to pass the time.

I want my descendants to be aware of the great struggle of fifty years of my life. It was like being on a frail ship battling huge waves until I finally was able to bring my fellow passengers (my family) to a landing no worse than the landing of thousands of others, but who might have had a safer and stronger ship. Now, though I am tired and broken down after this long and arduous journey, I feel fortunate and lucky that I was able to provide for those whom it was my duty to support until they no longer needed my help. And now I'm happy to say that they no longer need my support. They are making it possible for me to have a comfortable life free from want.

What I have said about my struggle above applies equally to my present wife the mother and grandmother of most of my children who shared my troubles and now thankfully shares our rest and freedom from want. We have now been married 46 years.

And now to return to my story. During the Succoth holiday following the summer of which we were speaking my parents left on an overnight visit to the town. I also left on an overnight visit to my friendly neighbor the Maskil.

My wife was left at home alone and since she was afraid to sleep alone in our dark bedroom she slept that night in my parents' bedroom. During the night thieves broke into our bedroom and stole everything we owned. My parents suffered some minor losses but my wife and I lost everything except the clothes on our backs.

It was a very serious setback. As for me being young and full of strength it did not get me down. My wife however not being too strong and being a nursing mother at the time suffered a great deal over our loss. She became very sick. In mid-winter I took her to the doctor in the town who said she was seriously ill. At the end of the winter I took her to a doctor in Vilna who diagnosed her illness as what we today call galloping consumption. He said she was so sick that death was imminent and advised me to take her home without delay. Two days before Sheveuoth she passed away in her father's home. At the age of 22 I was a widower with an infant child, my son Moses.

At this point a slight digression. Just prior to the wedding relations with my Rabbib, Rabbi Nahum, had become strained. But after my wedding we became friendly and during the year when I lived with my in-laws on Kest hardly a day went by without me visiting Rabbi Nahum and his family. I grew to love him dearly. He liked me and I liked his whole family.

During the same winter when my wife died Rabbi Nahum also died. His death filled me with a heavy grief because I felt very close to him as a person and because he was a very capable and brilliant teacher. And he was only 50 years old at his death.

His family consisting of a wife and five children and a married daughter by his first wife were left practically destitute. During his lifetime he provided a very meager subsistence. At his death he bequeathed only a good name. And this does not buy a loaf of bread or a pair of new shoes.

I visited the family during the Shiva and the widow was distraught with grief over her loss and her poor circumstances. She said, "As for my beloved husband the crown of my head I cannot bring him back, and as for me and my small children God will provide as He provides for all widows and orphans. But what will become of Rivka (who you will recall was supposed to be my bride) who is now grown up and looks like she is already 25 (she was only 20 at that time) and I have no means of any kind to arrange a match. (At that time a girl had to have a dowry. The greater the dowry the better the match.)"

After my wife's death I was plagued by matchmakers who praised to the skies the qualities of young girls and young widows whom they recommended as a spouse for me. During all this time Rebecca (Rivka) was always in my mind. My affection for her outweighed the worth of the dowries which were offered by the matchmakers. But in addition during the time I had been married Rebecca had developed into one of the outstanding girls in the town physically and mentally. Whether Rebecca felt attracted to me I'm not sure because she always denied it, but I really believe she was attracted to me. As for her mother, she thought about this match ever since my wife died.

For a time her mother and I entertained the same thoughts about this possible match, but we neither said or did anything about it until a mutual friend acted as a matchmaker and arranged the match.

Rebecca and I were married the first of Elul [a month before Rosh Hashana]. She has shared my difficult life's struggle with the greatest faithfulness and devotion until this very day. She is the mother of our nine living children, a tenth child a daughter we lost at age fifteen, and she has been a mother to my oldest child Moses born to my first wife, treating him with the same maternal love which she gave to her own children.

Yes! Today it is very easy to say the mother of nine children. And really today we get a great deal of pleasure from our children. They are all honest, intelligent, earn respectable livelihoods and show concern for us and support us so that we lack for naught. And we two together have lived to this day! Can there be any greater satisfaction than this?

And how did this come about? Much suffering and anxiety we endured before we reached this situation. To describe all the events would not be possible, first because it would make too lengthy a story and secondly because many of the events are no longer in my memory. All I can do is to describe the main events of our difficult life struggle which I still remember.

At the time of my second marriage my situation was quite different from what it was when I married the first time. The first time I was provided with a dowry and Kest and all my needs were supplied but on my second marriage there was no dowry, no Kest, I had to provide everything myself. During the period of my first marriage did I learn a trade, a profession, a business, some manner in which to provide for myself and my wife? I had no more earning ability now than when I was first married. And if you ask how could I get married under such circumstances you might better ask how could a young girl allow herself to marry a man who had neither a home or even the means to supply her with a meal? And how could my parents allow such a marriage to take place?

At the time of my first marriage there was a dowry and Kest and my parents then hoped I would become a Rabbi. But at the time of my second marriage my parents well knew that I was not going to become a Rabbi and that I had no training of any kind to make a living. Why didn't they say to me, "You can't get married until you are able to support yourself and your family. You can't count on any support from us." They said nothing of the kind. On the contrary they welcomed me and my wife into their home.

The answers to these questions are "Lithuania in the 19th century". This was the character of Jewish life in Lithuania only fifty years ago. To teach a child a trade was considered shameful. To make a business man out of him required money and money was a commodity which Jews in Lithuania did not have. As a matter of fact most of the artisans and business men were not very well off. The artisans worked like horses eighteen and twenty hours a day and barely made enough to obtain black bread and meatless barley soup. The business men seemed to live on air and rarely knew how they would earn enough for the next day's food.

In general it was a world in which ninety percent lived in bitter poverty. As for the other ten percent who seemed to be a little better off, most of them achieved it by luck and since luck is from God, at least that was everyone's belief, and since anyone can hope for luck from God, my parents, my

wife and I hoped that God would not forsake us. And in fact God did help us for we will soon celebrate our fiftieth wedding anniversary. We have raised ten children, four of them are now professionals.

However, the place and manner in which God helped us is exactly the same as in the story of the pauper. This pauper did not have the means to purchase the articles needed to observe Passover so he went to a "Good Jew" asking that this pious man intercede with God on his behalf. The pauper gave the pious man the last of his groschen and the pious man assured the pauper that God would help him. The pauper waited until two days before Passover. God's help had not arrived. The pauper sold his last goat in order to at least purchase Matzoh to observe the Passover. The pious man met him and asked "Were you able to procure your needs for Passover?" The pauper said, "I sold my last goat in order to do it." The pious man replied, "See, I told you God would provide for you." In the same manner God did help us as you will presently see, as I shall here recount it.

After we were married we lived with my parents who treated us very well and all our needs were supplied. However, we felt that we could not remain there indefinitely. So I began to look for a job which would be appropriate for my status.

My first job was as clerk in a distillery owned by a friend. My wages were three rubles a week. All that I had to do was to make several trips a week to the nearby towns to buy rye from which the whisky was made, keep the warehouse in order, wait on the local customers, make two or three night time trips a week to the city to deliver the huge two or three hundred gallon barrels of whiskey, and do other odd jobs which needed doing. But of course this did not require more than eighteen or nineteen hours per day.³¹

There were some problems about sleeping. Because of the "big" wages I was getting my boss really felt that I should not waste any time in sleeping but because of my weakness I simply had to get some sleep even though this was contrary to my boss's wishes. But there were no regular hours or places for sleeping. Sometimes a few hours at night or in

the morning or at mid-day. Usually fully clothed I would stretch out on a hard bench and sometimes in the hot airless room where the malt was dried.

But the heavy work and the lack of sleep really were not important because firstly the Torah says man is born to work and secondly because I was young and cheerful. If occasionally I felt gloomy or dejected I lifted my spirits with spirits. I became quite accomplished in saying "L'Chaim" and could hold my liquor as well as any coachman. And so my mind dulled but my heart was cheerful. I lived for the moment only and gave no thought to the future.

There was one difficulty. My home was ten viersts from the distillery and every Friday I would go home to my wife for the Sabbath. My boss envied me because my wife was younger and prettier than his wife and in a spiteful manner he would keep me working late on Fridays. Because I wanted to get home before candle lighting in order not to desecrate the Sabbath there were difficulties.

My parents lived midway between the distillery and my home so sometimes my father would hitch up the wagon and drive me home. But there were times when this was not possible and I was forced to do the whole journey on foot sometimes even in deep snow. But nothing could deter me from going home for the Sabbath.

When I crossed the threshold of my one room home where my wife impatiently awaited me with warm affection even though I only gave her about a ruble a week since I needed the rest of my wages to pay for my keep, and I saw that everything was in Sabbath readiness and I inhaled the aroma of the Sabbath meal which my wife had prepared I was filled with joy.

I quickly polished my boots with codfish oil and went off to the synagogue to welcome the Sabbath. I returned home to find the small table covered with a white tablecloth, at one end the three highly polished brass candlesticks, at another side the two Hallahs covered with an embroidered napkin, in the middle the bottle of whiskey I had brought for Kiddush, my wife sparkling and cheerful like a queen sitting and reading.

I said Shalom Aleichem and recited "Woman of Valor" (Proverbs 31.10) with whole hearted devotion. It seemed all specially prepared for me. After a whole week of hard work and troubles to come to this warm home and affectionate wife seemed to me to be a veritable Garden of Eden, a bliss almost indescribable.

But the taste of the Garden of Eden lasted only until the middle of the Grace after the meal. I was not altogether made of spirit only. I was only a combination of blood, flesh and nerves. When I had finished my very complete and tasty Sabbath meal I finished off with a very generous sized drink of whiskey. At that point my overworked and weary body took over and in the middle of saying the Grace after the meal I was sound asleep.

My wife had to wake me from this deep and delicious sleep. Within a half hour after supper, barely taking time to remove my clothes, I fell into bed for a single night's sleep which had to provide my body with a week's rest. And if this twelve hour sleep were not enough I would sleep about four or five hours on Saturday afternoon.

On awakening from this midday sleep came the hangover. The taste in my mouth was horrible due to the kugel and cholent (a dish of meat, potatoes and legumes served on Sabbath, kept warm from the day before due to the prohibition against cooking on the Sabbath). My heart was heavy and dejected because of the shortness of the winter Sabbath and the fact that before another sunrise I would have to leave my warm and comfortable nest and begin again the six days of cruel arduous labor.

For the first half of the week I still felt the pain of parting from my warm comfortable home and I was out of sorts and angry at God because he had not provided me with a better job. For the latter half of the week and especially as the time for going home came nearer I began to thank God for his loving kindness in providing me with this job because many had so much less than I had.

Since God knew that I would become irresponsible if things went too well with me he arranged that the distillery would close at the end of winter and I would lose my wonderful job. But God did not forsake me altogether. When the distillery closed God put into my head that I should become a teacher until the distillery would reopen in the winter.

So shortly after Passover I assembled about eight children at the same table where I had been a child student and I began to teach them in the same manner in which I had been taught so that a few years later in their lives they also would have to rely on God's mercy.

But God must surely have thought that my circumstances were too good because he arranged that the distillery did not reopen in the winter. So I found myself without my teaching and without my job. It was not until midwinter that I got a job in another distillery.

But before the winter was over God sent a messenger in the person of my cousin a girl who was married to a Nikalevski soldier.³² She lived with him near Petrograd. She came to our neighborhood to visit with members of her family and also to visit me because she was an orphan who had lived in my home when I was an infant and she used to take care of me at that time and she was fond of me.

When she became aware of my sad circumstances she urged me to go to Petrograd where there were more opportunities for me to improve my mode of life than existed in our poor benighted Lithuania.

She left for Petrograd before Passover. I left for Petrograd after the Passover holiday. And there began an epoch of my life which I remembered for many years and which I shall now describe.

Petrograd was 700 viersts distant from our area and while this is only about 500 miles such a journey in those times and places was the equivalent of a journey today from Europe to America.

When I arrived in Petrograd I learned that my cousin lived in a small house which was on the shore of the River Neva which formerly belonged to Finland. It was halfway between Petrograd and Schliselberg which were 60 viersts apart. The house was on a small hill surrounded by sparse, scattered and crooked pine trees.

My cousin's husband had a petty government job checking on cargo boats which operated in the summertime. He earned just enough for a bare existence. He was just as warm and friendly toward me as my own cousin. But they couldn't really do anything for me in this vast expanse of land. So the husband and I journeyed to Petrograd where he introduced me to some of his friends. And in fact there were more

opportunities in Petrograd than in my home area in Lithuania had I been a shoemaker, a tailor, or any kind of artisan, but a Yeshiva student or a teacher had no prospects in that city so I could not remain in Petrograd.

But since God was providing for me he arranged a miracle. He arranged ten or twelve years previously to have children born to some Nikolevski soldiers of Schliselberg so that they could be my pupils when I arrived in the area. The parents of my pupils provided lodging and so again I became a teacher.

And why did God send me to Schliselberg, where the greatest criminals were sent, to be a teacher when I could have been a teacher in my home town? While I did not know the answer then I know it now. Because God loved me so much.

For the Bible says whom God loves he chastises and as troubles are magnified when one is away from home and family and friends it seemed to me that God was saying, "Go to Petrograd, my child, and there I will send you troubles so that you will know my love for you." And it seemed that God also loved my wife because my leaving her also caused her increased troubles as I shall soon relate.

During the summer when I was a teacher in Schliselberg I was in fairly comfortable circumstances. My Kest (board and lodging) was good and both my pupils and their parents respected me. My wife however endured great hardships. Our first child, our son Nathan, was only a year and a half old and our daughter Ida was born a few weeks after I had left to go to Petrograd. I was able to send her only ten rubles a month which even in those days was not enough. She was able to earn a little money by sewing but with two infants she could not do much sewing so she suffered a great deal and so did I. Our one hope was that in the next semester I could develop a better paying school.

However, sometimes a small event can foreshadow great events. And so it was that a small "apple" had great influence on my life. This is no joke, no legend, but solid truth.

Toward the end of summer on a certain evening I was taking a stroll and encountered a Russian peddler selling apples. I was really astonished to learn that she was selling them for five kopeks a piece because in my home town we could buy a pot full, a quarter peck, for five kopeks. When I returned to my quarters and discussed it with some people I learned that this price was normal and that even in Petrograd it was not much cheaper.

It seemed to me that here was a golden opportunity to supply apples in this area from our home area. I immediately wrote to my wife to make inquiries among owners of orchards and estates. In a few days I received a letter from my wife saying that I had hit the bull's eye because Leib Brenner, who was the owner of the distillery where I had worked, had bought a large orchard during the summer and that the fruit was good and that he embraced the plan with enthusiasm.

In a few days I received a letter from Brenner saying that he had planned to go to Petrograd but that since he trusted me he would engage me as his agent and that he would, as soon as possible, send me a shipment of apples and that if the business turned out to be profitable he would buy from other orchard owners and that we could both build up a profitable business.

In about a week I received a bill of lading for a shipment of apples and I immediately set off for Petrograd to sell them. The school term had not ended and I was still teaching in Schliselberg.

Since I was not much of a business man and since I did not know my way around Petrograd I did not sell to the right merchant nor did I get the right price, as I later learned. I feared that my boss Brenner would be dissatisfied and would ship no more. However a few days after I had remitted to him he wrote me that he was very well satisfied with the sale and that he would send me a larger shipment and that he thought we would do well in this business.

My wife wrote that the whole town was excited about my venture. Many orchard owners had asked her for my address. Other merchants told her they would visit me in Petrograd. These letters filled me with elation and I was walking on clouds.

I gave notice to the parents of my pupils so that they should engage another teacher. They were disappointed but they congratulated me and they predicted that I would become one of the wealthiest men in Petrograd. I was filled with jubilation.

I began to picture myself walking the streets of Petrograd, well dressed and carrying a cane, going from one place of business to another, one place selling a shipment of fruit, another place selling dried mushrooms, grain, bristles. In another place I am buying leather goods, furs and jewelry for shipment to my home area.

And I had visions of sending my wife enough money for a better apartment and for clothes which would make her the envy of those who saw her. I began to wonder about what kind of gifts I should bring home when I returned for the Passover holiday. I also began to think that my circumstances were going to improve to the extent that I would be able to obtain the privilege, legal or illegal, of living in Petrograd in a modern place. The end of the Yeshiva student and teacher!

Since it would take a week or ten days before the arrival of the next shipment I went on a visit to Jachina (or Gatchina) about 40 viersts from Petrograd, the home town of my friend the Levansker. They gave me a warm welcome and congratulated me on my success and my business acumen.

After spending a few days with them I returned to my cousin's home where I had set up temporary headquarters and where I awaited receipt of a bill of lading. I waited ten days, twelve days, two weeks, and nothing arrived. I became quite uneasy. I decided to return to Schlisselberg thinking they might have used that address and there found nothing. At the end of three weeks I received a letter expressing deep concern over the fact that they had received no word from me about the shipment of apples and plums which they had shipped some time ago.

You can imagine the effect on me when I read that letter. It was a great misfortune, a calamity like a thunder from Heaven. I immediately went to Petrograd and found out where I could get information about the shipment. I learned it had indeed arrived and that since no one had claimed it and it was perishable it had been sold at auction at a bare fraction of its value, reduced even more by various fees.

My situation was frightful. My dreams and fantasies evaporated. I had left my teaching. Another man had replaced me and here I was in Petrograd where I did not have the legal right to even remain overnight and yet I had to wait to get the proceeds of the sale. I thought of ending my troubles my jumping into the Neva but it was frozen, and of course I really doubt whether I would actually have done it.

I wandered about the streets of Petrograd as one who had been severely beaten by fate. I finally decided to go to Gatchina. When I arrived at the train station I found I only had a couple of kopeks in my pocket and I needed two rubles for the train fare. I was really desperate. It really seemed as though the devil had arranged this. I just wasn't going to give up.

And what is the best stimulus for the brain and the drive to live? Necessity, of course. When the need arises we are able to do things we could not do in normal circumstances. I decided to try to borrow the two rubles from the merchant to whom I had sold the first shipment of apples. I got two rubles without difficulty.

When I arrived at my cousin's place in Gatchina they were not as cordial as when I first visited them when I had filled them with tales of my great success. Nevertheless they were courteous and this calmed me down a bit so that I could accept the bad luck which had occurred and strengthened me so that I would be able to accept the accusations and charges which would be levelled at me when my letter about the calamity would reach home. And the accusations really came.

In a few days I received a letter from my former boss blaming me not only for the loss on the shipment sold at auction but also for losses sustained on other merchandise which he had bought and packed and had made ready for shipment.

My wife also wrote me about the complaints of other growers who had packed goods for shipment to me which they were forced to sell at a great loss. And the upshot was that all who had praised me for my sharp business ability now said, "A teacher remains a teacher."

However the truth of the matter was that just as no special skill was responsible for the success of the first shipment there really was no fault on my part for the failure of the second shipment. The failure was due to a conspiracy which could not be stopped.

The facts were as follows. Every summer certain Petrograd merchants would come to our area and buy from the growers. These merchants didn't like the idea of the growers shipping to me. So with some well placed bribes, common in Russia at that time, they intercepted my mail and the bill of lading. Since I didn't know about the shipment, and even if I did I couldn't get it without the bill of lading, the goods were sold at a loss at auction. The conspirators were so successful that without the bill of lading I was not even able to obtain the proceeds of the auction sale.

Regardless of whether or not I was at fault the fact was that my situation was desperate. That my fantasies had ended as a dream, that my feelings were bruised, these matters were of little concern because I knew that in time my bruised feelings would be forgotten and really it would be expecting too much for one with my training to be a business success. The hard brutal question was how to earn just bread alone for me and my family. Should I go home? I didn't have money for the fare. And even if I had the fare what would I do at home? And my present location offered no opportunity either.

You know the well known saying of our present enemy Germany, "Courage lost, all is lost." So I worked up my courage and worked out a plan. My Gatchina cousin had a brother who was a dealer in hides (calves), a very profitable business at that time. I asked my cousin to arrange for her brother to lend me a couple of hundred rubles so that I could travel in the towns near Petrograd, buy the hides and share the profits. My cousin hesitated but finally agreed and I received the money.

I cut off the second half of my side curls. I had cut off the first half when I became a teacher. I bought a red Russian belt which I circled around my fur coat. I bought a Russian style fur hat which I put on Russian style, tilted to a side, and I went out to the towns as a Russian merchant. By that time I was quite fluent in Russian having learned it from my pupils and their parents in Schliselberg where all the Jews spoke Russian.

The itinerary which I planned to use would be on the Archangel Highway which went through Schlisselberg. When I arrived there and my acquaintances saw me in my Russian get-up they stared disparagingly and some said that perhaps I would do better as a Russian than as a Jewish teacher. My former pupils however approved of my new style.

In Schlisselberg people told me that I could buy calves hides in a town about 40 viersts away. I went there and found that they only had cattle hides. Although I knew nothing at all about cattle hides the price sounded reasonable so I took a chance and bought them. I went to a second town not far away and bought cattle hides there until nearly all my money was spent. Because I was a bit concerned about my purchases I hired a driver to transport me and my merchandise to Petrograd. The sleigh moved swiftly over the fresh hard packed snow, the bells on the horses made a pleasant sound and my heart went tick tick tick with a gnawing fear about whether or not I had another failure.

I arrived safely in Petrograd and located a buyer who offered me a good price. When I tried to get a higher price he spoke rudely to me saying he was not a Jew and did not engage in haggling. I restrained my anger and accepted his price. When the goods were weighed and I was paid I found that I had 75 rubles more than I had started with. I was very happy about it and immediately set out for Gatchina to tell them of my very good fortune. When I arrived there and told them they gave me a warm welcome and looked at me differently than before.

I sent some money to my wife and I gave her hope that the future would be good. After a couple of days in Gatchina I was advanced more money than before and I set out to do more business. But this time I really went way out, as you shall see.

In the town where I had bought the hides a man told me that if I were to go to Tichvin I could buy lots of calf and cattle hides for a fraction of the price I had to pay him. The problem however was that Tichvin was 300 viersts north of Petrograd. There was no train service. It was already mid-winter. The way to Tichvin was through dense forests and deep snow.

My partner had agreed that I should make the trip but there was no decision as to how to do it. To hire a driver I thought would be too expensive. So the answer seemed simple. I would hitch up my own two horses, my own two feet, and do it on foot.

From Gatchina I went by train to Petrograd and by sleigh I went to visit my cousin who lived on the road I was going to take. I spent the night there. The next morning I said morning prayers, had breakfast, took my talis and tefillin without which I still could not go anywhere, a bundle of a few shirts under my arm, a stout stick and I started on the long road to Tichvin.

For the first few viersts I felt very good. On the deep packed snowy way many sleighs were travelling in both directions. Many friendly travellers invited me to ride with them and I accepted readily. Here and there were houses, small villages and taverns, and not too far apart. But the farther I went the fewer the sleighs, the greater the distance between houses, the deeper the snow into which I sank up to my knees, and the area became more and more threatening.

Imagine for yourself the following picture. You find yourself in an area which seems like another world. Wherever your eyes turn forward and backward you see only snow and the heavens above and on both sides of the "road" a dark and dense forest. The branches of the trees are heavy with snow and between the trees the snow is so deep it reaches almost to the branches, the whole area covered with snow from six to eight feet deep. The air is a frosty fog with limited visibility of the sun which appears only between nine in the morning and three in the afternoon.

You walk and you walk and you do not see a single living creature. Perhaps in three or four hours you come to a small village. Tired and hungry you stop in the tavern, or if there is none you stop at a private home, have some bread and tea and proceed farther if it is not too late. The days are so short and you want to cover as much ground as possible. If when night falls you are still walking you continue to feel your way to the next village. If there is a tavern you are lucky. If not you go from house to house until you find lodging for the night with a family willing to inconvenience themselves for a complete stranger.

This is a very weak description of the nearly 300 viersts journey to Tichvin most of which I did on foot. Before I go on to describe the business aspects of the trip I must tell you that in spite of all the hardships I endured because I could not afford a driver the trip was worthwhile because of what I learned.

When I was at home with my fellow Jews I had a very low opinion of the Russian people, that is the uncivilized, the farmers and workers of our area who were followers of the old time religion, not Greek Catholic. Both in Polish and Yiddish we called them Boorlakas and when we referred to someone as a Boorlak it was understood to mean a man with an unkempt beard, cruel eyes, a drunkard, a libertine, a thief and a murderer.

On the other hand one who did not belong to their religion was considered by the Boorlakas as not kosher, just as a Jew who thinks of pork as not kosher. They thought of a Jew as a pagan, an unclean soul. They would not sit on the same spot where a Jew had sat without first washing and scrubbing that place. They would even scrub the door knob which a Jew had touched.

Because of this I thought all uncivilized Russians were the same. When I had met Russians in the cities whom I found to be honorable people I thought this honorable type would be found only in the cities and that when I went into the villages among farmers and poor working people I would meet with the same type of Russian as our Boorlak at home.

However, even though my trip took me to a distant and primitive area I found that the Russian people were better than the so-called honorable Poles. Most of the Russians whom I met on the trip I found to be naive, honorable and exceptionally hospitable and without any anti-semitism. Here is an incident which shows this clearly.

Once I arrived at a town at nightfall. I approached the first house and asked for a night's lodging. The woman suggested that I try the next house where there might be more room. When I went to the next house I found there only women and they refused my request. I felt rather unhappy but as I turned away from that door I met a man who asked whether he could be of help. I told him my story. He asked me to follow him explaining that he was the owner of the first house where I had inquired.

As soon as we had entered his home he proceeded to give his wife a lecture. "How did you dare to refuse this man a night's lodging when you know that all the other homes in the town have no more room than we have? Would you want this man to freeze to death outdoors? How would you feel if you were in his situation?" His wife was deeply ashamed. She apologized to him and to me. She hastened to put up the samovar and they treated me like an honored guest. In the morning when I offered to pay them they refused to accept anything. As a matter of fact very seldom did anyone in a private home accept anything from me for a night's lodging and food.

Now to return to my story. I did not arrive in Tichvin on foot. I wanted to make an arrival in a businesslike manner so I hired a driver for the last 20 viersts. I asked my driver if he knew of any Jews in Tichvin. He replied that he had once had his watch repaired by a man whom he thought might be a Jew and when he told me the man's name I felt sure he would be a Jew so I told the driver to take me to the watchmaker.

When I arrived at the watchmaker's he asked the usual questions. Where did I come from? Where am I going? Where is my home? When I told him that I was from Vilkomir he shouted in joy and wonder, "Then you are really my landsman because I am from Vilkomir and you surely must know my father Zalka the watchmaker." "Yes," I replied, "I saw your father about nine or ten months ago." Then he said, "Now surely I will not let you leave my house. Even if you were not my landsman I would insist on your staying here because there are very few Jews here and you are really something special. Since you are my landsman and since you will be able to give a real personal greeting from me, my wife and children to my father when you return to Vilkomir you are a very special guest and I shall be very happy to serve you in any way that I can."

Well this certainly seemed like an auspicious beginning and I hoped that my business would proceed in the same fortunate way. We sat up late that night with me telling him about our home town and with him telling me about his area. He said that he didn't know anything about the hides business but that he would make inquiries. That night I slept in a very comfortable bed and got a very good rest after my long trip on foot. The next morning I learned that my host had made inquiries about hides before I awoke and he reported favorably on the prospects. Later I myself learned that plenty of merchandise was available at favorable prices but that there was a serious problem which had to be overcome.

The calves hides which were available were not dry. This was the crux of the problem. To transport wet hides was not practical because they weighed five or six times as much as dry hides did and the freight costs would be too high and because they would not be salable if they were not properly dried.

How could I overcome this problem? Of course if my host lived as we did back home I could have dried the hides by hanging them from the ceiling of his home as I have previously described it being done in our tavern. My host however lived in a fine house where this could not be done. So I hunted for a place and as you know if you hunt you will find. So I found, an old bath house which had no windows and no chimney and was about to fall apart. I realized that this bath house was about as suitable for my purpose as a church for a dance but since I had nothing better available and since I was filled with ambition to make a success of my project I overlooked the difficulties and hoped that my enterprising spirit would overcome all the problems.

When I really began to carry out my project I found out that it was really hazardous because of the noxious fumes and the obnoxious smell from the drying hides. As a matter of fact I became ill several times and thereby added to the burdens of my host.

But I refused to quit. I spent three weeks buying hides to the extent of my funds and I dried them all. Even before I had finished my work I received a letter from Gatchina reporting that the price of hides had fallen. It therefore became very important that I make haste to get my merchandise to Petrograd as soon as possible. At this point I learned that the freight would be twice as much as I had expected and I had not retained enough money to cover this amount. Luckily I found a woman who wanted to go to Petrograd so her fare and what I had left was enough to pay the hauler. I have previously told you there was no train service from Tichvin to Petrograd.

At last I was on my way to Petrograd, this time riding instead of walking. But I suffered more on this trip than when I had walked because my clothing was not warm enough to protect me against the very unusual cold of that area. I was unable to ride more than a half hour without getting off

the sleigh for awhile and running in order to keep warm. Although I could run rather well I could not keep up with the horses, so half running and half riding I arrived in Petrograd in three days.

I arrived in Petrograd in the afternoon of the day before Christmas. I went to the merchants to whom I had previously sold hides and learned that they were not buying any more hides because the price had been falling. They were closing for the Christmas holiday which they observed for eight days. They said that all they could do would be to give me storage space for eight days and would buy the hides at that time at the market price at that time. The situation was really bad. [Literally, it got me black in the eyes.] There really was nothing I could do but put the hides in storage. After doing that I went to Gotchina.

When I arrived in Gotchina I learned that the price of hides had dropped 25% to 30% and was still falling. At the end of the eight days my partner and I went to Petrograd. He was well acquainted with the merchants who had stored the hides. They said the market was so weak that they didn't want to buy. They even offered to free us of any storage charges if we would sell to some other merchants.

My partner however prevailed on them to buy the hides at their very low price. His loss was not too great because I had bought at a very low price. My loss however was very great. After my failure in the fruit business this had to be labelled failure number two. This all happened fifty years ago and since these two failures didn't destroy me you know that there are more to follow this unlucky fellow.

The next business in which I was involved was a step upward. Instead of dealing in the hides which had been removed from the flesh I was going to deal in the meat itself, that is I was going to be a butcher. But not really a butcher as we understand its normal meaning, a special kind of butcher as he operated in Petrograd in the Jewish community.

In one area the life of the Petrograd Jew was the direct opposite of the Lithuanian Jew. The daily diet of the Lithuanian Jew was coarse bread and some pareve (non-meat) barley soup and only on the Sabbath did he enjoy a little meat or some

lung or liver. As for the Petrograd Jew he had to have some meat every day. Beef alone did not suffice for him. He had to have veal and this veal was of such a high quality that it was never seen in Lithuania.

Actually the calves were fed on milk and eggs for eight or ten weeks. This very special kind of veal was provided for the Petrograd gluttons by various Jews who lived in small towns surrounding Petrograd. Many Jews in Gotchina engaged in this business. They bought the calves, fed them, had them ritually slaughtered by a Shochet so the meat was kosher, delivered the meat in Petrograd and made a good living out of it. So I decided to go into this business.

However my friends in Gotchina didn't want me to compete with them. They agreed to lend me some money to get me started but they suggested that I start in another town where there was a Shochet. I wasn't too happy about this plan. I understood that to be successful I should have a home like my competitors and that I should have some knowledge about this business. The only knowledge I had about it was what I obtained by casually observing my father when I was a child. But since this was the only possibility I had I accepted the few rubles which my acquaintances were lending me.

I changed my appearance from Russian to Jewish, put my tallis and tefillin under my arm and started to hunt for a town where I could set up this business. But this time I went by train rather than on foot.

Schliselberg would not do because there was no rail service there. Since Gotchina was on the Petrograd-Warsaw line I went to Petrograd and bought a ticket to the first station outside of Petrograd. My inquiries showed this place unsuitable. I bought a ticket to the next station with the same result so I bought a ticket to a third station. There I found that there were about thirty Jewish families and that they had their own Shochet. I immediately went to his home and told him the reason for my visit. He began to dance with joy and shouted, "God sent you to the right place at the right time." And when I asked the reason for all this jubilation he explained.

"Not long ago there settled in our town a Jew who had been a detective in Petrograd and whose wife operated a pawn shop there. The police had found stolen goods in the pawn shop so this couple was punished by being ordered not to live within 50 viersts of Petrograd. Since our town is more than 50 viersts from Petrograd they settled here."

A few days prior to my arrival this former detective told the Shochet that he was looking for a suitable partner to go into the meat business. The detective said that he knew a large and rich group in Petrograd who would be his customers and that he had ample capital available but that his sentence prevented him going into Petrograd. "And now," said the Shochet, "you've come on the same kind of business and this is surely the work of God."

The Shochet continued, "First thing tomorrow morning we'll meet the man and conclude the partnership which will undoubtedly be successful for you and will also be a salvation for me because I so badly need the money which I will earn from the slaughtering."

Early the next morning we went to the man's house but since he was out of town for the day I spent the entire day with the Shochet and so we got to know each other. When he learned that I understood "the little black dots", that I was learned in the sacred texts, he was overjoyed that he would now have a real companion because the townspeople were uneducated being artisans or Nikolaevski soldiers with whom one could not hold any intellectual conversation.

That evening being Friday evening the Shochet and I attended services at their small synagogue which was in a private home and I received a warm welcome from everyone. Our man however did not appear.

The next morning the Shochet and I went to the synagogue. I was invited to lead the services, after which I was introduced to the man. And he was a man in the full sense of the word. He was tall, broad shouldered, with a powerful neck and a healthy reddish complexion. He wore a gold chain across his ample belly. His ability to speak Yiddish was minimal "What a pair we'll make," I thought to myself.

Since we could not discuss business affairs on the Sabbath the Shochet merely made a broad remark to the effect that he thought together we would have a good thing. That was enough for the man to invite us to his house for Kiddush. We accepted and we had no reason to regret it.

Arriving in his home we saw a table well prepared with a bottle of whiskey and a variety of refreshments. His wife, his children and the general appearance of his home made a very favorable impression. We talked about various things for about an hour, drank about half the bottle of whiskey and agreed to meet that night.

After Havdalah, the service at the conclusion of the Sabbath, we again went to the man's home. The samovar was already on the table and we were invited to have tea with the whole family. We got down to business and quickly arranged a partnership. I was to put my small amount of money into the deal. My partner was to provide whatever capital would be necessary. I was to live in their home at a very small charge. My main effort would be the selling of the meat in Petrograd. Profits were to be divided equally between us.

A few days later we bought two calves, slaughtered them and dressed them. My detective partner knew something about the butchering business. My partner gave me a list of his acquaintances in Petrograd and the next day I was off with the merchandise. I sold it at a good profit and to our mutual satisfaction.

But -----!

Observant Jews use only the fore quarters because the hind quarters are not kosher. The hind quarters are sold to non-Jews. It wasn't profitable to transport this meat to Petrograd and in the small town where I now lived there were not enough non-Jews to buy all this meat. This was one of the problems in the new business, a problem which became disastrous when Lent (Fast) arrived, a period of seven weeks when both Roman and Greek Catholics did not eat any meat.

In the larger towns where aristocrats, rich people and government officials lived the kind of people who were not too pious, some of the meat could be sold, but in my small town there were only small business men, working people and peasants who were strict observers, who obeyed the priest

implicitly, and to whom we could not even give the meat gratis. After two weeks of Lent my partner's dissatisfaction was quite evident and it was clear to me that he was about to terminate our partnership.

One morning as I was about to leave for Petrograd with a load of meat my partner told me that when I returned he would dissolve the partnership. This prospect filled me with bitterness because it meant I would be left without a single kopek. I made no reply to him but I resolved to sell the meat and not return to face my angry detective partner.

Even if I had decided to change my mind about this the poor results of my sales compelled me to follow this plan because my sales netted only 30 rubles instead of the 70 which my partner expected. I did not want to face the detective's rage so I made a quick decision. Instead of going to the Moscow station to return to my partner I went to the Warsaw station and bought a ticket to a place where Jews lived and nearer to my home. I was ashamed to go directly home.

Although my conscience told me I was committing a criminal act I was like a drowning man grasping at a straw. When I left my partner that morning I had to make it appear as though I were going to return that evening so I had to leave all my belongings there including my talis and tefillin without which a Jew could not go a single day.

With only 30 rubles which was barely enough to buy me a ticket to Dvinsk, a large town about 20 Russian miles from my home, and a talis and tefillin, it still seemed a better solution than returning to my partner and being stranded penniless in a Russian town.

So I bought a ticket in the Warsaw station to Rezshina the first Jewish town from Petrograd not far from Dvinsk where a cousin lived. So I left Petrograd as one would leave a fire. So I ended my Petrograd period which had lasted almost a year but which seemed like ten years to me.

I stayed in Rezshina only two days and then went to Dvinsk where I hoped as a last resort to make a living as a teacher because in all of Lithuania no place was so favorable for a teacher to make a living. When I arrived in Dvinsk and

walked through the station with the great stream of passengers no one would have taken me for a stranger because I carried no baggage, not even a small parcel. I put my hands into my empty pockets and went walking the streets like a native. But while the others leaving the station had some purpose in their walking, business or vacation or merely going home, whether rich or poor but going home, I had no plan or purpose. I was alone. I didn't even know where I would sleep that night. I walked around the streets of Dvinsk quite awhile until I encountered a landsman (someone from my home area) who was also a teacher.

Although he was not an intimate friend he was quite friendly. I explained my plight and purpose and he said, "Meanwhile stay at my house at very small cost and then during the intermediate days of Passover when teachers are hired something will turn up." His words were like balm to my embittered spirit.

A whole new epoch of my life was about to begin, not a materialistic life but a spiritual intellectual life. My Petrograd epoch ended with "calves flesh," this epoch was to begin with the "Besmedresh," small synagogue, prayer and study house.

I joined my friend the teacher when he was going to the Besmedresh near his home for afternoon prayers. When we opened the door and I heard the sound and felt the spirit of those who were seated at the desks and engaged in their studies it was like sweet music to my ears and my spirits were lifted. As soon as the afternoon prayers were ended I went to the closet and picked up a Gemara, a volume of the Talmud, and I joined the choir who were studying. The inner joy which I felt is beyond my power to describe. In one moment my broken and wounded spirit was healed and instead of feeling like a most unlucky man I felt like the luckiest man in the world. I felt certain that God had sent all these troubles to me for my own good in order to prevent me from remaining and sinking into the non-Jewish atmosphere of Petrograd.

The next day I bought an old talis and tefillin and I still had a few rubles left to sustain me until I would get a teaching job. Being a stranger it was not easy for me to get situated but I finally did locate three families who had between them four children whom I was engaged to teach and for which I was to receive sixty rubles plus Kest for the term. So I found myself in the same situation that I was in when I was in Schliselberg but my spirits were much better than when I was there.

But God's "care" still followed me. A thief stole the talis which I had just bought. Now I had to buy a new talis costing ten rubles and some clothes, so I had nothing to send my wife so she had to return to live with my parents. And if you think my bad luck was now ended, you would be wrong.

Near the end of the term the parents of my pupils engaged me for the following term and permitted me to add two more pupils to my group of students. These two additional pupils would bring me fifty rubles so I would be making 110 rubles plus Kest when the winter term would begin after Succoth. I went home for the Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and Succoth holidays with the understanding that I would resume teaching after the Succoth holiday.

I was a very welcome guest to my wife when I returned home in spite of all the difficulties she suffered during my absence. My parents, with whom my wife was living, also gave me a warm welcome. The three weeks I spent at home were pleasant. I enjoyed meeting my old friends after an absence of a year and a half and even though I was poorer than when I left they looked up to me as a seasoned traveller. After all it was no small thing that I had been to Petrograd the place where the Czar lived. And I had actually seen the very rooms in the palace where he lived. My friends, with their mouths and ears wide open listened with avid interest to the wonderful tales I had to relate about my travels.

At the end of the Succoth holiday I had to return to Dvinsk. My wife and I were not happy that she had to remain with my parents. However we planned that as my prospects should improve we would set up housekeeping in Dvinsk the following summer. So at a small farewell party given for me, aided by two or three glasses of spirits, I set off for Dvinsk with a happy heart.

But when I arrived in Dvinsk the same bad luck greeted me as when I was in Petrograd. One of the parents of my pupils had a brother who had met with misfortune when a fire destroyed his business. So the brother in order to make a living for his family had been given four of my pupils.

My expression of outrage did nothing to change the situation. My former employer, the parent of my pupils, blamed me for being two days late in arriving to start the term and while this was true, even if I had arrived two days earlier it would have made no difference.

Since I could not make a living out of the pupils still available and since it was too late in the season to make another connection I decided to leave Dvinsk. But instead of going home I decided to go to Kreslavke where a cousin of mine lived.

After I stayed there a couple of days she got me a job in a brewery where they made Beyer's Beer. This job was about the same as the one I had in the distillery shortly after I was married. Here too I worked like a horse and I slept in the malt house. The only difference between the two jobs was that in the distillery I first drank whiskey followed by herring but in the brewery I first ate herring and then drank beer.

I remained in Kreslavke until Purim when I went home with my mind fully made up that I would no longer try my luck away from home but that I would stay home. Thus ended another epoch in my life.

My description of my Dvinsk episode is not for the purpose of describing the material aspect because that was the same as the Petrograd episode. I have described the Dvinsk episode as a separate epoch because of the change in my spiritual outlook which resulted because of it.

It is clear from what I have written that when I was quite young I was infected with the spirit of Haskalah or enlightenment. This was the modern learning which was opposed to the orthodox belief that held that religion was given by God and that the main purpose of religion was to serve God in order to earn the reward in the next world and one had to believe in this religion blindly, without questioning.

The leaders of Haskalah the Maskilim said that religion was instituted by men of great stature for the well-being of men on this earth and therefore religion could be criticized and studied and wherever a religious doctrine did not meet the test of our reason they would try to explain away the contradiction and when this could not be done they would plainly say that this particular doctrine which did not meet the test of reason was merely legend. This theory was called Haskalah or Rationalism.

Up until the time when I arrived in Dvinsk I was a strong follower of Haskalah. In Dvinsk Haskalah's grip on me began to weaken and I was beginning to be attracted to Chasidim.

The followers of Chasidism the Chasidim, as well as the Maskilim, disagreed with the Orthodox. These Orthodox were called Misnagdim which means opponents of Chasidim. The Chasidim said that the Torah of Moses and the Talmud were together only the body and skin of religion and that religion also had a Neshumah, a soul, a deep and hidden divine philosophy whose final purpose we could not ever attain but which we had to study and learn and the more that a man would sink himself into this study the more that man's soul would partake of the divine so that that man would reach a level where he could do wonderful things which would supersede the laws of nature, in short miracles, in this world and that furthermore he would attain the highest level in the next world, the Garden of Eden. This philosophy was called Kabbalah, Mysticism.

Today I consider this philosophy merely a spiritual means of exercising one's mind, a kind of mental gymnastics. But at that time that philosophy made a very strong impression on me and quite naturally so for two reasons, first because of my economic situation and secondly because that kind of philosophy lightened the suffering of my soul as morphine lightens the suffering of the body.

It would be quite correct to say that Dvinsk and Kreslavke were Chasidic towns because most of the Jews of those towns were Chasidim and it was among them that I was living. My landsman the teacher was a Chasid. The Bes Medresh where I studied and prayed was Chasidic. My employers were Chasidim as was my cousin whom I mentioned before and who was a convert and therefore fiery Chasid.

Even if I had any desire to remain a follower of the Maskilim I would have run the risk of offending my employers who were Chasidim which would have meant losing my job. Or I would have been a hypocrite because both my poor economic situation and my spiritual inclination made it logical for me to embrace Chasidism because of its deeper religious belief, its cheeriness, its enthusiasm, and because of the democratic fraternal attachment which the Chasidim had for each other.

The true Chasid looked down upon the religious practice of the Misnagdim the Orthodox. The Chasidim charged the Misnagdim with worshipping God only in order to earn a reward in this world or the next while the Chasidim felt that the worship of God was for the purpose of enabling the soul to rise to a higher level to join itself to God from whom it came.

It was rare to see a sad Chasid. If on such a rare occasion a Chasid appeared downcast then a second Chasid would surely greet him somewhat as follows, "Hey there, you with the soul of a Misnagid, why are you downcast? Are you saying that God has done you wrong? Are you saying that you can operate the world better than God? Come here you fool. Let's have a drink. Be a man." And the result would be that the sad Chasid would have the drink and be ready to dance.

A Chasid who became spiritually aroused when praying or when listening to his Rabbi expound Torah or when moved by a nigun (a tune) being sung by a group of Chasidim, that Chasid felt that he had attained the highest rung on the ladder of good fortune.

The democratic attachment which one Chasid had for another was something wonderful. The American democracy has a long way to go before it will attain that level. A poor Chasid could say to the richest and most prominent Chasid, "Listen to me Yankele, you know I don't have the wherewithal to prepare for the Sabbath" or "I don't have enough for the rent" or "I don't have enough to marry off my daughter and I need this amount from you." If by some chance the rich Chasid would try to reduce the amount requested the poor Chasid would berate him and insist on the amount requested. And if a Chasid was not able to do that he was not a real Chasid.

When I returned home from Kreslavke I remained a Chasid in spirit but outwardly I did not appear to be one. I did not pray in the style of a Chasid, nor did I wear my tefillin as a Chasid, nor did I act in other things as Chasidim did. However, when I had the opportunity I would spend up to three hours just on my morning prayers and I would spend even one hour merely saying Grace after meals.

Even now I have no regrets about this because it taught me to think and enabled me under other circumstances to arrive at my present thinking.

At this time I'm going to make a brief review of the seven years (1875-1882) prior to my arrival in America. This seven year period was the period following the two year period which I had spent away from home. This whole seven year period was filled with hardship for me, my wife and my family which now consisted of seven persons.

For the first five of these seven years I went from one pursuit to another. For a term I would teach, then I would shift to business and then back to teaching. For one period of time I made a contract with a landowner to sell his milk. This gave me a place to live, a cow, a horse and enough space to conduct a Cheder (a school). But I found I couldn't do both so I gave up the Cheder. This landowner was such a cur that even though my wife and I worked as hard as horses we earned nothing for ourselves. So I gave that up. For a time I rented a farm and engaged a non-Jew to work it for me paying him a percentage of the crop. In these various activities I spent five years moving from place to place.

In all of these endeavors I wanted to avoid teaching which I hated. But it just seemed that I could not escape it. So for the last two years of the seven I ran a school in a shtetl where some of my Maskilim friends turned their children over to me because they felt confident that I would operate a modern school.

My economic situation did not improve in the shtetl. Teaching did not provide enough to make a living for my family. My wife was forced to engage in business. The tight quarters in which we lived had a bad effect on our health and our children suffered from various illnesses.

In one respect there was improvement, in my intellectual life. The appeal of Chasidism began to fade and I again came under the influence of Haskalah and I returned to the Book and to intellectualism. I became an ardent supporter of the Hebrew Journal Hashacher which was edited by Moshe Peretz Smolenskin the nationalist and Zionist who became my ideal. Here I end the story of this seven year period.

Now comes the most important period of my life. That period is the present one which I began when I left my old home and came to America. Even though this was a period of many problems and even though I did not attain a position of wealth I did manage to acquire that which is most worthwhile for a man to attain, to live in a land where my children had

the opportunity to compete with everyone else, not only in material activities but also in intellectual fields, and second where I, living in a land of freedom, was able to free myself of fanaticism and superstitious thoughts so that now I am able to look not only on life but also on death with a clear and sober head. These two things I could not have attained in the old country and now that I have attained them here in my old age it is worth more to me than the world's wealth.

There are two reasons why I want to describe certain incidents in this period of my life, first in order to let you know something about the ordeals which the pioneers suffered in establishing the foundations on which the American Jewish community stands (what I endured was endured by thousands of other immigrants) and secondly many of the things which I will describe will prove that an edifice built solely on idealistic bases cannot stand.

At this point I must point out that although I started to write this autobiography in October of 1915 the greater part of it was written at a much later time. It is now the 28th of May, 1919. The reason for this delay is that I stopped writing for two years while I served as Manager of Philadelphia Central Relief Committee and that writing is very difficult for me. I am only able to write two hours a day and some days I must spend entirely in bed.

When I began with this writing I did not think I would be living at this time and now even though I am four years older I am making a start in describing my coming to America. In my present physical condition it's going to take quite some time for me to write all of this story. Perhaps I will be able to finish the story and if not, you will know I was not able to do it and in that event there will be no great loss either for you or me.

Any further writing will be in a separate book.

BOOK TWO

In 1881 after the first pogroms in Russia there was a large emigration from Russia to America. There was also a strong movement for colonization in America which was strongly supported by the Hebrew Journal Hashahar which I have previously mentioned.

For these reasons there grew in me a burning desire to go to America. The desire was there but not means of fulfillment. In Southern Russia, the area of the pogroms, societies were organized for the purpose of facilitating emigration to America for farming, one society being Am Olam, the eternal people.

In our area Lithuania since there had been no pogroms there was no effort to organize emigration. So the only means available to me was to write letters to various committees in the towns where emigration was taking place and whose names and addresses I found in the Hebrew Journals. These committees wrote me polite replies but they advised me to remain where I was. But soon some people in our area began to talk about America.

At the end of the summer of 1881 my brother-in-law Rosen who lived in Panavezsh came to my shtetl Kavarsk on a visit and brought with him a letter from his brother-in-law Goldshtick, now known by the name of LeMaire. Goldshtick gave a glowing description of the welcome he had received in America. A few weeks later we learned that Rosen himself, alone, had gone to America. Of course this only increased our desire to go to the Golden land. But desire is all that came of it for the very plain and simple reason that I did not have the small number of rubles needed for the journey.

At the beginning of 1882 a letter arrived in Vilkomir from a Mr. Silberman who had been in New York for two years. In this letter he extolled the material benefits for Jewish immigrants in America to such an extent that the whole town was talking about it. When that letter reached my mother-in-law, of blessed memory, she immediately brought it to me in Kavarsk.

I must at this point remark that my mother-in-law was punctiliously pious and observant and she had strong misgivings about me remaining true to God and her daughter were I to go to profligate America. However she had such confidence in me that not only did she herself bring the letter but she also persuaded my wife not to oppose me in this matter. I have never forgotten this effort which she made and the confidence she had in me. It was always a source of deep regret to me that I caused her suffering in later years because I was only true to her confidence in me with respect to being true to her daughter, not with respect to being true to God.

The letter which she brought brought matters to a climax. I arrived at such a level of enthusiasm that I resolved that come what may I would go to America. My plan was to arrange passage just to London so I could leave a few rubles for my wife, hoping that when I arrived in London I would not be sent back.

On the first month of Adar about six weeks before Passover at 1 pm I finished teaching my last pupil and said to them all, "Now you are free from further schooling until you get another teacher because I am going to America."

There was a big commotion in the shtetl because of my announcement. The parents of the pupils complained over the fact that I had not completed the term. But I convinced them that I was really doing them a favor. I promised them that I would write them the truth about conditions in America so they could make proper arrangements for emigrating because in truth everyone was beginning to think about going to America. And so I managed to placate them.

I began to "gather" for the journey. This gathering had nothing to do with packing my trunks because all my baggage could fit under my arm. The gathering had to do with gathering the few rubles needed to make the trip.

At this point I could mention with praise a person who belonged to a nation concerning which my blood boils with rage, Poland. This was the time when the murderous Poles with atrocious cruelty spilled the blood of Jews in outrageous fashion.

This person was the landlord of the shtetl, a Pole whose name was Sesitsky and who conducted himself in an exceptional manner. Some people thought he was a little crazy but if all the Poles were as crazy as he then our brothers in Europe would not have been cruelly slaughtered. Other landlords especially thought he was crazy because he did not go to church and because he took an interest in the Jews of the shtetl.

For instance if some misfortune occurred to a Jew in the shtetl this Sesitsky would try to help. At Passover he would send potatoes and money to the poor and needy Jews. If two Jews had a dispute they would come to him to settle it.

So the idea came to me that perhaps Sesitsky might lend me the few rubles I needed for my trip. I arranged to have a letter written in Polish and I brought it to him. He read it with interest and then he really opened up and gave me a lecture. How did I dare to leave my wife and children to go to the other end of the world? And how did I have the effrontery to think that he would help me in such an unjust project?

I let him finish his tirade. Then I spoke my piece and calmed him down. But he flatly refused to give me any help. Well, I thought to myself, he wasn't crazy enough to help me so I'll have to do it without his help.

Two days later a special messenger came suggesting I call on Sesitsky. I lost no time in getting to him. He said, "I've made inquiries about you and people speak well of you. I know I can't dissuade you from going so I'll wish you good fortune on your trip. But I will help your wife. I will let her be a buyer for me of various articles which I will need in my various businesses so she will be able to earn a living."

I was very happy about this and felt that this was even better than if he had merely loaned me money for the trip. Not only did I thank him then but even now we thankfully mention his name because of the support he gave my wife until I was able to send for her.

When I gathered enough to get started on my trip my parents, my friends and the Rabbi of the shtetl who gave me a letter of recommendation to the Kovner Rav Yitzhak Elhanan, gathered in my house. With tear filled eyes I tore myself from the arms of my wife and parents and with my pack under my arm I was off to America.

In Kovno I presented my letter to Rav Yitzhaz Elhanan. He wrote a postscript to the letter which was quite helpful later on. On my trip I stopped in Koenigsberg and Berlin and I arrived in London at the time of Purim. In London I was hoping to acquire a ship's ticket (Shifscarte) from the Help Committee because I no longer had enough money to buy a ticket.

When I arrived at the committee's place I found a large hall containing long benches occupied by Jewish men and women of various ages and various appearances. An angry looking man told me where to sit. After a long wait I was told to enter another room where the Committee sat. I answered their questions and when they learned I was from the Kovner district they were amazed because there had not been any pogroms there.

However I was helped by the fact that I had told them I was a farmer because they were most anxious to give assistance to farmers. I was also helped by the letter of my Rabbi which had a postscript signed by Rabbi Yitzhak Elhanan. I had very wisely arranged that the letter made no mention of the fact that my last occupation was teacher.

After they had read the letter carefully they seemed to be much more friendly and I was in their office a longer time than the other applicants. Also they were interested in hearing my reports about the condition of the Russian Jews.

Finally they gave me a card which indicated where I should report in two days and that then I would be listed for emigration on the next ship and would receive money to sustain me until the date of sailing.

After the two days passed I reported to the place and there found a long hall where there was a long line of gloomy faces among whom were some of more attractive appearance and some young and apparently intelligent people. There were

benches all around the hall occupied by women and bundles and children of various ages and many howling babies. The hall was filled with a frightful noise and clamor. The threats of a man that he would expel the noise makers had as much effect as applying leeches to a corpse.

This man placed me in a line which continued to grow longer. After a long wait I arrived at the window and presented my card to the man stationed there. After he examined the card he spoke sharply saying, "Your card indicates that you are married and that you have left your family behind. We can't give you preference over whole families who have been waiting a long time and who have priority over you. And above all people like you who have left their families behind should not be eligible at all."

When I tried to talk to him he said, "I have no time to argue with you" without even looking at me. I had to leave the window downcast and with a heavy heart knowing that my few shillings would soon be all gone.

I began to think that perhaps I should remain in London. I decided to consult a countryman whose address I had to see if he could find some kind of opening for me in London. He was quite friendly and said, "Don't worry. People do manage to make a living in London." He began to explain various plans which I could consider.

Several days went by and I had not connected with anything. I learned that a transport would soon be leaving with emigrants. Since I had plenty of time on my hands I decided that I had nothing to lose by again trying to get on that transport. I presented myself at the same window where I had been so rudely dismissed. The same man was at the window. He asked me a few questions, acting as though he had never seen me before, and in a couple of minutes gave me a card directing me to the first office I had visited. There they gave me enough money to tide me over until the sailing date and told me to report to another office where I would get details about the ship's departure.

The day for all the emigrants to assemble arrived. There we were informed that since the ship was to sail on a Saturday in order not to desecrate the Sabbath, we were to remain in our lodgings on Friday when we were to be picked up. Money was given to us and also clothes, not new but good, when needed.

So on Friday March 19, 1882 wagons went from one lodging house to another in the Jewish area picking up emigrants until each wagon was fully loaded with men, women and children. The loaded wagons assembled at one place and then all proceeded to the dock. This parade of wagons was the object of much interest to those who saw them.

At the dock we were put on a small vessel which took us to our "regular" ship. At that time I thought that all ships were the same but later I found out that it was only a freighter which had been procured at a low price for the emigrants. I regret that I have forgotten the name of the ship.

The next morning there was a big commotion. Thousands of people, men, women and children, rich and poor, came to visit the ship. At first we thought they had come to see us poor Jewish immigrants about whom the London press had written with great sympathy. But later we found out that they had come to see their beloved elephamt Jumbo who had been bought by Barnum from the London Zoo and with whom we had the great honor of sharing the ship.

There were some visitors who really had come to see the Jewish emigrants. Among them was a Christian lady reputed to be a millionairess who had donated a great deal of money to the emigrant fund. In her honor we arranged ourselves in a semi-circle and she, together with her entourage, walked past us. Whenever she walked by a woman holding an infant she would take the infant's hand in hers and say something which of course we did not understand.

After this procedure a man gave us a short talk in Yiddish. He gave us rules for our conduct on the ship and also told us that we need have no hesitation about eating meat on the ship because it was Kosher. He also told us that Matzos had been provided. We were sailing ten days before Passover. Finally he introduced us to the Mashgiach, the supervisor of dietary laws, who would see to it that all food would comply with dietary laws and who would also be our adviser for the entire trip.

Following this we descended into the ship and each one of us received a sack of straw, a quilt and a dipper for water. The women were taken to one "stateroom", the men to another, on the walls of which were shelves, one above another, with barely enough room for a person to squeeze in. These were to be our beds.

On Saturday March 20th shortly after noon our ship began to move out of the port. The weather was good and as long as daylight remained we remained on deck and looked at the sights on shore. We continued on deck as darkness fell and we watched the flickering lights until we were in the open sea when all we saw was the black water and the stars above.

Some of the passengers began to feel sea sick and they went down to their bunks where they thought they would be more comfortable. But I remained with others on deck until late in the night.

In the middle of the night when I was already lying down in my lair but not yet asleep something seemed to drop from above accompanied by a scream, Help, save me." "What's the matter," I asked. Came the answer, "I feel very sick. A little water, I'm dying." I got off my shelf with the greatest caution because I didn't want to be hit by contents of the stomach being steadily disgorged by my upper neighbor.

When I got up and walked by the women's quarters I heard more screaming. Other men were up to help the sick. In a little while our whole stateroom was filled with sick and "nurses". There was a running to the sailors for water and the doctor for help and medicine. Instead of water and medicine we received a bawling out for having disturbed their sleep. There was no sleep for any of the passengers for the rest of the night. For the next couple of days those who first became seasick did recover and then others became sick. I was among these.

During the period of seasickness no one was at all interested in eating. When we had recovered from being seasick we had the desire to fill our stomachs but nothing to fill them with. It was not because there was any lack of quantity. The tables were loaded with bread, butter, herring, cake and potatoes in their skins and we were free to take as much as we wished. But the trouble was that we could not put the stuff in our mouths. The butter smelled like old wax, the herring like raw fresh fish. The cake was moldy. The bread and potatoes without good reason had a nauseating taste.

As for the so called kosher meat, hardly anyone touched it, some because of their strict observance of dietary laws and some because it made them sick. That meat was about as kosher as I am 25 years old.

One of our group had gone into the kitchen and discovered that our so called kosher meat was not ritually salted and was prepared in the same pots and pans as the non-kosher meat. When we complained to the Mashgiach that this type of procedure rendered the meat non-kosher he blithely said it was sufficient that a ritual slaughterer had certified the meat kosher.

So we no longer paid any attention to the Mashgiach and we survived on bread, potatoes and black coffee. Actually no one was too concerned about food.

The first week of the trip was quite pleasant. We spent most of the time on the deck looking at the sea and talking about America. The most pleasant day was the eighth day of our trip, the Sabbath, beginning in the morning.

The incident I am about to relate had a comical aspect but I'm telling it because it had a tragic aspect. My purpose is to show what our German brethren really thought of us. They held us in such low esteem and considered us so ignorant that they had picked out one of their esteemed persons to be our teacher on the trip, a person who in truth was not worthy to polish the boots of the lowest of our group.

And now to the story. Early Sabbath morning our Mashgiach appeared. We had not seen him for several days and had not wanted to see him. He said to us, "Today we shall gather for God's service and I shall preach something worthwhile for you." All of us naturally greeted these words by exchanging smiles. But before we could reply he left our stateroom. The pious ones of our group decided that if he really returned they would let him know just what they thought of him. But we all agreed we would let him preach and have a little fun at his expense.

In a little while he returned with candles in one hand and candlesticks in the other. "Now let's all assemble for God's service. I will serve as your Cantor," he said.

At that point, when we realized that this fellow was so ignorant of our religious practice that he did not know it was improper to kindle any kind of fire on the Sabbath, the pious ones could not restrain themselves and berated him and told him that if he did not leave them immediately he would be physically attacked. This fellow had the unmitigated gall to insult the Russian Jews. It became such a scandalous situation that the Captain heard about it.

When the Captain entered the stateroom this Mashgiach fellow immediately addressed him and described us as if we were the worst criminals. Luckily for us some of our emigrants understood English and they explained to the Captain that the Mashgiach wanted to preach to us after he had done something forbidden by our religion and that when we told him we didn't want any of his preaching he insulted us.

Hearing this the Captain grabbed this fellow by the collar and led him out of our stateroom with the strict order never again to enter our stateroom. Later we found out that the Captain's friendliness to us was in his own interest. When we were approaching New York the Captain asked us to sign a paper saying that we had received only the best treatment on the ship. Regardless of the reason for his friendliness we had bested the Mashgiach and we had a very warm and pleasant Sabbath morning. As the weather was splendid we were in good spirits.

The afternoon of that Sabbath day was interesting. It had to do with the maneuver which the Captain conducted with the sailors as required on each trip. At a signal the sailors came arunning, some stationing themselves at the masts at the sail ropes, some at the lifeboats. At another signal some climbed the masts, some climbed into the life boats which were lowered into the water. While we were feeling entertained by all this at the same time we were a bit frightened because it meant the Captain was expecting bad weather. And that is what happened.

During the life boat drill the weather was gorgeous but the next morning Sunday the sea began to get rought. By the afternoon the storm arrived. The whole sea was an expanse of mountainous waves and the ship was battered about like a splinter up one wave and down another and the storm continued to worsen.

Sunday evening we were warned not to come on deck. In our stateroom we were not able to stand or sit and if we attempted to lie down in our bunks we were shaken out. Trunks, benches and other objects slid from one side of the ship to the other. Monday morning when some of us wanted to poke our heads out of the door leading to the deck it was frightening to see the huge waves black as ink which appeared ready to swallow the entire ship. Everything on deck was covered with ice. The raincoats worn by the sailors on deck seemed to be made of tin because of the freezing. Everyone in our quarters was very frightened especially the Jews. The women were crying. The men gathered together and were reciting Psalms.

When night came the storm became more violent. We had agreed to conduct a Seder Service because it was the eve of Passover but we were unable to do it. The knaidlich, the four cups of wine, the charoseth, even the Matzoh which the Committee had provided, we were not able to enjoy. We did however manage to read the Haggadah and the Hallel hoping thereby to receive the favor of God by whose mercy we might be saved from the threatening danger.

There were some women however who had taken tablecloths from their suitcases and they spread them over some tables and on these tables portions of Matzoh were placed. Some better families had brought their own Matzoh, wine and Passover whiskey and these were placed on the tables. But everything placed on the tables had to be securely held by someone.

We sat around the tables holding on to the table and the bench. One of the men who had brought his own wine recited the Kiddush and the blessing over Matzoh. There was a father whose son asked the four questions. The four questions and the recitation of "This is the bread of affliction" were about as appropriate to our situation as the furs worn by our women on a hot summer day. But just as our women do it to serve fashion so we felt duty bound to serve God whether it was appropriate or not.

When we reached the point in the Haggadah of reciting the Hallel (Psalms) there was such an alarm and such loud crying by the women that the non-Jewish passengers, the sailors and even the Captain came running to our quarters. No one however interfered with us. As a matter of fact the Captain was quite pleased.

When we finished the Hallel and our trouble filled Seder Service we had some short conversations. Their theme was that if we wanted God to save us we had to decide then and there that we would not forget God and his Torah when we would arrive in profligate America.

After this we ate some of the dry Matzoh which we were barely able to swallow because it was so dry. It must have been baked when the Jews made the Exodus from Egypt.

It was now late in the night and the storm still continued. Now tired, hungry and sleepy we crawled into our bunks. But sleep wasn't possible. Every time the ship rolled we thought it was going to completely turn over. The women were crying. The men were trying to comfort them. And as if this were not enough one of the passengers gave us such a scare that it's a wonder our souls remained in our bodies.

About three o'clock in the morning we were aroused by loud screams from an upper deck. Half dead, half alive and only partly dressed we all ran to the upper deck from where the screams came. "What's the matter? What happened?" we asked the man from whom the screams emanated. "You're asking what's the matter," he said. "Don't you realize the storm is worse? Don't you know one of the masts has been broken? How can you sleep in such a situation?" We answered, "What can we do?" And he replied, "Recite Psalms!"

Naturally we were quite angry at this fellow and the Christians were ready to lynch him. But we already had had our sleep interrupted. So we really did recite Psalms. And we did it with such fervor and weeping that we awakened all the ship's passengers.

The Christians protested vigorously because we had disturbed them and they complained to the Captain. When he heard the whole story he upbraided them for interfering with us. "They are praying to God for you as well as themselves," he said, "and instead of being grateful to them you are laughing at them and disturbing them because you're losing a few hours sleep." To us he expressed the hope and expectation that the storm would abate the next day. The next morning the storm decreased and in the afternoon the weather was pleasant. So it remained until we arrived in New York.

After the stormy weather had ended a stronger storm arose in our bellies. Our appetites grew very strong but we had nothing with which to satisfy them because only a little while ago we had promised God to be pious and since we believed that God stilled the storm because of our promise we, except for a few exceptions, would not eat any chometz, food not ritually fit for the eight days of Passover.

So from Monday evening until Friday we survived on a few pieces of Matzoh which we received twice a day, which we would not have eaten if we had not been so hungry, and some potatoes that had been steamed in their skins. By Friday all the Matzoh had been consumed so Friday evening dinner and Saturday morning breakfast consisted of Matzoh crumbs and for the rest of Saturday we had only potatoes. And since the very pious did not eat the potatoes they in fact fasted that day.

But we didn't feel too hungry that day because we were told that we were to arrive in New York that day. In the afternoon we saw land and we were no longer thinking about eating. On Saturday evening we stopped a short distance from the port and on Sunday April 4th on the eve of the last day of Passover a smaller ship took us to Castle Garden.

When we sailed from London the London Committee told us that a committee would meet us in New York and take care of our needs. During the whole trip we anticipated the grand reception we were to receive. Some of us fantasized that we would be welcomed with music. But after we had finished with all the necessary procedures for entrance into our new country and had gone through the last door one at a time we looked here and there and everywhere hoping to see the committee but there was not even a trace of it.

Well the music and even the grand reception we could do without. But would that they had brought something to still our hunger. They should have realized that since it was Passover we would not eat chometz. "But go talk to the wall." There was no one there to talk to. The only people who were of some help to us were the people who had come to welcome relatives who were among our group of emigrants. These people helped change our German and English money into American money so that we were able to buy some apples to still our hunger. They were also helpful in escorting us to the Jewish quarter where we would be able to either eat in a kosher restaurant or buy something to eat.

I didn't go with that group. I agreed to watch their baggage while they went to eat and they promised to return with food for me. But it was four hours before they returned because they lost their way back to Castle Garden. I was ravenously hungry by that time and before they finished telling me of their difficulty in finding their way back to me I had the bundle of food in my hands.

My eyes really lit up when I saw good matzoh, not like the ship's, salami and fruit, enough to provide two meals for three. But before I had taken the first bite I was surrounded by hungry women and children with tears in their eyes begging for some morsels to still their hunger. So I shared my bundle of food with them so that we each had only a couple of mouthfuls. We all were still hungry while we continued to wait for the committee.

Night was approaching, our strength was waning because of hunger, the committee had not appeared, so we hit on this plan. We would send a few of our bold young men to the Jewish quarter where they would locate a synagogue where Jews would be gathering for the evening prayers and there the young men would raise a hue and cry about our situation.

The young men did an excellent job. When they arrived in the Jewish quarter they got directions to the largest Orthodox synagogue (if I'm not mistaken it was the Kalverier synagogue) and they arrived as the synagogue was nearly filled with people about to begin the evening service. But before the cantor reached the pulpit our young men shouted, "You dear Jews are about to chant the evening service and then you will return to your homes for your holiday meal. But in Castle Garden there are several hundred Jews who have not had almost nothing to eat for two days and if you don't do something about it they are going to be forced to eat chometz."

There was then an uproar in the synagogue. The evening service was postponed. A matzoh baker was ordered to immediately send 200 pounds of matzohs to Castle Garden and some of the people went around to certain homes collecting food. Before our young men had returned to give us their report a wagon arrived with a huge case of matzoh. In a few minutes that case was opened and surrounded by people who fell on it like locusts. There was pushing and shoving until the group who had brought the matzoh assured everyone that there was enough for everyone. Actually there was more than enough for everyone including some Christians who joined us.

By the time we had filled our bellies with dry matzoh a group of well dressed Jews appeared carrying heavy baskets which were filled with good things, meat, chickens, Passover cake, wine and whiskey. Then it was "To the Jews" and all of us partook of the goodies. Then we had a little whiskey. Everything seemed friendly and orderly. We forgot our troubles. We felt the Jews were different than the other nations and we felt that America was different than the land we had left.

The men who had brought baskets of food spent a couple of hours with us in pleasant conversation and then told us that a few of them would come the next morning and escort all our men to the synagogue services after which each synagogue member would take one of us to his home for the midday meal and all the meals for the two last days of the Passover holiday.

At first we refused because we felt we were lowering ourselves to accept. But these men were persistent in a friendly manner and they told us we should not feel like hodge podge beggars but like invited guests. And each one of us was formally invited with the words "I desire that you be my guest." So naturally we accepted this very friendly invitation. Monday morning a few men came, lined us up in pairs and we marched to the synagogue. It would be superfluous for me to describe the Americans who stopped to watch us as we marched.

We received a very friendly reception when we arrived at the synagogue and after the service each one of us was invited by a member to be his guest. There were more hosts than guests and the hosts who had no guests seemed to be disappointed. The women and children who had been left at Castle Garden were a bit disappointed but arrangements were made so that they had their fill of food.

We had to return to Castle Garden for sleeping and there we slept like lords on the bare, dirty stone floor. To sleep in Castle Garden was a privilege given only to Jewish immigrants.

During these last two days of the Passover holiday I sought out some country men whose addresses I had. Some advised that I forget about the committee and become a peddler as many earlier immigrants had done. Others advised that I wait and see what the committee could do for me and if that were not satisfactory then I could become a peddler. I accepted the second idea.

The two days went by and no committee appeared. Some of the immigrants decided not to wait on the committee and they went out on their own to seek employment. But I and a number of others hung around Castle Garden. Finally on the fifth day some people appeared and took us to the "regular immigrant house" in Green Point.

While it was true that this immigrant house provided warm cooked meals at tables and real beds for sleeping, in some respects it was less desirable than Castle Garden. The beds were dirty and filled with little creatures which inhabit New York tenement houses and with little creatures which tormented the soldiers in the trenches. The discipline was militaristic and the man in charge was an angry old German Jew, the same type as the Mashgiach on the ship. If one of us wanted to go somewhere or even write a letter it was necessary to get permission from that despot.

Every day ten or twelve of us were selected and dressed in white uniforms and were given the job of washing dishes, cleaning beds and so on. The food was of the cheapest grade. It was a paradox to compare this situation with the reception given to us by our fellow Jews in the synagogue.

In a sense it was natural that there be a difference. In the synagogue the Jews were plain folk like us who had felt the Russian whip and the bitter taste of being immigrants and they empathized with us. On the other hand in this immigrant house we were dealing with a committee of an organization run by German Jews who did not have too much love for Russian Jews but provided help out of a cold sense of philanthropy, and therefore the system and discipline which resulted was suited to uncivilized recipients which they considered us to be.

In addition to operating Immigrant House the committee operated an employment bureau for jobs in the country as well as the city. On our second day at Immigrant House I and some others went to the employment bureau. Those who had a trade were given jobs in their trade, others were given labor work if it were available.

I listed my work as farmer and they told me that they were especially anxious to help one who wanted to be a farmer, that I would first have to work with an American farmer to learn the American system of farming which was quite different from the Russian, and that I would be notified as soon as they arranged for me to be placed with a farmer.

When I asked about pay they told me I would get between 12 and 15 dollars a month. This was 24 to 30 rubles a month which was much better than I earned as a teacher, and furthermore it also provided bed and board, so feeling very happy I returned to the barracks which they called Immigrant House to await their notification.

A few days later Mr. Goldshtick a countryman whom I've mentioned before came to see me at Immigrant House. He had already been in America for a year and he made his living as a peddler in the rural areas. When I told him that my goal was to be a farmer and that I was awaiting notice from the committee he tried to dissuade me from this plan. First he pointed out that the work would be arduous and second that I would be put in an area where there were no Jews and I would therefore be unable to observe my religion.

I answered that I could do heavy work because I had already done it. As to the religious problem of eating non-kosher food and working on the Sabbath, well I was no longer on the stormy sea and no longer afraid and my thoughts and feelings were returning to me.

Furthermore, even according to the Talmud itself I would be allowed to forego some religious practices for a time and God would forgive me because of the high idealistic purpose I had in mind, the idea of Zionism which held that the future of Jewish life demanded that Jews become farmers and colonists.

Goldshtick realized I was not going to change my mind and since he himself was a follower of Haskalah he then suggested that I let him, rather than the committee, find a farmer with whom I could live and work because the committee might send me to a non-desirable place or a non-desirable farmer. He had been peddling in the farming areas and would pick for me a good spot and good and honest people whom he knew were looking for green hands.

He was planning to leave the next day and promised to write me as soon as he found a good spot. Within two days I got a letter saying he had found a good place. He gave clear and detailed instructions for my trip to Albany where I was to meet him in a certain boarding house on a Saturday.

If I had had the money for my expenses for an Albany trip I would have left immediately since it was on Friday that I had received Goldshtick's letter. Not having the money I tried to get it at the employment bureau. They at first refused on the ground that they did not approve of acting on the advice of one individual unknown to them. At that point I made the threat that if they would not give me the money I would abandon the idea of working for a farmer. They said they'd give me the money if I could give them some references about my friend Goldshtick.

By the time I was able to get these references from my countrymen it was already Saturday. It was Saturday evening by the time they gave me a two dollar bill and a ticket to Albany on an immigrant train which took all night so I arrived in Albany Sunday morning.

I went to Goldshtick's boarding house and learned that he had left on Saturday leaving no word for me other than telling them that a greenie might come there for him. I stayed there all day and lodged there that night but he did not appear.

Monday morning having paid for board and lodging I didn't have enough for a return ticket to New York or even to remain in Albany another night. Goldshtick's letter had named the various stops which the train would have to make when we would leave Albany for his farmer's place. So having no other course open I got on that train hoping that at one of the stops I would by some miracle meet him.

At the first stop, which I think was Louisville, I got off carrying my suitcase and asked for the hotel (luckily the same word in Yiddish as in English) which was near the depot. When I arrived there my total vocabulary was three words, peddler, Goldshtick, farmer. The crowd at the hotel didn't understand so they fetched a German who managed to understand me somewhat and told me that he had seen Goldshtick on Saturday afternoon.

So I went to the next stop. Alas no Goldshtick. So I went to the third and last stop Devensburg, from which it was, according to the letter, four miles to the farm. When I got off that train and looked around I felt sure Goldshtick had made a mistake. He had described this third stop as a railroad station (naturally, he had no other word to call it), but all I saw was what might be described as a small wooden shed and two men, one wearing overalls over a pair of pants, the other wearing an old worn out coat sitting at a

noise making telegraph apparatus who seemed to be the station master.

I addressed him with my monologue, peddler, Goldshtick, farmer. He smiled, said some words I didn't understand except that I recognized the words wife and house as he pointed to a nearby house. There the woman recognized the name Goldshtick but was of no further help. Goldshtick's letter indicated that nearby was the village of Devensburg which had a hotel. I left my bag at the station and went to the hotel. There I saw a number of men sitting on the porch with their feet raised to the railing and chewing continuously. I later learned that in America men chewed tobacco. From their stares it was clear to me that I seemed to them some kind of strange creature. I addressed them with my three word speech. There were smiles and some words I didn't understand. I went across the street to a store with the same result.

My heart was filled with pain. No Goldshtick. No farmer. No money. 53 cents left. I was as hungry as 15 wolves. I began to be seriously concerned and I concluded that it had really been a crazy idea to expect a miracle to solve my problem.

But actually a small miracle did occur. In my bewilderment I did something which in normal circumstances would be considered sheer lunacy. I stopped every single person passing through the village addressing him with my three words even though I realized how hopeless it all seemed to be.

And yet this foolish procedure brought better results than some brilliant ideas. Late in the afternoon when I was about to give up in despair there approached a beautiful pair of horses mounted by two men who appeared to be father and son. I approached them and said "Peddler, Goldshtick," and before I got to the third word they shouted, "Yes, yes!"

You can imagine how relieved I was to have found the farmer. It seemed to me at that time to be the finger of God. Today I realize it was not wisdom but chutzpah to think that God would take time from his care of millions of unlucky folks all over the world to direct his attention to just one person and put the idea into the mind of a farmer in this remote place to appear at this moment to meet me so I would not be forced to spend the night on the bare earth.

But at that time my understanding was different. Today I think my former ideas about God to be absurd. And yet I know that 99% of people including many very learned people hold fast to these ideas which I have discarded. I realize I have wandered from my story but whenever I compare my former ideas, which are still held by most people, and my present thinking I have a weakness for wanting to talk about it. But now I'll go back to my story.

After the farmer and I had rejoiced over meeting each other the first thing he did was to lead me into the hotel and treat me to a drink which was a great relief to my hunger. It was a great regret to me that following the example of the farmer I only poured half a glass for myself. Just in passing I must point out that here I saw a difference between the Russian peasant and the American. In the homeland when a peasant ordered a drink in an inn his glass was always filled to overflowing, but here in this country the peasant (well isn't a farmer a peasant) who ordered a drink poured it himself and only half filled the glass.

Later I learned that the American farmer in some respects had a higher standing than a landlord in my old homeland. (Well there I am wandering from my story again.) The whiskey made me feel more cheerful and I forgot my recent difficulties. The farmer's son accompanied me to the depot to pick up my box, a new word which I added to my vocabulary, and so the farmer and his son headed for home with their great find, me.

When we reached their farmhouse the farmer's son jumped off the wagon and told the family that the new hand recommended by the peddler Goldshtick had arrived. The whole family came out to look me over. I'm sure I did not make a very favorable impression with my long coat reaching below my knees and my pale cheeks. But they gave no visible expression of their disappointment. To the contrary the whole family gave me a very warm welcome.

They tried to talk to me. I looked in their eyes or around them and just shook my head. When they realized what kind of a creature they had to deal with they used sign language to invite me into the house.

I was astounded by the cleanliness and tidiness of the room. I was equally astounded when I was led to the room where I was told to leave my small suitcase which I understood to be my room. There I saw a clean bed covered with a bed spread and several fine pieces of furniture. And I am not ashamed to say that until then I had never seen so clean and attractive a room, except for the rooms I had seen in the Czar's palace in Gatchina.

When I came downstairs the farmer said something to his wife and she immediately set on the table which was covered with a white tablecloth, a plate of sliced bread, butter, preserves, cake and pie. They indicated I should sit and eat. Although I felt a little awkward for the first time sitting at a non-Jewish table (no meat was on the table) I didn't wait for a second invitation. In a few minutes I cleaned up what had been put on the table. Even today it is a source of wonderment to me that they didn't put me in the wagon and send me back because later I found out that what I had eaten was enough to feed the whole family for one meal.

After I had eaten they asked about my name. I answered Harris Rubin which was the name the committee had assigned me. They all said it was a pretty name, but now I know that they would have said that no matter what the name. Knowing my name the farmer said, "Come on, Harris," and giving me a wink made me understand that I was to follow him.

I followed him into a shed filled with farming implements where the young man with whom I recently arrived was working. But I hardly recognized him because he was wearing an odd old yellow costume, overalls and jumper, and wearing a wide straw hat.

The old farmer dressed himself in a similar costume and said something to the young man who then handed me a similar but old discarded uniform. And without any further advice I put it on. When I observed my appearance in a small mirror it was a shock and I could not help wondering what my former pupils would have thought had they seen me so attired.

When I was ready they led me into the stable and the first honor they gave me was to clean up the stable where the cows stood. This did not appeal too much to me, especially did it not appeal to my sense of smell, but there is a saying, "If you are a soldier you have to smell gunpowder" so I decided that if I wanted to be a farmer I would have to smell

something that smelled worse than gunpowder. So I went to it and when I finished they gave me some other work which did not smell so bad.

At five o'clock the farmer made the motion of putting his finger in his mouth. I didn't know what this meant but I noticed that they put their tools down so I did the same. They walked to the house so I followed them. They took off their costumes and washed so then I understood the meaning of putting the fingers to the mouth, "let's eat."

I followed their actions. I took off my costume, I washed, I combed my hair as they did. But I wanted to beg off when it came to eating because I had just finished eating enough to last for 24 hours. But they insisted I join them at the table.

When I entered the dining room the farmer's wife appeared dressed up like a lady of the manor. The table was set with beautiful dishes and so many courses that I asked myself, "Is this a peasant's table?" This table was far more attractive than that of a landlord of the old country and I thought to myself, "This is America. This is an American farmer." I thought that if I could attain my goal of being an American farmer it would be a thousand times better than I had ever imagined it would be.

I was anxious to write home to tell them of the impression made on my by America and American farming. But while I was engaged in this day dreaming the farmer asked me "Can you milk?" The similarity to Yiddish was such that I understood the question. But I didn't know how to answer.

"What kind of work is this for me," I wondered. I would have to seat myself at a cow's rear end and tug on her teats. In the old country this was women's work. If I answered that I didn't know how I might lose my job. Again I reminded myself "If you are a soldier you have to smell gunpowder." All this went through my mind in an instant and when the farmer made sign language about milking I answered "yes."

He took me to a stall after pointing to his two boys who were already milking. I sat down on a stool, placed the bucket between my feet and proceeded to squeeze the cow's teats. But I was getting almost no results.

The farmer was observing my fumbling and I couldn't help but feel that I would be getting my discharge momentarily. But he merely asked me to get up, sat down and in a short time filled the bucket with milk from that same cow. Then we both knew that I knew nothing about milking. I felt very uncomfortable because I had told him I knew how to milk a cow. What he thought I do not know, but he was friendly and gave me another task while he and his boys finished the milking.

When the milking was finished we provided supper for the cows, the horses and the pigs. And that ended the day's work. Then the work clothes were removed. Everyone washed and this time even the feet were washed and the socks were changed and while some wore slippers, some wore just socks alone, as on the fast day the ninth of Ab. All went to the parlor.

The man read either a book or newspaper. One of the daughters played the organ. Pianos had not reached the farmers. The farmer's wife was busy mending and sewing. And I sat there like a rooster among men. At first they tried to converse with me, but when they found that was like talking to a wall they gave up. I felt uncomfortable sitting there silent like a clumsy fellow. So I went up to my room and picked up a Hebrew book which I had brought with me. I went back to the parlor, sat down and began to read.

One of the boys came over to look at the book and immediately there was a great interest and curiosity. The book was passed from one to the other and turned from side to side and there was much shrugging of shoulders and an amazement that such a language could be read.

When in answer to their question I told them that the language was Hebrew their wonderment increased and they became so elated that the boys went down to the cellar and returned with a pitcher of cider and some beautiful apples. One of the daughters poured the cider into glasses, set them on a tray and served each person. The other daughter put the apples on a tray and served each person also.

The cider was an exceptionally good drink. Everyone became a little friendlier, even I. Suddenly there was a knock on the door. All eyes turned. Who would be knocking at such a late hour? It was nearly 10 o'clock and among farmers that is late. When the door was opened there stood Goldshtick. Everyone was excited and very happy to see him, I even more than the others. It seemed that a new spirit had entered into me.

Goldshtick explained that he had arrived in Devensburg late in the evening and there he was told that a greenie was looking for him and that the greenie had been taken to the farm of the Macmillans. Goldshtick left his peddler's pack at the hotel and in the dark walked the four miles to the farm. That is an example of the great friendship between us.

Goldshtick was tired and hungry so he was treated to some cider and refreshments and the family celebrated with us until midnight. He shared my bed and we talked most of the night.

Nevertheless I arose at the regular time and performed the tasks assigned to me. At breakfast he gave me some instruction in table manners and named the various courses which were set out on the table and he also told the farmer something about me. The farmer told him about the milking incident and they joked about it. The farmer said that he was confident that I would learn and that he needed me especially for the harvest time which was some months away and that I would probably learn my job by that time and that he would pay me \$15 per month which was quite satisfactory to me.

After breakfast Goldshtick and I talked awhile and he promised to return to see me in a couple of weeks and then took off to the hotel to pick up his peddler's pack. When he left I had the same feeling of being forsaken as when my mother left me at the Yeshiva. Actually in this instance a feeling of even greater loss because while the people at the Yeshiva were all strangers yet they were interested in me and we could at least converse. Here on this farm I was really alone among people to whom my feelings, my character and my psychology were about as far away as East from West, people with whom I could not exchange a word. And when I realized I would be here at least six months my heart grew so heavy I barely restrained myself from tears.

You can therefore imagine how uplifted I felt when Goldshtick returned in about an hour and told me that he had been talking to a farmer who lived in the area. This farmer asked Goldshtick if he could recommend an immigrant who would be as good a worker as I and this farmer was even willing to pay Goldshtick's expenses to and from New York if he could find so good a worker as I.

I knew of such an immigrant and gave his name to Goldshtick who took the next train to New York. The very next day Goldshtick returned with the man whose name was Schneider. I particularly mention his name because ten years later he played an important role in Newark as a rich Jew and politician.

When they arrived I was as happy as if I had just won a great fortune because now I could at least look forward to some companionship at least once a week, Sunday. Without this I was fearful I would forget how to speak.

Every Sunday Schneider and I spent the whole day together. Although he was a plain and ordinary fellow we felt strongly drawn to each other because not only were we both in the same situation in America, but just as I had left a wife and seven children in the old country he too had left a wife and children there. We each looked forward eagerly to spending Sunday together.

The first Sunday Schneider came to visit me. The second Sunday I went to visit him. There I met another young Jewish farm worker who already spoke English. This young man not only increased the size of our group but he taught us English and acted as our interpreter whenever necessary. We asked him how he had heard of us and he told us that the whole area was talking of the fact that Macmillan and Kuns (Schneider's boss) had hired Jewish farm hands.

In order to explain how news of every little happening on a farm would spread for miles around I want to report two incidents. I noticed that an American cat would mew the same as a Russian cat so I said that the American cat could speak Russian. This story spread all around the area and wherever I went I was pointed out as having said it. Another time when I was driving a pair of horses and brought them to a stop by yelling as in Lithuanian "Tprrru" this was imitated and discussed whenever local farmers got together.

The third Sunday we went to visit our new comrade four miles from me and so we continued to meet each Sunday at one of the three farms and all three of us would dine with the family at whose farm we were meeting. Goldshtick arranged his schedule so that he would join us every fourth Sunday at Macmillan's. So that made four Jews meeting at one time and we made a regular holiday out of it.

In spite of these pleasant respites it took an iron patience to hold out for the whole summer. I must say that I had a good job, good board and good treatment. However I did suffer greatly in the realization that I was only a farm hand and also that in one stroke I had torn myself from my former strong Jewish roots. This was a torment, a suffering of the spirit. But I also suffered physically.

Previously I said that I was freed of the job of milking, but this was only a temporary freedom. When the work of the farm increased I was given a broad hint that I should learn milking so I proceeded to the task.

But my fingers, the fingers which had done only teacher's work - pointing, weren't suited to milking a cow and they hurt, the fingers, and perhaps also the teats of the cow. Every morning my fingers were sore and swollen and when I would herd the cows for the milking I would be constantly flexing my fingers to try to get them in shape to do the milking. Finally the pain was such that I could no longer do any milking which was not accepted in good grace by the farmer.

But I was greatly relieved when I was freed of that task and put to work carrying the milk to the cellar and properly storing it there. I was put in charge of this operation and I treated myself well with milk and cream.

In mid-July harvesting hay began and so did hard times for me. Whoever has been involved in this knows how arduous it is, especially when a cloud appears while the dry cut hay is on the fields. The hay harvesting lasts four to six weeks in this area. It is their main crop. It is immediately followed by the grain harvest. It was just too much for me. First because I was not used to such continuous hard physical labor and secondly because the use of farm machinery produced as much work in a day as was done in Russia in a week.

Here is a specific instance of this situation. Once when there was much cut hay lying waiting to be hauled away heavy clouds appeared. Immediately there was a great deal of hustle and bustle to get the hay in the loft before the rain fell. I was given the honor of working in the loft stacking the hay as it came off the machine which brought it up a couple of hundred pounds at a time. This work itself was

very strenuous. The heat under the roof of that barn plus the heat which came from the hay itself was simply unbearable and the close quarters compounded the hardships.

I was very tired and could not handle the machine to suit one of the farmer's boys who ran up to take over from me and honored me with an American curse. I honored him with a louder voicing of a Russian curse, Mi Sheberach. He was so surprised that he stood looking at me open mouthed. I don't know whether it was the Russian curse or the anger in my eyes which stunned him. I didn't want to work anymore. His father came arunning to placate me. I let myself be persuaded and our angers subsided but our friendship after that was different.

Toward the end of the harvest I was again given the job of storing oats in the loft. It was an unusually hot day. That night as I sat at the supper table the chair and the area around the chair were wet with my sweat. The next morning the pain in my back was so great I barely got out of bed. I went to the stable to pitch some hay to feed the cows and I fell down in a faint. I was carried into my bed where I remained for several days.

It was then that I really got the taste of loneliness. I was so weak and helpless that they had to undress me. They had to carry my food up to me. I felt unwelcome. As soon as I was able to get on my feet I requested that they pay me the wages due me and take me to the station so that I could return to New York. Since I couldn't do any more work and since the busy season was over they complied with my request.

While I was waiting at the station for the New York train it occured to me that I would be arriving in New York about the time of the High Holidays, that I would not be able to do any work and the little bit of money I had would be all gone. So I decided to take the train to a nearby village where Goldshtick had his headquarters and that I would then talk things over with him. My two other Jewish farm workers and I had spent the 4th of July there as guests of Goldshtick at a holiday dinner and celebration which he hosted.

Goldshtick was not there when I arrived. The lady of the house where we had the dinner remembered me. I told her I was sick, unable to work. She suggested that I remain in her house for a few days to recuperate and that if I wished I could work for her when I was physically able and that if I was not recovered in four or five days she would not charge me anything. This suited me fine so I remained.

Her husband and she were an elderly couple. He was unable to work. While she was old she was healthy and still able to manage their small farm nearby and this very substantial house in which I stayed with them. She took good care of me and in three days I was able to do a little work. At that time Goldshtick arrived. He suggested that I remain at this house for about a month which would bring us to the Succoth holidays and that I could then return to New York.

When my two comrades learned that I had not yet gone to New York they came to visit me and they agreed to join me on my trip to New York. Although my job was an easy one, my board was first class and my employers treated me well, I began to count the minutes until I would leave for New York. Although I had to wait only a month it seemed like a year. When the happy day arrived my two comrades and Goldshtick joined me and together we left for New York. This ended the first chapter of my American career.

At the time when I was still working for farmer Macmillan Goldshtick told me that my plan to become a farmer was impractical. Nevertheless when I got to New York I sought out the Committee only to learn that it no longer existed.

I did however learn of a newly organized private group called Agudath Ovedei Adamah, Union of Workers of the Land, consisting of 100 people whose plan was as follows. Each member was to put up a sum of money which would be used to acquire 100 claims in Western states where there was still government land available. Every year 10 of the members would be chosen by lot to start as farmers and the remaining members would assist those in getting started so that in 10 years all the members of the group would become farmers.

The leader of the organization was a Mr. Sobel, a former Rabbi now a Maskil, a follower of the Enlightenment movement, and a free thinker, who was a good friend of Goldshtick.

So on my second day in New York I met Sobel. He was so happy to meet me he almost kissed me. And his married daughter who had learned midwifery in Russia and who was intelligent and an ardent supporter of the colonization idea and whose husband was a member of the organization. She paid me the highest compliments, complimenting me especially on the fact that I had been able to spend six months actually doing hard farm work when most of the immigrants gave up in two weeks.

Mr. Sobel was so enthused that he promised me that if I joined their group I would be among the first ten to go without being subject to drawing by lot and that they would even forego any deposit of money by me.

Nevertheless I turned it down. After my six months of working on a farm I realized that the members of this group were not really suitable to farming. I also was certain that Jews could not become farmers unless they would be in Jewish surroundings where there would be a synagogue, a Shochet, a Jewish society and wives in sympathy with the plan. I forgot to say previously that Sobel had agreed to bring my family over in order to get me to join up.

In passing I must report that the plan came to naught. A few groups did go, among them Sobel's daughter who sent letters full of enthusiasm about their new pioneering lives. But as time went on the enthusiasm lessened, the letters began to tell of difficulties and in less than two years they returned to New York to seek some kind of business.

I became convinced that I had to give up the idea of becoming a farmer. I had to do something to make a living so I had to become a peddler as did most of the immigrants.

If I were a skilled writer I would take this opportunity to write at length about the Jewish peddler in America because it was the foundation of the Jewish community in America, the foundation which really saved the Jewish immigrant. The story of the Jewish immigrant would fill a thick book. My circumstances are such that I cannot undertake this task but I do hope that some capable writer will write that historic episode. I will merely make the following remarks.

In the 1860's when a significant number of Russian Polish Jews emigrated to America they were mostly plain, broken down business people or artisans and there were few intellectuals among them. That fact and the fact that except for the German Jews there were no Jewish businesses forced these immigrants into peddling.

In the 1880's after the beginning of the pogroms in Russia when the immigrant numbers were quite high there were among them many artisans and intellectuals seeking work but even they mostly went into peddling.

Some peddlers worked only in the cities while some worked only in rural areas. The rural or country peddlers were of several kinds. Some sold dry goods, some sold utensils of various kinds, some sold picture frames and jewelry and so on. All of them suffered hardships. The city peddler had to endure the harassment of hoodlums and while the country peddler was free of attacks by hoodlums his work was very arduous. He trudged from one farmhouse to another carrying a heavy pack on his shoulders and until he became known in an area it was difficult for him to find lodging for the night.

There was also a difference in the character of the peddlers. The city peddler had the character of a pure schnorrer (sponger). He would usually have two or three dollars worth of various articles in an open basket which he would display as he went from door to door. People would buy usually out of a feeling of pity for him, and in some cases also because of a need for the articles. The country peddler on the other hand had more of a business like character. He carried a substantial pack of goods and he could and did sell his goods for less than the country store.

The results however were reversed. The city peddler, if only he had the patience to endure the insults, that is if he could be a good schnorrer, would very soon become a customer-peddler, one who had regular customers to whom he sold all of their household needs on installments. Usually in a short time the city peddler who used to go from house to house with his open basket hanging from his neck would be seen dressed like a sport with a cigar in his mouth and a small briefcase under his arm going from customer to customer taking orders for furniture, clothes or jewelry and collecting for the merchandise previously sold.

In a few years the customer-peddler would open a store and sell to new peddlers. The country peddler took longer to get ahead, but most of them did get ahead more or less. In truth it can be said that most of the Jewish storekeepers in the United States whether in the city or the country got their start as peddlers. Jewish manufacturers arose out of later Jewish immigrants among whom were greater numbers of craftsmen.

Because I was more comfortable in the country than in the city and also because I very much hated anything that smacked of being a schnorrer I decided to be a country peddler as did my comrade Schneider. So right after the Succoth holidays Goldshtick took Schneider and me to a peddler supply house where he opened a credit account of \$10 for each of us and with the captial which we already had I acquired \$20 worth of stock and Schneider acquired \$25 worth of stock.

Goldshtick instructed us as to how to pack our stock. He took us on the ferry to New Jersey and put me on the peddler train which ran from Jersey City to Easton on the Central-New Jersey Line. This was called the peddler train because peddlers rode on it without tickets. Goldshtick knew about this and he also knew the area because he had peddled there when he had first arrived in America.

Goldshtick dropped Schneider at the station named White House, about 50 miles from New York. He took me to the fourth station beyond that because he thought that was a better area to peddle and he was friendlier to me than to Schneider. There was an iron mine in this area.

I should have done better than Schneider, but at the very least I should have done as well, but it turned out otherwise. Schneider immediately began to do well and his business grew from day to day and he became a rich man but I remained a poor peddler. The reason for this was quite simple. I was in my heart still a Yeshiva student and an idealist. Schneider had never been a Yeshiva student but he had been a peddler in his youth in the old country.

When Goldshtick dropped me at my station I was supposed to go to the first house, ring the bell and show my merchandise. But my heart did not let me do it. The first house looked as though it were occupied by rather well-to-do people who would insult me for bothering them so I waved my hand at the house

and moved on. The next house was quite modest so I thought that poor people probably lived there who could not buy anything from me. At the third house a dog lay on the porch so of course I couldn't approach it. And so, for one reason or another, I walked by a dozen houses.

Then I began to realize that if I continued in that manner I wouldn't earn a cent until the Messiah arrived so I worked up my courage and with a loud beating heart I rang the bell at a nearby house. An angry woman opened the door and before I could say a word she shouted, "Nothing today." I got away as quickly as possible.

So I continued for the rest of the day, stopping at about one out of every five or six houses and it wasn't until late in the afternoon that a woman asked if I had needles. While I was going through my satchel to find the needles she saw some other things she wanted and she bought altogether \$3.00 worth of my merchandise. That was my entire business for the first day.

Follosing Goldshtick's advice I went to the place he had suggested for a night's lodging. The next morning my bill for supper, lodging and breakfast was \$.50 which I paid in merchandise not cash. And because I felt this was very reasonable I also gave the child a gift hoping to gain their good will which might be helpful in the future.

When I started out on my peddling the second day I realized that I should stop at every house and make an effort to enter and display my goods but still my heart had me skipping some houses. In those houses where they wanted to buy but offered less than my price I refused to sell because I insisted on one price. I wanted them to know that a Jew too was an honest and decent man. In truth I was successful by this manner of doing business because rarely did I sleep in a barn and never did I have to sleep in the open field.

Wherever I spent the night I was always invited to be their guest in the future and wherever I made a sale I was always welcomed when I made a second call. I began to build a group of regular customers whom I called on once a month and I knew each day where I would have dinner and where I would spend the night. Wherever I dealt they called me by my first name and they were always happy to see me. In New York in

the stores where I bought I acquired a good reputation and good credit. In these areas everything was satisfactory but in the area of making a profit things were not too good.

Such things as justice, conscience and a feeling of honor were not found ever among big business men and certainly not among peddlers. The motto of the peddler was if you want to be somebody, a mensch, then you must for a time forget that you are somebody. In practice this meant a peddler should schnorr as much as possible in order to get as much as possible from as many as possible. If you could get 300% profit you were to get it; if only 25% that too was acceptable. The main thing was never to lose a customer.

The peddler always had to be ready with some kind of an excuse if he were caught in some dishonesty and if he didn't have an explanation he was not to care too much about it. There were enough peasants in America, so went a peddler's phrase, that if one of them became angry there was always another one to be found.

Most peddlers operated in this manner as did my comrade Schneider. And in so operating they succeeded. But for myself, I could not forget that I was a man, even though I had been a teacher, a farm hand and now a peddler. And so I remained a poor man.

This might sound like self praise but believe me this is not my intention because it is not very pleasant to describe myself as a shlim mazel, an unlucky person. If I had not been born and raised to be such a naive person and if I could have followed a more practical system as did most of my fellow peddlers who now occupy important places in the world of business I would really now be able to praise myself as a great success in business.

I will now tell you something about Schneider with no intention of praising myself or putting him to shame. I will merely recite facts and whether these facts indicate honor or shame is no fault of mine.

Schneider was a better peddler than I was. He had the knack of getting into a house even if the people didn't want to let him enter. Furthermore he did not bother with such foolishness as one price and he was a better business man than I. His main goal was to sell as much as possible. If he could make a profit he would, but he would sell even without profit, his purpose being to increase his volume of sales

so he could increase his line of credit. In a remarkably short time he had established sufficient credit to open a store in "White House." There his business increased and his credit increased until... until he emptied his store, closed the shutters and gave his creditors nothing, a fig. Do you think he had any feeling of shame or pang of conscience. God forbid! Instead of feeling ashamed he was proud of it. Instead of being conscience stricken he was happy about it.

One of his creditors was a pants manufacturer, really a poor man. I happened to be in Schneider's store when this manufacturer came in pleading with tear filled eyes for Schneider to pay his debt and save him from ruin. Schneider listened and said that all he could do was to treat him to a cigar. When the manufacturer began to use harsh words and call Schneider a thief Schneider threw him out of the now empty store. When I told Schneider I could not do such a thing he said, "You're nothing but a teacher," by which he meant that he was the smart and clever man and I was the unlucky one.

Perhaps he was really correct because I thought that he would lose all his credit but as a matter of fact when he opened his store again he bought from other people and he obtained greater credit than before, because by now he was worth several thousand dollars. He operated for about another year and then again closed the store paying nothing to his creditors, having arranged mortgages with a friend. He went to Newark, N.J., bought a fine house and opened a butcher store.

I assumed that he opened a non-kosher store because I knew that he was the kind of Jew who had even forgotten where his tallis and tefillin were and he also had a good appetite for pork and rabbit. It never occurred to me that he could or would operate a kosher butcher store. I felt he would be afraid that someone who knew him would report what kind of zaddik he was.

Some time later I met him and asked him how he was doing and he said excellent. "Is this a better business than clothing?" I asked. "Much better," he answered, "to sell a cheap suit as an expensive one can't be done too easily but to sell a piece of salami made of the poorest quality meat as the best quality was not too difficult as long as one had the know how."

"Are your products strictly kosher?" I asked. "Strictly or not strictly," he said, "when the chief rabbi of New York comes to Newark he eats only meat bought at my store and that means that my store is considered the kosher store of Newark."

"How can you do this?" I asked. "You're still just a teacher," he said.

I never saw him after this encounter but I did hear that he grew to be quite rich, that he was president of the largest Orthodox synagogue in Newark, and that he was active in politics, even though he could not write the first letter of the Yiddish or English alphabet and associated with the irreligious Jewish socialists. If he had not died an early death he would perhaps have been one of the leaders in the American Jewish community.

I must emphasize that in telling this story about Schneider I do not intend to single him out, but I use him only as an example to represent many who have become well off and are now leaders in our community.

And now to return to my story. For three years I dragged myself around the country, in heat and in cold, in mud and in snow, a heavy pack on my shoulders, and no great fortune did I acquire. All I was able to accumulate was just about enough to maintain my family abroad in a rather poor level of existence. I was not able to accumulate enough to bring them to America until the shipping companies began to compete so strongly that they reduced the passenger fare to eight dollars.

In the early part of 1885 I sent tickets and travel expenses to my family, my wife and seven children, who arrived in Castle Garden in May, 1885, three years after my arrival. But when I arrived I was alone, a stranger with no one to meet me. They, on the other hand, were met by a husband and father with great joy, a father who had made ready a home and made every possible effort to give them a pleasant and comfortable welcome.

Along with my family came my mother-in-law and brother-in-law Nissan Bloom. S.S. Bloom (Shmuel) was already in America and he was interested in the arrival not only of his mother and brother, but he was most helpful to me and my family.

While I was out working in the country collecting as much money as possible he rented the rooms, obtained the furniture and all that was necessary for my family to start housekeeping.

I must report one other thing he did which shows friendship and his concern. When our bunch arrived they were not a very attractive looking group. They were so green they appeared to be black. Moses who was 12 years old and considered himself the biggest sport of the whole bunch was dressed in a long coat made of material which is used as cheap lining today which at one time had been yellow, and boots with leggings into which his pants had been inserted. Nathan was barefoot because his shoes were so worn out that they had been thrown into the sea. The rest of the group did not look any better. They were surrounded by bundles of various sizes and bedding packed in sheets which had become quite soiled during the trip.

Almost as if to be spiteful it was an unusually beautiful spring day and a Sunday when all of New York was dressed up as if for a holiday. Shmuel and I stood there wondering how to transport this group to Orchard Street where we had taken rooms. No express wagon was to be had because it was Sunday. The only thing we could do was to take the elevated train.

Imagine leading a pack of such greenhorns into a car filled with people dressed in their Sunday best, a twelve year old boy dressed for a winter storm on a beautiful Spring day, his brother barefoot, his younger sister dressed as for winter, and with kerchiefs on their heads.

To Shmuel and to me who thought of ourselves as completely Americanized the group seemed so funny and bizarre that we were ashamed to bring them into a car. So after Shmuel and I conferred for a while in English, first because we didn't want the group to know what we were saying and secondly to impress them with our being Americanized, Shmuel said "Just for today what difference will it make? You take a big bundle, I'll take a bundle, the children will take the smaller bundles. You take half the group in one car and I'll take the other half into another car. As long as they don't throw us off, we'll make out. Tomorrow we'll get them bathed, have their hair cut, buy them clothes and they'll look like American gentlemen and ladies."

I followed his suggestion. When my group and I entered the car the passengers moved away from us and stared but that's all that happened. The next day, not only were they unrecognizable as greenies by others, but they too did not recognize themselves when they looked into a mirror.

I cannot end the description of this period without relating the following joke. When I led my brother-in-law Nissan into the barber shop he was so anxious to show that he was not a complete greenhorn and to show that he knew English that he made a deep bow almost to the floor and said, "Goodbye."

We remained in New York only three or four months. Now that my family was with me my expenses had increased beyond my earnings at that time so I had to move to the country.

Our first move was to Princeton, a splendid, quiet town near the Delaware River. This move made a big improvement in our living conditions. Instead of paying \$18 per month for four rooms, living like in a chicken coop, we had a comfortable house of eight rooms and a barn for \$8 a month and our living expenses were cut more than a half. In addition, both Moses and Nathan, my sons, did some peddling. They didn't bring in any great fortune, but they did bring in a little which helped. Since we had a barn I bought a horse and wagon which enabled me to carry a greater stock and also made it easier for me than carrying a pack on my shoulders and it also enabled me to get home nearly every night.

Furthermore we were not lonely here in Princeton because my brother-in-law Elias Klein and a certain Abe Cohen, now reverend in Chester, and a certain Blumenthal, now deceased, lived with us. They all peddled in the area. In addition other Jewish peddlers would spend a night or a Sunday at our house.

We remained in Princeton only a few months. I rented a larger house not far from Princeton having 10 large rooms and 2 barns, a fruit orchard and about 8 acres at about the same \$8 a month (or to be exact \$100 per year) and the house was not far from the station.

After we had moved into this new place I bought a cow and some chickens, I already had a horse, and my desire to be a farmer was again aroused. I felt that this was only a beginning of being a farmer because I would need more land if I was to make my living from farming. But I did not give up peddling entirely. I continued as one half peddler, one quarter farmer and one quarter a new occupation, taking in boarders.

But the boarders were not like today's boarders who pay \$1 per night and \$2 for a dinner. Our boarders were poor peddlers who paid \$.10 for a night's lodging and \$.15 for a meal, and we had more than enough of them. We usually had three every night and on Sundays as many as a dozen.

The work involved was more than boarding house operators do today. Today the boarding house operator buys his bread and has beds ready for his lodgers. We had to bake our own bread because our boarders and we didn't like to eat non-Jewish bread and every night we had to make up sleeping arrangements for every one.

My wife and mother-in-law, who lived with us, were overworked beyond their strength and after all this effort we made only a poor living. After a while my brother-in-law Samuel (Shmuel) Bloom pulled us out of there. Bloom had lived with us when we were in Princeton and he was a peddler at that time. When we moved from Princeton he gave up peddling, went to live in Philadelphia where he worked at his trade, being a jeweller, for \$4 per week plus board.

After Bloom had been in Philadelphia a few weeks he came to visit us and strongly urged us to move to Philadelphia and he presented strong facts showing that families like ours were living much better than we were and they were not burdened with the kind of hard labor we were doing.

My wife, of course, was in favor of this plan. As for me, I was weighing it in my mind because deep in my heart I still cherished the idea of being a farmer but in my head I knew that Shmuel and my wife were right. In the end I capitulated and we decided to move to Philadelphia.

But first we sent Nathan to Philadelphia to learn a trade so that he would be earning some money when we would arrive in Philadelphia. He learned how to make button holes for shoes, a golden trade nicht wahr? Shortly before Passover of 1887 we moved to Philadelphia to 904 S. Front Street. With this move I ended my peddler period.

When we arrived in Philadelphia Nathan was earning \$4 a week at his golden trade. Moses also got a job making button holes on clothes through the recommendation of my brother Saul who also worked at this golden trade and Moses made \$4 per week also. From a newspaper advertisement I got a job as a laborer digging a foundation for a building at \$1.50 a day.

My family did not want me to do that kind of work but I insisted on doing it. I felt that no man should be ashamed of doing plain labor work. If I were to do this kind of work our combined income would be about \$17 per week which we figured to be equivalent to 34 rubles, a sum which it took me a whole semester to earn as a teacher.

But the work proved to be too hard for me because after three days I got sick. I had to give up the job and the idea of seeking labor work. I began to look for a job more suitable for a Jew like myself and I found a strictly Jewish job which paid \$7 per week. And what do you think it was? Why, button holes, of course.

I became a maker of holes for buttons on clothes. So instead of being farmers and peddlers the children and I became button hole makers. Our total earnings per week came to \$15 and for 11 people (I, my wife, eight children and my mother-in-law) that was hardly enough, and Passover would soon be arriving. But as God was good to us he sent us some boarders, namely Meyer Hoff and his sister, my brother Saul, Simon Gordon and Moses Chaim Cohen.

These five were our regular boarders. But we also had other boarders who stayed with us from time to time, among whom were Abe Cohen, Elias Klein and others whose names I have forgotten. But I have not forgotten how hard my wife and mother-in-law worked on a Sunday to feed 25 persons or even more. And I worked hard cleaning the rooms and the beds, a very necessary job. We all worked very hard and as the Americans say we barely kept above water.

But after two years in Philadelphia, when I and my three sons Moses, Nathan and Ike, began to work in photoengraving our situation began to improve. How we came to get into photoengraving is something I must explain. But first I must go back a bit in my story.

Before we came to Philadelphia when we were still living in the country I became concerned over the fact that my sons were forgetting the little bit of Jewish knowledge which they had brought from the old country. On the recommendation of some countrymen, peddlers like myself, I engaged a young man for a small sum plus board to be a teacher for my sons.

He was an intelligent young man, a Maskil or follower of the Enlightenment. He was knowledgeable in Art. His name was known in our family as Moses Cohen or Moishe Chaim Cohen. A strong and warm friendship developed between him and my whole family. We tried to help him as much as possible and so, of course, we introduced him to peddling. But since he was of a rather intellectual nature he didn't do too well at peddling.

We came to feel that he was one of the family and so he moved with us to Philadelphia where he tried to find a job more suitable for him. Through an advertisement he got a job in a wholesale drug store. He would come home so tired and so dusty that our hearts were so torn just looking at him that we wouldn't let him go back to that work. Everyday he went looking for work until he saw an advertisement for a helper to an artist who worked in oil and he got the job.

When he got that job it seemed as though his troubles were over but the bad luck pursued him. A few days after he got that job as artist's helper the place burned down and he was again out of work for awhile until he got a job with the recently deceased Louis Edward Levy who operated a photoengraving shop at 7th & Chestnut Streets. He started at \$4 a week but he was so capable in this work that he was soon made the head etcher at \$7 a week. He brought my son Moses in as a helper and later an opening developed and he brought him in as an exposor. A little while later I brought my son Nathan in as an engraver. Later I brought my son Ike in. And so from button hole makers we all became photoengravers.

At this point I feel bound to tell you of an encounter I had with the above mentioned Mr. Levy when I was in his office asking him to give my son Ike a job. "How many children do you have, anyway?" he asked. "Just nine," I answered. "Only nine," he said sarcastically. And in that superior manner which German Jews use in trying to instruct Russian Jews in how to live he said, "I think you commit a great wrong when you bring so many children into the world that you cannot give them a proper upbringing."

Naturally I felt strongly offended by such a brazen remark and I felt like telling him that he had committed a great wrong in making such a remark, but what weight would he give to the arguments of an ignorant Russian Jew who was merely one of his employees.

However, when later Moses and Ike went into the same business as Mr. Levy and were more successful than he and when my younger children attained the same level of culture and education as his three children, he was forced to change his opinion and to consider his former remarks as false and foolish. His changed attitude and future helpful relations with my children and with Russian Jews in general clearly showed that he had changed his attitude as did many other German Jews. All of this, however, is departing from my story.

Our situation improved when we all became involved in photoengraving. At first we continued to take in boarders. In about a year Moses was making \$25 per week working for a competitor of Mr. Levy, I was making \$14 a week and together with the earnings of Nathan and Ike the family income was over \$50 a week, a very respectable income at that time. We began to save a little money. Moses put \$10 per week into the house and except for his small personal expenses he saved the rest and because we all had one pocket, we felt that all of us were saving.

Had I followed the course which the majority of immigrants of that time followed I would probably be a rich man today as are most of those immigrants today. Most of them started as peddlers or workers and as soon as they saved up \$10- or \$200 they would get into some kind of business and many of them became quite wealthy.

My situation was such that I could have attained such a wealthy status because as it later developed my sons were excellent businessmen. We could certainly have made the kind of success as made by the Silvermans who operate that large store at 6th and South Streets which started as a small stand by old man Silverman, who was not too smart.

As we began to increase our savings I really thought I would go into some kind of business. I had, I thought, really given up the idea of being a farmer. As a matter of fact when a friend came to consult with me about his desire to be a farmer I dissuaded him from it. But the spark of the farming idea was still deep within me and under certain conditions this spark became a flaming fire, so that instead of becoming a business man I did become a farmer.

And now I come to that chapter which I hold to be the most important in my life. And its importance is not because it was especially different from any previous chapter but rather for the opposite reason. Everything that happened to me in this period was almost the same as that which happened to all the Jewish idealists who became farmers at the same place and same time as I did.

My farming period was valuable to me because after that experience I gave up completely the false belief which I and thousands of others held. That belief held that in order to carry out a certain theory in which one believed it was only necessary to have the wish and the desire to accomplish it. I came to the conclusion that any theory which was in opposition to the practical facts of life could not be carried out.

The everyday practical aspect of living gave me the first impulse to begin the study of that great seminal thinker Karl Marx who held that no Utopias, no theory, could build anything. I became a strong follower of his teaching and today I understand life, and also death, quite differently than formerly. And today I think I am much closer to the truth than before. I think I am fortunate in this respect and I think others will find it worthwhile to know what I lived through during the several years I was a farmer. Therefore I am going to relate all the events of this period which I can recall, in the hope that this description may be of some value to others.

From time to time, even now, we hear talks by agitators and we read articles by writers who preach to Jewish workers and small business men about how these workers and small business men darken their lives in dingy shops or little fruit stands or cigar stores. These agitators and writers say it would be better if these workers and shop keepers would be farmers, better for reasons of health and self respect for them and the Jewish nation. These proponents of farming seem to say that all that is necessary is to have guts, save a little money, move from the city to a farm somewhere, exchange the shears and pressing irons and store fixtures for an iron plow, have a little patience and endurance and the goal will be achieved.

But in truth the situation is actually quite different. First of all one needs to invest several thousand dollars which the worker or small shop owner does not have. Secondly, and this is the main fact, just as it took a long time to take Jews away from farming, it may take an even longer time to get them back to farming. If we were able to change the system things might be otherwise but under the present system the Jew is not suitable material for farming. Not because of any inability physically or intellectually. Actually most of those Jews who tried farming were good at it. Yet, seldom did they stick to it simply because the history of the Jewish people developed a life style, a psychology, which made it impossible for them to be suitable for farming in general and especially difficult for them to be new farmers.

The Jew, being city minded and filled with community spirit, who as a minimum needs a synagogue, a meeting hall or club where he can meet with his fellow Jews at least once a week, the Jew who wants his children to begin their Jewish education at age five in a Jewish school so he can make upright men of them and make suitable matches for his daughters, that Jew cannot do as the German, Italian or Polish beginner farmer who alone or with a couple of families is able to settle on a farm somewhere in a two room hut and lie on the bare ground with his wife and children for ten or fifteen years until he begins to reach his goal. And in this land it is even more difficult for a Jew to be a farmer.

In Russia, for example, where the government gave land to Jews, several families would settle in a colony and some had a moderate success, first because farm chores there were not as onerous as here, the land cost was small and

the cost of the necessary implements was small and secondly, several families being together could have the institutions which Jews needed.

However, in this land not even colonies of Jews could make farmers of Jews because the farm chores here are much harder and even the smallest farmer must have several thousand dollars and then, of course, the Jew in this country found the greatest opportunities in the business area which suited his character.

For these reasons the Jewish farming colonies were great failures. Those Jews who today want to be farmers or want to persuade other Jews to be farmers are making a big mistake. If there are a few successful Jewish farmers this is either because they have a real genuine peasant's spirit or because in addition to farming they take in Jewish boarders in the summer or have some other business side line.

But let me relate what I lived through during my several years as a farmer and the facts themselves will support my remarks. The time about which I write was the time of the beginning of the establishment of the four Jewish colonies in South Jersey, manely Woodbine, Alliance, Rosenhayn and Carmel.

At that time I had completely given up the idea of being a farmer. However, a certain Mr. Gavard, then a shirtmaker but now the Philadelphia branch manager of the Baron Hirsh Fund, met with me and my brother-in-law S.S. Bloom. Mr. Gavard was an idealist and a firm believer in the colonization idea. He told me wonderful things about the colonies in South Jersey. He awakened my desire about being a farmer and the three of us decided to organize a group of more or less compatable persons who were to become farmers. Our plan was to buy a piece of ground near the already existing colonies and form our own colony in accordance with our own ideas.

In a short time our group consisted of Gavard, Bloom, Moses Kahn, Elias Klein, my brother Saul, my son Moses, a man named Hanin and me, a total of eight. Gavard and I were selected as a committee, better described as spies, to look over the colonies, pick one suitable for us near which we could buy a piece of land suitable for our group. The fact that they put me on the committee was a factor in fanning into flame again the fire of my former dreams of being a farmer.

When we got off the train at Rosenhayn and I first saw a Jewish farmer chopping, digging, pulling at the bush and stumps on his land, I was so happy that tears filled my eyes. A Jew working hard on his own land! After a short conversation with the Jew in muddy overalls with sunburned face and calloused hands, I discovered he was an intelligent man and I was so moved that I felt like embracing and kissing him. After we talked to a number of other cultured and educated Jews who glowingly described their hopes and expectations from their farms it is understandable that I again became very enthusiastic about becoming a farmer.

From Rosenhayn we went to Alliance where we met several intelligent people who were very enthusiastic about their situation. They showed us a tract of land which did not please us so we went on to Carmel. Even though Carmel was near a swamp and was three miles from the train it seemed to us preferable to the other two places for three reasons. First, the people were the most intelligent of the groups we had met. Secondly, the soil seemed better than in the other places. Finally, the owner of the Carmel land, a Christian named Miller who lived in a fine home in the town of Carmel, took a deep interest in the building up of the colony.

So we spent the night in Carmel. The next morning Mr. Miller showed us a tract of 170 acres of bush land which was about a mile from the town and on the Bridgeton Millville Pike and about four miles from Millville. His price was eleven dollars an acre. The location suited us and so we did not even go to Woodbine. We went home, gave our report to our group, several members of the group went to look over the tract, and after several meetings we decided to buy it.

On one point Mr. Gavard could not agree with the group, so he left us. But he was replaced by another person. On the day we were to close the deal it was not the committee alone which went but the whole group, and some wives went, not because of any lack of confidence in the committee, but because this day was considered a very special holiday for us and each one of us wanted to be present on this great occasion.

We were not alone in feeling this was a special day because the colonists already in Carmel felt the same way about the arrival of seven additional families to their colony. And these seven families were not just ordinary families. They were no longer greenhorns, they were well off. At least that's what the colonists thought.

It seemed that the mosquitos too were quite happy about our coming. They greeted us before we even reached Carmel. I remember the mosquito welcome even today because the thick swarm of mosquitos had already sucked out all the blood of the colonists and their children so when we arrived our fresh supply provided them with a feast. When we said the excessively friendly mosquitos were more than we could bear the colonists calmly assured us that the mosquito season did not last long, only five months out of the year! And they also assured us that while the friendliness of the mosquitos was at first uncomfortable, we would soon get used to them. As evidence, they said, "The mosquitos no longer bother us," even though they were constantly scratching and their children's skins were amply marked by the kisses of the mosquito.

Furthermore, the colonists said that the sufferings caused by the mosquitos paled into insignificance when compared to the sufferings we had to endure under Russian bureaucrats in Russia or capitalist bosses in America. We, not knowing where to start scratching, had to agree with them. My wife was the only one who disagreed. She protested rather strongly. However, when we entered Mr. Miller's house and there were no mosquitos, because their house was screened, my wife dropped her protest. She concluded that all we would need would be the money to buy screens.

We went several hours in our negotiations with Mr. Miller. We signed the necessary papers. We became owners of a piece of American land. My old wish for which I had so long striven was at last achieved.

When we completed our business with Mr. Miller we did not return to Philadelphia that day. We spent the night in Carmel. The next morning, bright, sunny, cloudless, dry and warm, we went to inspect our property. Some townspeople accompanied us so it looked like a parade. But instead of flags we carried small bush branches to chase the swarms mosquitos who also accompanied us.

Ah! How fortunate we felt then when we came to our land! It was no small matter - our land! In Russia we could not dream of such a thing, because in Russia Jews were not allowed to own land. The fact that our land was covered with wild bush made no difference to us. In our fantasy we saw it cleared and planted with blooming fruit trees and

wine gardens in the midst of which were our homes, equipped with all conveniences where we would be living in peace and contentment "under our vines and apple trees" just as Jews lived in the time of King Solomon. We felt confident that in a short time we would be the best example of the farming life so that every Jewish business man would give up his store, every tailor his shears, every shoemaker his awl, and take to his plowshare to work on Mother Earth. We, together with the other colonists felt confident that in a few years the thousands of acres of South Jersey bush land would become successful Jewish colonies.

It would not have been wise for anyone to have said to us that there was a long road to travel before our fantasy became a reality. If we did not break the bones of such a wise man for his warning we certainly would have crowned him with names such as traitor, scoundrel, and so on. Just as the Zionists act today toward their opponents who say there is an endless road separating the Zionist fantasies from reality.

By the time we returned to our homes in Philadelphia we already considered ourselves half farmers. In our home and wherever we met anyone outside our home, our sole topic of conversation was our forthcoming move. We began to count the days until we could really be farmers. In a short time we paid the balance due on our land we obtained deeds. We hired a surveyor who divided it into eight equal portions about 21 acres each and the portions were allotted to each of our group by lot except that Moses and I were allowed to have adjoining lots. Because this exception was made for us I accepted a section which had a disadvantage. At that point each member of the group received a deed in his name for his particular acreage. (We considered ourselves seven families, though their were eight portions, because Moses was still counted as part of my family.)

The second summer after we obtained our deed a group consisting of Samuel Bloom, Moses Kahn, my brother Saul and I impatiently awaited the fourth of July when we would actually go and work on our land with our own hands, even though we knew that all we could do was to clear the land of bush.

On the third of July we went to a hardware store and bought some small choppers and went to Carmel where we spent the night. The next morning, immediately after breakfast,

we celebrated the fourth of July by clearing some bush from our land, even though we knew it was useless because it would all grow back until we really began to farm the land. We did it because we wanted to have the joy of working on our own land. Although it was rather a hot day we set to work with vigor, and as a result we all got sick the next day. We returned to Philadelphia half alive.

It was three years after we bought the land before all of us started farming. I was the first one to do so. During these three years everything pertaining to our farming plan went well. The Carmel colony grew by leaps and bounds. Mr. Miller, the leader of the town, built a factory with tall chimneys and a whistle which could be heard three miles away. He rented the factory at a low cost to a boss who was very happy to exploit the Carmel green horns. When the whistle blew four times each day a large gang of workers were seen leaving and entering the factory just as in a big city.

New inhabitants arrived daily. Land which had sold for ten or twelve dollars an acre was being cut up into building lots selling for fifty dollars each. The building and loan associations of Bridgeton made loans freely to the Carmelites. The Yiddish newspapers and even the English newspapers began to tell about the good fortune of the Jewish colonies in general and Carmel in particular.

Every time I went to Carmel and saw the progress of the colony and heard the optimistic comment of the colonists about the future I came home encouraged and inspired. All my thoughts were concentrated on searching for the means whereby I could bring nearer the day when I could settle on my land and begin farming.

How happy I was when I was able to buy an additional thirty acres adjoining our land which was on the Bridgeton-Millville Pike on which there was an electric car. Moses and I together owned over seventy acres of land in a good location. At that time my fantasy reached the highest level. I felt certain that if I lived a few more years I would build a farm which would be admired. Then I would be the most fortunate man in the world.

Moses, who was still single, was earning thirty dollars per week and since his expenses were less than ten, the balance of the money was more than enough to pay off the balance due on the land, to buy a cow, a horse, a wagon and

other implements and also to hire a Polish worker. The family would live in the town of Carmel and the three boys Nathan, Ike and Sam would work in Carmel's factory. Even the small wages they would earn would be enough for food, since we'd have a couple of cows and a garden. I would remain working in the city for about a year saving about ten dollars per week after my expenses. To clear the land and do other necessary work I would hire a Pole. I knew I could rely on my wife to manage everything properly. If everything went according to plan for one year I would have saved some money, some of the land would be cleared, and in the second year I would really be able to start farming. Since I thought of myself as a bit of an expert in farming and since I felt strong and healthy and able to work I felt certain that my plan would work, that I would at long last reach the goal of my deepest hopes.

My plan, however, survived as long as it was a theory. When I tried to put it onto practice I found out that I had made the plan without the boss.

My first battle was with my wife. In truth she had never been attracted to the whole idea, but as long as it merely meant putting up some money for the land and talking about it, she did not oppose me and let me fantasize about it as much as I wanted. But when the time came to actually leave the city she strongly protested and as time went on her protests grew stronger.

Today, to my shame, I must admit that her arguments were valid and correct. Her argument was, "Now, after so much suffering, we have at last obtained a home and an adequate livelihood and we can hold our heads up like other people. You want us to destroy the whole thing and embark on a venture which at best will mean much suffering and hardship." She simply did not want to move.

But of what value was my home to me at 404 Dickinson Street when in my strong fantasies I saw a substantial house surrounded by fields of grain and vineyards. I argued with all my strength against my wife and naturally I won. So against her will my wife became a farmerette.

I say I won because it seemed so to me at the time. But if I knew then what I know now! The fact that my wife went along only because she was compelled against her will was alone enough to make it impossible to carry out my plan when we were up against the formidable obstacles which I shall describe.

Finally when my wife agreed to go along with the plan and all arrangements had been made for moving my wife and I went to Carmel to rent a house where we found that nothing was available. All completed houses were occupied. All the houses being built had been sold and we were forced to rent an old and dilapidated house near the Bridgeton-Millville Pike about a mile and a half from Carmel.

This alone was enough to increase my wife's unhappiness. At least in the town of Carmel there was a factory with a whistle, a couple of stores and some intelligent people and plans for a city park, though even that would not have reconciled her to the plan. So you can understand how much she would have to endure to live in a house which stood alone in the bush surrounded with millions of mosquitos sucking her blood and the blood of her children, to have to walk one and one half miles to Carmel for every little thing she might need, to get up early enough to prepare breakfast and lunch for the children who had to be in the factory to start each day's work at 7:00 AM.

As for me, I remained in Philadelphia, working six days a week so it could be said that I did not suffer directly from these hardships. But in a sense I suffered even more than she because each Sunday my wife told me of her difficulties and all week while I was at work my conscience was burdened when I thought about all of her hardships. But there was no talk about giving up. I was consoled by the thought that our troubles would not last too long, that the end would be good and worth all the sacrifices.

In the meantime, in order to lighten some of the hardships, I bought a horse and wagon even though I did not yet need it for working the land. This was no fancy carriage horse, just a heavy work horse. The wagon was a plain farm wagon suitable for moving hay, wood, rubbish and so on. It was, nevertheless, used by my farm hand the Pole to occasionally drive my children to work and to drive my wife to the town of Carmel so they would not have to do it on foot.

As a result my wife was not so angry when I came to visit on Sunday. On our table I found cheese and butter and milk from our cow and eggs from our own chickens. Each Sunday when I walked on our tract I saw that a little more land had been cleared by our own farm hand and I would swell up with pride.

In a short time my wife began getting used to this sort of life and we also received notice of the availability of a house in the town of Carmel so it would seem that all was going well. But the fact was otherwise. My old trouble returned. I was short of money.

We had bought two sewing machines in order that the boys learn to be tailors. We had bought a cow, chickens, and a horse and wagon. So I was short of cash. I borrowed \$90 from a money lender and was obligated to pay him \$10 a week for 10 weeks. I was only earning \$15 a week. After I paid \$10 on the loan I had only \$5 left which was not enough to cover my board and expenses in Philadelphia. Nathan and Ike who were just learning their trade in the factory were earning nothing. The wages of Moses was not enough to provide food for a family of ten or twelve and feed for a cow and horse and chickens and wages for our farm hand.

Our sole hope was that Nathan and Ike would soon be getting wages. But alas, work at the factory stopped. Nathan didn't like the factory work and he immediately came to Philadelphia and went to work at engraving and I felt certain would never go back to the Carmel factory. And I would have to have been a tyrant to have sent him back. When he came to Philadelphia from Carmel he was a sight, dirty, unkempt hair, shoes torn and muddy, altogether forlorn looking. After working in Philadelphia a short time he bought new shoes and a new suit, got a haircut, got bathed, put on a clean collar and looked like a different person. But he could not help me. His wages were just enough to take care of him. When work at the Carmel factory started again he didn't go back.

Ike too didn't like working at sewing machines and he too came to Philadelphia. So my plans to depend on their wages came to naught and it seemed clear to me then that my plans would not work out for a Jew. Were I an Italian it would have worked because it did work for the Italians who

wanted to be farmers. They would build a two room house with an outdoor oven in which they would bake their own large loaves of bread and cook large pots of pork soup on which they would subsist. They would not hire a farm hand. They would work their own land about half the week and work for another farmer the other half of the week. And they would work Sundays. Such ideas as having a nice house, good clothes, good company, letting your children leave the farm for the city, such ideas would never enter their heads. The \$15 or \$20 which Moses produced would have been enough for them, but not for us Jews.

My wife, and even I deep in my own heart, had to admit that we were really happy that our children preferred the city because already we saw that the children, in a short time, were being coarsened, becoming ignoramuses, in the country.

My situation looked bleak and for a while it looked as though I would have to give up my whole plan. But who is so stubborn as a Jew once an idea takes hold of him? And who has such a natural ability for a business as a Jew? He can go to sleep as a tailor or shoemaker and wake up the next morning as a complete business man. So I did not give up my plan. I found a means to continue and the means was business, a business which would fit in with my farming, a coal yard and hay store. There was no such business in that locality.

You don't need the mind of a cabinet minister to ask, "Where's the money coming from to start this business?" From what I've already told you you know I was in short supply of that item. But as a Jew I was able to borrow a little money and with good references to a coal broker everything was made right.

However, since I was still obligated to work in the city I had to get a partner for this business and I had to move my family into the town of Carmel. We got a good house in the center of Carmel. I was able to get a good partner who was a good worker and an exceptionally honest man Moses Aaron, now deceased. In fact this very quality of being so highly honorable was a defect in my partner. If he had been the usual run of the mill Jew, not too big a thief and not too virtuous, we would really have developed a big business

because we were the first Russian Jews to get into the coal business in this area, including Philadelphia. My partner, however, was foolish, impractical, as idealistic as I was, so we worked out the following plan for operating our business.

Whereas the main goal of both of us was to be farmers and we were to operate this business in the winter when there's not much to do on the land, we would be able to use our horses and my boys Ike and Sam in bringing the coal the three miles from Rosenhayn to Carmel and also to pick up hay from farmers and haul it to our land for baling. We would then use our facilities to haul the coal and hay to our customers for a small percentage. Because our customers were idealists like ourselves there was never any discussion about not giving the right weight.

When we started the business and the weather grew colder every Carmel resident became our customer for coal and everyone who owned a cow or horse became a customer for hay. In addition to the cruelly hard work of delivering coal and hay in all kinds of bitter weather by my partner and my boys my wife had plenty of work as the bookkeeper. And on Sunday my partner and I spent the whole day going over the accounts and trying to keep them in order. Each Sunday I learned that plenty of coal and hay was being sold but much too little cash was being collected. When I complained about this to my partner he said that the money owed to us by our customers was as good as gold. But this did not help to pay our bills. And so I did what others did in such circumstances, I borrowed, I exchanged checks, I predated checks, I sometimes "forgot" to sign checks. And so I labored through the winter.

With the arrival of Spring and warm weather our customers no longer needed coal. Our creditors, however, wanted to be paid. Our total profit, which really was payment for labor, was about \$800 and it was all in the pockets of our customers who had not paid us. Our inexperience in business and our idealism had prevented us from charging enough to cover our losses. How could we refuse to deliver coal to a poor workman whose family was huddled in rooms freezing cold? What made it even worse was that it was an unusually cold winter.

Our creditors were quite understanding and reasonable, but my credit was destroyed and I could no longer engage in this business. It was a great heartache for me and what gave me the greatest pain was that I was unable to repay \$200 which I had borrowed from my brother-in-law Nissan Bloom.

This \$200 was all that he had and had I not received salvation from another source I would have contemplated suicide. I was saved by an event involving Isaac Rosen who is now my brother-in-law. Rosen who then was not my brother-in-law but only a countryman, had lived in Fort Worth, Texas. His first wife had died. He was not in good health. He had arranged to sell his business for \$20,000 and had come East. He wanted to buy a good farm and get married. I took him around to see various farms and he finally bought the Wood Farm, about 300 acres which bordered on Carmel. It contained many valuable buildings and was known for miles around. Rosen bought it for \$13,000. The buildings alone were probably worth that.

He was very happy over his great bargain and I was very happy with the \$500, partly as commission and partly for other services which I did for him. He was planning to marry my sister Esther. This incident was the salvation I referred to. I was then able to repay Nissan his \$200 and to continue with my farming.

Of course it was very good that I was able to repay Nissan but as to the \$300 which remained to help me continue farming, perhaps it would have been better if I had not had that money. It merely prolonged my suffering for three years. Just as the Inquisition used to give in to their victims to prolong their torture, so this money was the means of prolonging my torture as a farmer.

I gave up my job in the city. I fired my farm hand the Pole. I bought a horse to replace my first horse who had given us his horsey soul on Yom Kippur. With the remaining money I bought 5 milk cows and one heifer, so with the cow I already owned I now owned 7 cows and one horse.

My calculation at this point was quite simple. Since the dairy farmers were getting only 2 cents a quart for their milk in the city and even less when they sold to a creamery, I would certainly do well by selling my milk in Carmel at 5 cents a quart and also selling the manure which was an absolute necessity to the farmers in that area.

Today of course I know an entirely different calculation. For instance, suppose a farmer owns 10 milk cows and everything goes well, the cows stay healthy and live out their years and calve every year and yield an average of 6 quarts of milk every day through the year. This would mean that according to the prices in those days a farmer would get 12 cents a day for each cow's production. For such a sum of money not only our farm agitators but even the poor tailors would refuse to do the following: milk the cow twice a day, feed the cow, clean the barn, and this does not even take into account the cost of the feed for the cow even in those times of low prices.

So the question arises why should any farmer bother with milk production? As a matter of fact the farmers complained bitterly about the situation but they couldn't help themselves. They were born farmers. They were raised as farmers and they would die as farmers.

As I said before the farmer had to have stable manure so he had to have farm animals and so he could grow enough on his farm for his family and have enough pasture for his animals and enough bedding for his manure production and he would have enough milk, eggs and other things for his family's survival. So he remained a farmer and raised his children to be farmers because very seldom did a farmer seek more than eating, sleeping and working.

As for me, my land was new land which required much hard work and money and produced as yet nothing. Each week I received a bill for feed and hay and even my Jewish head could see that all I got out of it was a little milk for my household and not enough to pay even for straw which I needed for manure production. I had no pasture so I had to keep the cows in the stable all year. When I did let them out for a little air and sunshine they strayed into a planted field where one dollar's damage would cost \$10.³³

Since I couldn't pay for straw I hit on the idea of driving my team to a wooded area about three miles away. There I would gather fallen leaves and pine needles and load the wagon with it and attempt to use it in place of straw bedding.

I found that the work and time involved would have cost me at least \$3 if I hired someone to do it and the amount of bedding I produced in a day was worth only \$.75. So I had to sell 5 cows in order to get a few dollars for our sustenance.

Then came the crisis of 1897, the financial panic. We lacked the money to buy a bag of flour for bread and the money to pay our rent of \$6 per month. We were totally dependent on the three boys, Moses, Nathan and Ike, who were working in the city and the small wages of our daughter Ida who was working in the Carmel factory.

At this point I feel I should pause and relate something about my personal situation and the colony in general. First because the two were strongly intertwined and secondly because I want my story to have some historical value from which something can be learned. I shall at least relate those events in the Jewish settlement which I think worthwhile and which, naturally, I still remember.

While I have related my personal disappointment this does not mean that I alone had fooled myself when I settled in this colony to become a farmer. That which happened to me also happened to each colonist in this or a similar manner. To become a farmer is to go through a prolonged agony for years. As for all the good fortune which we dreamed about, we all knew that it was not to be ours. Most of the colonists did not even make a start in cultivating their little plots of land. Those who had a little money opened stores and soon there were more stores than customers. Those who had no money went to work in the factory, either alone or with their children. Others returned to the city from which they had come. Those few who did not want to give up farming were those who sent their children to work in the factory and the earnings of the children were buried in the land.

And yet the situation, the mood, of the colony was quite good and hopeful. Although the aspirations for a farming settlement had been cooled off about 90% there was a very strong hope for developing an industrial complex in a lively and progressive town.

A well known New York manufacturer of ladies wrappers Franklin and Mirsky gave a great deal of work to the Carmel factory and other manufacturers also sent work to Carmel. Eighty percent of the town's population were friendly intellectuals who were radicals and they were the town leaders. The few orthodox Jews were tolerant to the non religious Jews. As a matter of fact it was not unusual to see an orthodox Jew walking to synagogue on the Sabbath, accompanied by a non-religious Jew smoking a cigar, engaged in friendly conversation.

Franklin and Mirsky were radicals also, and nowhere were the workers as independent as the Carmel workers. Even a minor labor holiday was observed with the greatest ceremony. There was hardly a single evening when there was not a lecture or a discussion or a meeting. On the street there were frequently groups discussing socialism, anarchism and religion.

In general, there was a Socialist atmosphere. For a time it was an idealistic place which attracted intellectual and progressive Jews who made it their home. Just as in the beginning they dreamed of making the community an example of the ideal farming community, now they dreamed about making it an example of the ideal Jewish industrial town founded on radical principles.

This alone held me bound to the place as if I were held by chains and I felt therefore that it was right for me to remain in spite of all my troubles, until, until something happened about which one of our prophets said, "Your destroyers and your despoilers will come from within you." (Isaiah 49.17.)

A couple of people who belonged to the cream of the town, who dealt in real estate, under the kosher name of Lerman and Sokalowski, and who were not doing too well, were impressed by the progress of the town as a result of the work provided by Franklin and Mirsky and they worked out a plan whereby they could get rich.

As to the fact that their plan would destroy Carmel, that made no difference to them. What capitalist cares about another's misfortune which may result while the capitalist profits?

Their plan was simple. They convinced Franklin and Mirsky that instead of sending their orders to the Carmel factory they should buy a few hundred acres of land, build a factory there, build homes there, and build a new settlement there. They argued that in addition to being manufacturers F&M would also become landlords. The more orders F&M would send the more workers they would need, the more houses would be needed, the more the settlement would grow and the more valuable the land would become, the more money would be made. Lerman and Sokolowski would become partners and share in the profits of the real estate part of the plan.

Franklin and Mirsky bought the idea. They bought a large tract of land near Atlantic City and gave it the beautiful Biblical name of Mitzpah and they began to build the settlement.

When Carmel heard about it it was like a blast of thunder out of a clear sky and the whole town was deeply disturbed. Mass meetings were held one after another. Finally, it was decided to send a committee to F&M in New York. I was on that committee.

At our conference in New York we offered to return to F&M their deposit on the land. We pointed out that their project would result in great damage to Carmel and even to F&M, which really did happen. F&M were inclined to agree with us but Lerman and Sokolowski who were present and whose looks were like those of cold murderers refused to relieve F&M of their contract and the plan remained in effect.

This gave Carmel its first push backwards. I say the first push because the community did not go down all at once. After F&M left Carmel the factory was run as a cooperative. The workers appointed a manager whose job it was to obtain work in New York and other places and to manage the factory. For his efforts he was paid a percentage of the total wages paid. The workers also opened a cooperative store. Other shops opened up and for a while things were quite lively. It was during this period I was operating my coal business.

However, the lack of steady work, the prices which were too low, and the frequent strikes destroyed the community.

It was easier to call a strike in Carmel than to get ten men to make a minyan. Most of the Carmelites were socialists or anarchists. As for rent, if it was paid that was good, but if it was not, it was also okay. Most of the workers owned their own homes, wood for heating was to be had in the bush, a bag of flour was obtained on credit, and as a last resort a striker would go to Philadelphia and get a little job which would give him enough for support for a few weeks. So it was very easy to have a strike every Monday and Thursday.

As time went on the situation worsened. While in the early period each week saw the arrival of a new family, during this period of decline each week saw the departure of a few families who let their land revert to the mortgagee and the house to the building and loan association.

The population grew smaller, the houses emptier and the land worthless. Everyone now saw that the great hopes for Carmel were only empty dreams, that all the energy and money which had been expended had all come to naught.

So much for the colony in general. Now to return to my own personal situation. During this critical period when all came to the conclusion that the settlement would not be a success there were still a number of families who did not want to leave and they tried by various means to continue their miserable existence in that place. Among these families there were a few farmers, as I was. It was also during this period that my whole family argued with me saying that it was time for me to give up my dreams, move to Philadelphia, join our children, and earn a poor but adequate living. But I couldn't yet tear myself away from my land and give up. I still hoped to reach my goal with one last try which was to put an end to the episode and went as follows.

Isaac Rosen who was now my brother-in-law and who was now living on his large farm, and one hundred cows, eight beautiful horses, a large number of farming implements and carriages. He suggested the following plan.

He would set aside for me 30 acres of his best land to be planted with potatoes. He would supply the seed, the fertilizer, the horses and implements. I and my son Sam would do the work. Rosen would advance the money, to be charged to me, necessary to pay any workers we would need, and Rosen and I would be equal partners in the proceeds of the sale of the crop.

We considered ourselves modest experts and figured as follows. Good experienced farmers were producing 300 bushels of potatoes per acre. We thought even with our limited experience we would easily produce 200 bushels per acre and this would mean a crop of 6000 bushels which at 75 to 80 cents a bushel would bring about \$5000.

After estimating a deduction of \$1000 for fertilizer and other expenses there would remain \$4000 of which my share would be \$2000. At worst, even if my share was only \$1000, it would still be a good venture.

So I hired a Pole to work on my land while Sam and I with the greatest enthusiasm took to the work of 30 acres of potatoes. Sam immediately began to bargain with me as to how much he would earn for himself at the end of the season. He, poor fellow, really was in dire need. He owned only a pair of dirty overalls and a pair of grubby old farm shoes.

My wife and I also began to plan what we would be able to do with the few hundred dollars we would get out of the deal, but here the results were the same as the results of the meat business in Petrograd in my younger days.

That summer was a rather dry one. Some of our potatoes burned up because of the dryness and the heat. Some were eaten by potato bugs. So instead of a crop of 6000 bushels we didn't even produce 1000 bushels. In some other areas there had been plenty of rain and there was an overproduction of potatoes so the price dropped and it would not pay us to ship to a commission merchant. My son Sam and I would load the Rosen's wagon with potatoes each day and peddle them in Bridgeton and Millville for about 50 cents a bushel. The result was that Rosen lost several hundred dollars in the venture while my son Sam and I had worked at back breaking labor for six months for nothing. I also had to pay wages to the farm hand whom I hired to work my land.

The time had finally arrived when I had to agree to allow my family to move to Philadelphia, but I still insisted that I alone would remain to farm my land. In order to get some money for a month's rent in Philadelphia and for furniture and some subsistence I sold my two cows, my horse and my wagon. I gave my wife the money. She and the children left, with no small happiness, for Philadelphia. I remained as a boarder with my sister Esther, Mrs. Rosen, and each day for a period of one month I worked on my land. With the coming of the first frost and snow I could no longer work my land so I went to Philadelphia.

In my new home there I found a pleasant, comfortable, warm atmosphere. My wife, so happy, seemed to be wearing a new skin. In the evening when the whole family gathered around the table for supper everyone seemed lively and happy and since I was welcomed as a guest, I too was quite content. But I didn't make this too obvious because I still held fast to the idea of returning to my land to farm it.

My fate had tried to dissuade me from farming by treating me with all kinds of hardship. Perhaps now fate had reflected and decided to try to dissuade me by kindness and good treatment.

That first week at home was like a holiday, perhaps the greatest of my life. I had never had such a good time. I didn't have to work, I could sleep as late as I wished, my wife brought into the house whatever was necessary without asking me for anything, as a matter of fact she would ask me if I needed money for anything.

Not for long, however, did this holiday feeling remain inside me. By the second week this kind of life began to bore me. Not having any occupation when I still had the ability to work seemed to me the most unbearable kind of job which I had ever had in my life. Having to ask my wife for ten cents to buy a little tobacco was much more unpleasant than having her ask me for dollars, although I perceived no unfriendliness from her in this situation.

Then there was another thing. Because I was doing nothing I couldn't let her carry heavy baskets from the store when she went shopping. As for me going to the store myself, I sometimes did, but I didn't think that in itself was so noble or honorable a job. I had to begin to think about some kind of an occupation at least until spring when I would again return to farming.

The question of what to do had no easy answer, first because it would only be for a short time, and secondly because even the smallest business would require money of which I had none. So all I could do would be to peddle tea, coffee, whiskey and similar items. But I hated that kind of business. It was really begging and I hated that more than death. I always felt it was better to do the hardest and dirtiest kind of work rather than to be dependent on the favors of others. As the Talmud says, "Skin a carcass in the street rather than beg of people."

But since peddling was the only thing available to me I decided that I would peddle butter instead of tea, coffee and whiskey. I'll explain what's better about peddling butter.

I knew from my own experience that the butter sold in Jewish grocery stores or dairies was of such poor quality that I didn't want to put it in my mouth. My wife used to go a distance of 20 blocks to get butter of better quality and even that was not good. I decided to obtain the very best butter available. I was acquainted with a large number of the better class Jews and I felt certain that they would be glad to pay a few cents more for good butter. I felt certain that if I built my business on the competition of quality rather than price, that not only would I be successful but it would be an honorable and respectable business.

Mr. A. Klein gave me the names of several creameries. I wrote them asking for their prices. I ordered a tub of butter as a sample from the creamery with the highest price, figuring their butter would be the best. That decision was perhaps the smartest I ever made in my life. That tub of butter was the best we had ever tasted. I was confident of the result.

Now I shall again interrupt my story and give a lecture on butter. Jews who came from Russia, Roumania, Galicia, used to think, and many still do, they could never get butter in this country as good as the butter in the old country. If a woman was able to get butter from a milkman who had himself beaten it from sour cream she had to pay a higher price. Other women who possessed unusual energy and who considered themselves experts would buy sour cream from a milkman and spend two or three hours beating it to make their own butter which was an inferior butter but they were proud to serve it even to a special guest.

They were wrong. Just as wrong as the religious people who think the world exists because of their piety. As wrong as the wealthy people who think they are the smartest people. As wrong as our legislators who pass the laws under which we live. As wrong as all the other wrongs in the world.

The butter which these women made couldn't be good because the sour cream which they bought was old, dirty and thin and the butter made from it had the same poor quality.

Even when a milkman made his own butter it was made from cream which was old, dirty and thin and therefore, his butter too was inferior. It was only a rare milkman who obtained first class quality cream and whose butter was of good quality. In short, only when the cream was fresh, clean, fat and beaten at proper temperature would a decent piece of butter be produced.

That butter which was made in the old country from sour cream is in this country called dairy butter and it really is of a coarse quality. Americans use it mostly for cooking and baking. The best butter is creamery butter. This butter is made from cream which is separated from skim milk by a machine while the milk is still sweet.

There are various grades of creamery butter depending on the freshness and butter fat content of the milk and the temperature when beaten, and also on the feed given the cows and the kind of separator used. Only the best kind of separator would produce the pure cream which would make the best quality butter.

The best butter came from the milk produced by cows which were fed with the best feed and when the milk was delivered to the creamery and colled not later than twelve hours after milking and beaten in a first class separator, the resulting cream kept at a proper temperature not longer than 24 hours and then beaten in a good machine under a skilled workman who squeezed out every drop possible of skim milk and water. This kind of butter was the best, the cleanest, and by the way, the most kosher because a creamery which produced this kind of butter used its machinery and buildings only for this purpose and no other.

This kind of butter was the kind I received in the sample which I had received, so you can understand why I was so sure I would be successful. The next thing I did was to buy a small scale, a half pound and quarter pound hand printer, and white fine quality parchment paper in which I wrapped the portions of butter. No Jew before me had ever done this.

I put these portions of butter in a good looking basket and covered the contents with a white cloth and set out to see my acquaintances.

I did not feel too good for the first few days. Although from my youth I had the opinion never to be ashamed of doing any honest work and although as a newcomer to this country I had done my share of peddling, nevertheless I felt uncomfortable after being in this country fifteen years, to go from house to house ringing bells carrying a basket on my arm.

However this uncomfortable feeling lasted only about three days because within that time I had acquired enough customers to earn six dollars a week which was the goal I had set for myself. When I made my second call on my customers, butter being an article that requires delivery twice a week, they were waiting for me. They treated me like I was an honored guest. They praised my butter. Instead of being forced to seek new customers, new customers came to me so that on each trip I added a few more.

As in my former ventures my hopes were not realized. This time, however, for an opposite reason. In my former ventures some outside trouble or disaster was the cause of failure to achieve my goals. This time, although my goal was to make only six dollars per week I was making 12 to 15 almost from the start and by the end of the winter it was up to 18 to 20.

The name Rubin became well known to Philadelphia Jews because of Rubin's butter and that popularity convinced me to finally give up my deeply rooted idea of being a farmer. I remained in this business. I became a wholesale and retail butter and egg dealer. I made a relatively moderate and decent honorable living for seventeen or eighteen years. I stress relatively moderate because someone else in my situation who had acquired such a reputation, would have become the richest butter and egg man in Philadelphia. My butter had acquired such a reputation that when a storekeeper wanted to tell a customer he had the best butter, he said he had Rubin's butter.

Here's an incident to show you what I mean. One day when I already had a considerable wholesale business in addition to my retail business, when I was serving one of my regular retail customers from my wagon, a woman came from across the street to buy some eggs. I tried to sell her some butter. She said, "I only buy Rubin's butter." I said, "Where do you buy it?" "At Davis' store." Davis was one of my wholesale customers.

I showed the woman the name Rubin on my wagon and said I was that very same Rubin of Rubin's butter. She found it hard to believe that the Rubin who had such a reputation and who must, of course, be a rich man would be driving a wagon and selling butter at retail. I relate this to emphasize that I only was making a relatively moderate living. While this was a great improvement over my former circumstances I was not any great success even though I was working harder than if I had been a farmer.

There were several reasons for this. First and most important, I had not learned to adopt the most important principle of business, to make myself a dual personality. If one wants to be a success in business he cannot be the same person in his office or store as he is at home, or in the synagogue or in society because conscience and business are not a matched pair, they don't go together.

I continued in my old way of thinking that I could make out with a small profit, 5 or 6 cents retail and 2 cents wholesale per pound. If a woman said she bought from me because she wanted to give me a show she didn't get any of my merchandise. If a woman said she owed less than my book showed I would take no money from her and would never again sell to her. If a woman came into my store and tried to pick the largest eggs or tested my scale or tried other vulgar female tricks I would give her a lecture telling her that was a vile thing to do and if I didn't feel in a good mood, and when did I feel in a good mood, I would cut her off in a curt manner and not sell her anything.

So although my merchandise had the highest reputation and although I had the highest respect from my better class customers, some of whom I changed from bad to good customers, nevertheless among the general group of customers I was considered a "crank" and this didn't help my business at all.

In the third year of my butter and egg business I was making forty dollars a week, a substantial sum at that time. But it was the same old story. If I had a smaller family, if I acted in a different manner toward my wife, and if our thinking were otherwise about money, the forty dollars would have done very well, provided that I would have lived on 20 dollars a week and saved 20 dollars a week. In that manner I would have saved \$1000 per year and so accumulated capital with which I could have speculated, a very necessary function in that business.

With capital I would have been able to hire a salesman. In fact others in my situation did work their way up very well. However, my handling of my finances was different than this. When I started the business my goal was to make six dollars a week. But at the very beginning I was making 12 so I gave my wife 15, when I made 25 I gave 28 and when I made 40 I gave 43 and so on. My wife and I were not spendthrifts but our inclinations were different from other people's.

As soon as our income increased we stopped exploiting our children. As the business grew and the work increased I didn't hire extra help because I didn't want to increase expenses. In addition to her household duties, my wife helped at the store when I was away. If her help were not enough I would begin working several hours before sunrise and would work late into the night so that I was working 16 to 18 hours a day.

Harder than the physical work was the mental effort because I was always in debt and in order to maintain my credit I was constantly borrowing and exchanging checks and wondering "which pane of glass to remove and which to replace." The mental strain was so great that it finally affected my heart and I had a breakdown.

In the fifth year of the business I became very sick. My doctor told me it was due to overwork and that if I continued at the pace I would soon be out of business forever. So I took my son Sam, who was earning 16 dollars a week at the time, from his job and made him my partner. While this reduced my physical work it only increased my mental strain because my expenses were increased and lacking capital my financial situation only worsened.

This situation could continue while Sam was single but as soon as he married he could not continue at such low earnings and he suggested that I take my son Alec to replace him.

Alec was already in his first year in high school and he protested strongly. However, he did join me. But he did not like the business, had no interest in it and didn't do well for me. I did not blame him. There was no future in it for him.

The next one I took in the business was my youngest son Willie. He and Alec worked together for awhile but when Alec left it was too much for Willie alone because he was too

young. So I took as a partner Harry Teitelman. He worked for me for wages for four years. I found him to be diligent and trustworthy so I made him a partner and Willie left the business.

By that time the whole butter business had changed. The poor quality butter which had been sold in the stores when I started in the business was no longer sold, partly because they imitated me and partly because of government regulations which were strongly enforced against false and poor quality merchandise. This was a set back to my former popularity and an additional reason against my achieving success.

Nevertheless we managed to cover our expenses for ten years. But then the creamery man from whom I had bought my first tub of butter returned from a financially very successful trip in the western states. He bought a big wholesale butter and egg business and competed with us. Little by little he took our customers away from us. We did not have the capital to withstand this competition. I knew that if I remained in this business I would wind up as a "contemptible" one in my old age. I was 68 years old. I was no longer able to do hard physical work. The effect of many years of hard work had affected my heart so that I suffered severe pain frequently and I could no longer do any physical work at all. I decided to give up business altogether.

At that time a man appeared who bought my half interest in the business for \$500, assumed my obligations and took over accounts due me. So in 1915 I became a retired man. And so in a weak and poor little ship I had sailed the stormy sea of my life and now I could with a tranquil mind look back on my life's struggle and accomplishment and feel that under all the circumstances I had achieved the best that I could have wished to attain.

While the events which I have described are in truth only a small part of my life, even from these events alone it would seem reasonable to expect that by now my grave would be covered with grass or that I would be in an old folks' home or that my children would be poor ignorant workers or charlatans.

But to my great joy it turned out altogether differently. As these words are being written I am in the sixth month of my 73rd year. I live in my own comfortable home where except

for a weak heart I lack nothing needed by a person of my age. I am honored and respected by my children and grandchildren of whom I could be justly proud even if I had been born in a prominent place rather than in a desolate forest somewhere in Lithuania where I was raised to be at most a teacher of Jewish children or a small town rabbi.

So I say again as I reach the last station of my life's journey and as I remember the arduous struggle of my life, I feel a bit like Columbus because I, like he, did not sink under the angry waves of my life's journey before I reached a better shore than I could have wished for.

It is true physically my condition is not the best. My heart condition prevents me from making my present quiet life as interesting as I would wish. It would be good, now that I am free of life's struggle, my mind clear and cheerful, if I could devote myself to organization work, especially as a Jew and socialist, in which areas there is so much to be done that if I could be involved it would be the most interesting time of my whole life.

But since my experience has taught me that there is no perfection in life and since I am an optimist who sees not only the bad side but also the good side, I consider myself lucky for all the good things that are mine as long as I do not have too much pain from my heart and am able to be ambulatory and am not a burden to anyone.

With this I am finished writing my memoirs, which I have finished the 27th of February, 1920. Now I can say with the deepest sincerity the same words as our ancestor Jacob said when he saw his son Joseph in Egypt, "Now, let me die....."

When I had finished writing my memoirs I gave them and a sealed letter to be opened at my death to my oldest son Moses to be put in his safe. In this sealed letter, among other requests, I requested my son Moses in his later years to give the material to his oldest son Leon who would transmit it to the next senior Rubin who would transmit it to those who would follow carrying the Rubin name. I thought I would never again see this material.

However, several months before August 30, 1920, the date of our 50th wedding anniversary, our children began to talk seriously about a special celebration for our golden anniversary. So I very naturally began to think about adding to my memoirs a report of this event because I felt that it would be a reward for me and my wife for all the troubles which we had experienced in those 50 years.

In the month of July plans were being made by our children to hold a very big affair. I began to think about the happenings of those 50 years since we were a young bride and groom and I rejoiced in the nachas over the fact that we had survived to be honored and respected by ten successful children and their spouses and their children. I rejoiced thinking about receiving congratulations from relatives and friends who would come to celebrate with us on this great joyous occasion.

But, and what a frightful but, on the 31st of July my dearly beloved son Moses made a mistake in operating his automobile while hurriedly returning to his family from an Atlantic City trip and the automobile turned over pinning him and crushing him beneath it. Our good, healthy, lively, cheery Moses was no more.

To my great pain and tragedy and to the pain and tragedy of Moses' wife and children, instead of greeting family and friends on the 30th of August at our Golden Wedding celebration we all were assembled on the 2nd of August at Moses' funeral.

Oh, what a frightful reversal, what a frightful happening for me. Waiting to live to receive a reward for all the troubles of our whole lives, but instead we lived to receive such a heavy stroke of tragedy that it exceeded all the blows which we had suffered our entire lives. Instead of ending these memoirs with joy and happiness I must end them with tragedy and tears.

The greatest wonder is that my weak heart survived this tragedy. Today as I write this it is the 14th day of December and physically I feel as well as I did six months ago when this tragedy occurred.

The End

Typewritten in Yiddish by F. Tenenbaum,
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Sunday, March 25, 1973 - translation completed
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NOTES

1. (page 3) The books were of various kinds because the students were at various levels of knowledge. The bundles were bundles containing food, enough food to last for a week because their homes were too far away to go back and forth each day. They went home only on Friday for the Sabbath. So for the whole week they ate and slept in the school which in this case was our home.

The food was usually a half a loaf of rye bread, a jug of sour milk mixed with sour cream, a couple of herrings, a few potatoes, some cereal grain and similar items. Cooking for the students was, of course, done by my mother.

There were bundles of clothes, not uniforms such as were worn by students in the Russian schools. The clothing of a five or six year old Jewish pupil in Lithuania consisted of a long shirt of coarse home woven linen, a piece of string served as a belt, and on top of the shirt the four corners, a piece of cloth with an opening for the head and which hung from the shoulders and to which fringes were attached at each of the four corners. On the shorn head with its side curls went a little hat which was not removed even when sleeping. And there was a long robe or housecoat which was worn when it was too cold for just the shirt or when we went to the town. And this garment was also used as a blanket when sleeping.

As for shoes, if the student had them that was very good. If he didn't he managed without.

Older students who were already studying the five books of Moses wore a combination consisting of a pair of pants and a shirt which was so arranged that the two ends, front and back, were exposed. Still older students who were already studying Talmud wore knee pants. These three types of costumes were seen in our school where I received the foundation of my Jewishness and my humanity.

2. (page 3) I must point out that this description of my first school was typical of the schools in the towns and villages but that the yeshivas were quite different.

3. (page 5) This beating was not because the Jewish teachers were depraved characters but because beating and berating the pupils was the practice among all teachers. That was considered the proper way to raise children.

In this area the Jewish teacher was worse off than the Christian on two counts. If the child did not behave properly at home the mother complained that the teacher was not being a proper guide. If the child's progress in his studies did not satisfy the father when he did his weekly testing on the child's weekend visit, then the father would blame the teacher. It is no wonder the teacher overreacted and acted like the worst kind of tyrant.

4. (page 10) The Hebrew Tehom Shabbas means a distance of 2000 ells which observant Jews are not permitted to exceed on the Sabbath when walking out of town. This distance, however, could be lengthened by a legal fiction, by a placing at the end of the first 2000 ells a piece of bread or some article of food. This legal fiction was termed Erub. This is a very brief description and if you think you now know all about it you are in error. A very long intricate section of the Talmud is devoted to this and it demands a very good mind to understand it.

5. (page 11) Such crude shoes were made of twisted pieces of bark peeled from young trees and looked like they were made of leather thongs.

6. (page 11) These were instruments on long poles used to insert or withdraw bread or the clay pots from the deep ovens.

7. (page 11) This is a thing which is not pleasant for me to describe but since I promised to be honest in my writing I must tell you about it. It would be wise if you were to

hold your nose while reading about it. I feel like doing that very thing now even though this picture from my memory is 60 years old. In short this was a receptacle something like a washtub in which all slops were put during the day and in cold weather urine during the night. In the morning it was emptied because morning prayers could not be recited near the receptacle.

8. (page 12) A long thin wooden splinter used for lighting.

9. (page 12) Every Jew was required to pray three times daily and also to study something every day. This was done in the school, the Bes Medrash. Where there was no school it was done at home. But where there was a Bes Medrash it was considered more meritorious to do it there. An employed person really had to devote an hour or two to study and a person who had more time was expected to spend all his available free time in study. Those who were sufficiently knowledgeable would study Talmud. Those less knowledgeable would study other texts. Those lower in knowledge were expected to recite Psalms. Those who had no free time during the week did it on the Sabbath and on the Holidays.

10. There is no note 10.

11. (page 15) According to the Jewish religion one was not permitted to eat without first washing the hands which meant pouring a full glass of water over each hand three times and reciting a blessing while drying the hands. The first thing done when sitting at the table was to take a piece of bread, dip it in salt and recite the appropriate blessing. After eating a long grace was recited.

12. (page 15) No Yeshiva student was addressed by his name. He was addressed according to the town from which he came, i.e. Vilner, Kovner, as we would say New Yorker. Among themselves the students followed the same practice except when two students came from the same town or were brothers in which case the proper name was used. But the hosts who provided eating days and others would always address the student as Yeshiva Bochur (Yeshiva student).

13. (page 16) I have already remarked that on the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur holidays the villagers would not use the congregational facilities in their neighborhoods but would take the whole family to the nearest town.

14. (page 18) This was the area where the main synagogue stood and in Lithuania it was known as the synagogue court. Usually in that area there were several schools and also the residences of the rabbis, the heads of the schools, and the teachers. It was in that area that the head of my intended school lived.

15. (page 19) According to our present concepts I must admit that this was a belittling and ugly form of begging. But in those days it was the fashion and fashion as you know makes every crazy idea acceptable and makes even the ugly appear attractive. We see that today wherever one turns.

16. (page 22) I have wandered a bit but I could not refrain from doing this when I think of this terrible war, the most frightful known to mankind. I had to relieve my overburdened heart on this lifeless paper. If the heavy feeling I carry in my heart could be distilled into a liquid it would be enough to poison all those who have brought this horrible tragedy upon us and I would not begrudge giving it to them.

17. (page 23) When a Yeshiva student studied he rocked and chanted aloud the words which he read in the Talmud and then immediately chanted the Yiddish translation of these words. If two students studied together, which was usually the case, they made motions with their hands and a special motion with their thumbs. They seemed to feel that without this chanting, rocking and hand and thumb motion they would not get the lessons into their heads.

When two or three students got into a discussion about a passage in the Talmud then there was bedlam. They jumped up and down, ran back and forth, and insulted each other. "You are an ignoramus. You are thick headed. You have the brain of a peasant." It appeared that they were ready to kill each other. But in truth they really loved each other while they were carrying on in this manner.

18. (page 24) I have previously explained that the Yeshiva students slept on the benches. But there had to be a system in this matter. Otherwise there would be confusion and arguments because the benches varied in quality of their desirability, some being more comfortable than others.

When a student found an empty bench he took it and thereby established his claim to it. The senior students naturally established their claims on the more desirable benches. Even in this matter there was exploitation. Those students who were comparatively better off financially could buy from a poor student who needed money for food his better claim for only a few kopeks. For instance, I was considered better off because my parents used to send me packages of cheese, fruit, rolls and some spending money. So in time I was able to acquire one of the best claims.

19. (page 24) This word "crease" demands an explanation from which generations to follow may learn something. Today it is generally thought that the present generation is smarter and more practical than former generations. But you will soon see that the opposite is really true. Today the size of the garment is adjusted to the size of the child. As the child grows in stature the garment becomes too small and even though it is not yet worn out it must be discarded.

However when I was a child the situation was reversed. The child's garment was made so that even if he grew in size it would be usable for at least three years. The hat which was too large was lined with paper. The boots which were too large were filled with straw, which was also used to protect against cold. The pants being too wide did not concern anyone. As to the pants being too long, that certainly didn't bother anyone as they were stuck into the leggings of boots.

The biggest problem was with the coat but in this instance the solution was to make the coat two or three inches longer than necessary and use the extra inches as a hem or cuff. As the child grew and the coat became too short the hem was used to lengthen the coat. This hem was called the crease. The fact that the lengthened coat showed didn't worry any of us at all.

20. (page 25) If you really want to know what an observant Jew may eat without the ritual washing of the hands, pouring water three times on each hand from a vessel free of cracks, I suggest that you consult the Shulhan Aruch, the collection of laws and regulations governing the life of an Orthodox Jew.

21. (page 26) The talk of the students about the match was actually true and the rabbi's daughter is my present wife who was two years younger than I. Today it seems hard to believe that matches were arranged for children only 10 or 12 years old but it was a normal thing for Jews in those days even though the marriage took place several years later. However, when I did marry at age 18 it was to someone else, my first wife who died after only four years of marriage after which I married my present wife.

22. (page 27) In addition to each student acquiring a name which referred to his town, e.g. New Yorker, the student also acquired a nickname. For example, my buddy was short and fat and so he was called Pumpkin. I was shy and was called Little Calf. The well known Philadelphia teacher Seftelson being very short was called Little Mite. These nicknames were used when there was some friction or unpleasantness between the students.

23. (page 30) This type of school was established by Czar Nicholas I solely for Jewish children to train them to be teachers and non-Orthodox rabbis, government rabbis. There were two schools, one in Vilna and one in Zitomer.

25. (page 31) Rebecca was the name of the rabbi's daughter and he wanted to arrange a match between us. She is my present wife. At that time, however, my thoughts were elsewhere. I was fantasizing about being in the Rabbiner School wearing a uniform with brass buttons and eventually marrying a huge dowry. As for Rebecca, at that time we used to tease each other like cats. I would pull her braids and she would call me Little Calf.

26. (page 31) The term Baal Hagula actually means an expressman, a teamster, but the term really means a bit more than that and I think I should describe what the Baal Hagula of those days really was.

The Baal Hagula was a drunkard and a boor just as the teamster of today but there was a big difference in the total picture. The size of a Baal Hagula's drink was not less than a half pint and if the tavern keeper did not fill the glass to the brim the Baal Hagula would not take the glass in his hand until the tavern keeper poured those last few drops into the glass to fill it to the brim. Then and only then did the Baal Hagula carefully lift the glass, in order not to spill a drop, to his mouth and at the instant the glass touched his lips he quickly bent his head backwards, so that his mouth was turned heavenward, and he took the entire glassful into his mouth at one sip. Then he held the drink in his closed mouth a few seconds and then swallowed it all in one gulp.

How skillfully and gracefully this was done was quite remarkable and impressive. That was called a genuine Baal Hagula drink. To have one of these every hour was not considered too much.

A sober Baal Hagula was never seen except perhaps on Yom Kippur but even then he was easily identified by his face and general appearance.

Now that you've had a description of his personality I'll tell you about his teams and the place where his work was done. The teams were either two or four horse teams and the horses were half dead. The wagons were large and deep and on the upper half were large half hoops over which canvas was thrown for protection against rain. First the wagon was loaded with trunks and sacks and I really mean packed in the full sense of the word. A Baal Hagula who would refuse a passenger because his wagon was full was a rare one, as with our present street cars.

There was no order of sitting. The passengers just arranged themselves on the trunks and sacks, sitting like Turks, with feet crossed under them. For a passenger who found a smooth trunk or a soft sack it wasn't too bad, but if the trunk had sharp points or if the passenger was squeezed against another it had to be endured.

Often it happened that young men and women, total strangers, were so closely packed together that they wished the trip would be extended even though the trip was like the suffering of a dead sinner in his grave.

There was no use complaining to the Baal Hagula because he would pour forth such a stream of curses and insults and foul language, in which he was an expert, that the passengers would want to run for shelter somewhere. Even after the body of the wagon was filled to capacity additional passengers were put on boards sticking out of the sides and end of the wagon.

Now if you are wondering how a pair of half starved horses could pull such a load of baggage and passengers through sandy and muddy roads then surely you will wonder even more when I tell you that the more passengers there were the better it was for the Baal Hagula and the horses.

At the start of the trip from the city all the passengers were seated and the Baal Hagula was well fortified with a couple of drinks and sitting on his coach box. The well rested horses responded to the snap of the whip and the wagon rolled along the hard surfaced road at a good clip. However, when it reached the first hill or the first stretch of muddy road the Baal Hagula jumped off his coachman's box and yelled, "Now all of you, get off and take a little walk." We all obeyed. First because we dreaded hearing his foul language and secondly because it was more comfortable to walk than to ride.

The difficulty however was that we were so piled together and our feet had become so numb that it took time to get untangled and down on the ground. Our impatient Baal Hagula would then let loose a tirade on us just as he would on the horses when their pace did not satisfy him.

When we finally got down on the ground and got our blood circulating and our muscles relieved of their cramps we would have been happy just to continue walking alongside the wagon provided we had shoes without holes. But, alas, it was not that simple. We had to help push the wagon up the hill or through the mud. And when we were going down hill, since there were no brakes, we had to help in holding back the wagon from knocking the horses down.

So the trip was a series of dismounting and mounting the wagon. This was so much trouble that those young passengers who were physically able to do so walked most of the way while their baggage rode in the wagon. The Baal Hagula was very kindly disposed toward these people and used to invite them to sit on his coachman's box and occasionally even let them drive the horses. Many passengers would

strenuously exert themselves in order to get into the good graces of the Baal Hagula. So now you can understand why it was better for the Baal Hagula and the horses if there were more passengers. In short, more passengers meant more money for the Baal Hagula and more help for the horses in pushing the wagon.

27. (page 33) I think it would be worthwhile for me to give a description of the Polish revolution since I lived through it and it may have some historic value.

This revolution against Russia which began in 1862 was a revolution of nearly all the Poles in whom the spirit of revolution burned fiercely but it was not an organized revolution. It was rather a guerilla war. A few well known Polish leaders recruited a couple of hundred followers from the masses, most of whom were idle fellows and drunkards. They had a few rusty rifles. They hid deep in the woods where they received food, whisky and clothes from the local landlords. There they drank and sat waiting for help from France.

From time to time a few of these heroes would leave the woods singing their national hymns in wild abandon and would go to the Jewish tavern acting as if they were laying siege to Russia and they would get very drunk, of course without paying. Then they would go into a Jewish village stealing chickens and whatever they could carry with and ordering the Jewish villagers and the nearby farmers to be sure to send food to their encampment in the woods, warning them not to disclose any of this to the Russian soldiers and accompanying all this with threats of fire and killing if not obeyed. In fact they did carry out their threats against several villages in our neighborhood and after these forays they went back to the woods.

It frequently happened that on the same day that the rebels had been in the villages the Russian soldiers and cossacks would arrive asking about the rebels. They accompanied their questions with blows with the flat side of their bayonets.

You can well understand the unfortunate situation of the villagers. They were between two fires. To speak was at the risk of their lives and not to speak was at the risk of their freedom. The Jews suffered most in these situations because both the soldiers and the rebels abused them more than the peasants.

The Jews of course feared the Polish rebels more than the Russian soldiers because their lives were closely bound up with the Poles. The Jews lived in the midst of the Poles and did business with them. Among the Poles were many well known to the Jews. Furthermore, the Polish landlord of the Jews was usually also a rebel. The main work of the Russian soldiers was to go from village to village, from court to court, seeking rebels. But instead of finding rebels the soldiers seemed more intent on finding in the courts of the Polish landlords the whiskey, the chickens and the sheep on which they gorged and got drunk.

Seldom did the Russians find any rebels but in the few cases when they did they did not even fire a shot, they just took them captive without any resistance on the part of the rebels. If the soldiers discovered a rebel hideout in the woods they rarely found any rebels because the rebels had already gone deeper into the woods which extended for miles. The rebels were thoroughly familiar with these areas while the Russian soldiers were not so there was no pursuit. The Russians were content with the one or two rebels whom they might occasionally capture.

There were a few areas where the rebels had a few well organized regiments and they would go out in open battle, but it was like a combat between a fly and a lion. The biggest effort of the government was spying, finding those who were involved in the rebellion and filling the jails with them and then sending them to Siberia or hanging or shooting them.

The hanging and shooting was usually reserved for those who had held office in the Russian Army or government and this usually took place in Vilna where the tyrant Miraviev was governor. Even today I cannot quite forgive myself for the wildness which made me go nearly every day to see the public executions.

28. (page 34) The word Hazerin means repeat. It meant constantly to restudy that which had been studied in order not to forget what had been learned and this, you can understand, had no end. Even if you had gone over a lesson twenty times and you knew it by heart you still had to repeat it. While study alone was considered the greatest mitzvah or commandment my father was very strict about it. When I came home between semesters and my father saw me going out or riding

about too much he used to say, "Well, you smart student of mine, have you forgotten who you are and how much of my hard earned money you are costing me? Get back to your studies at one."

It made no difference to him that the house was full of peasants and guests, that half the table was covered with the bellies and intestines of sheep and calves, I had to get a big Gemara [volume of the Talmud] from the bookcase and sit at that very same table where I had learned the alphabet and I had to sway and chant from the text. With one eye I looked at the text and with the other eye I watched my father. As soon as I saw him leave the house I would put the Gemara back in the closet and I would go outdoors. I found a way to cope with my mother.

My greatest trouble was on the Sabbath. As soon as my father rose from his afternoon nap he sat down to read Psalms or some other book which he understood and I was then, of course, forced to sit beside him studying Gemara and did not dare to leave for a moment.

29. (page 38) As for my parents, I was not sure that everything would be satisfactory because it had all been previously arranged. As for me, I knew the girl and I had no objection to her. Even if I or the girl had an objection it would have made no difference. In these matters neither the girl nor the boy had any authority.

30. (page 39) I have purposely mentioned the bath in order to describe it so that you may have some idea about how absurdly people lived. And this was not in the wilds of Africa or in America before the time of Columbus. It was in civilized Europe not too many years ago, and perhaps even now, in Lithuania and Poland.

In those places people could do without a meal, without decent clothes, without separate sleeping quarters, without fresh air in their houses, even without toilets in the large cities, but everyone just simply had to have a steam bath, a Shvitz Bad, at least once a week.

The baths in the larger towns were bearable. The one thing worth mentioning about these baths was the steaming of the clothes, because not only did one go to the bath to cleanse the body but also to rid the clothes of vermin. Under the ceiling of these baths there were racks, or the patrons brought long sticks, on which the clothes were hung. The heat at the ceiling area was so great that the little creatures were roasted, and if one carelessly walked under these hanging clothes one felt that one was under a shower of hail.

Mainly it would be worthwhile to describe the baths of the peasants and Jews who lived in the small villages. A building of sorts was thrown together in the middle of a field, in order to protect the village against fire, and made of crooked logs which appeared at a distance to look like a large trunk. There was no roof because rooves were made of straw which was too easily combustible. There was merely a ceiling of wood and boards which were covered with a lot of earth in order to keep the heat from escaping. There was a hole about one foot square covered with a pane of glass and this was the only window. A larger hole through which a man could barely squeeze was the door made of boards which turned on a pole.

In one corner near the door was a large pile of stones over a hole filled with wood which was burned to heat the stones until they were red hot. Since there was no chimney the bath became filled with so much smoke one could barely breathe. Outside, near the bath house, was a large hole filled with water. Inside the bath house there were two wash tubs, usually made of casks, which were filled with water from the hole outside the bath. One tub was for cold water, the other was for hot water, which was made by placing hot stones in it.

When everything was ready, that is when the water was hot and the stones were red hot and making steam, as many people as possible sat around the tubs washing themselves. The steam reached the ceiling causing the earth to fall down together with the hot drops of water from the snow melting on the earth above. Some bathers were on the benches of varying heights and others were rubbing and beating them with bunches of leaves and those being rubbed and beaten felt like they were experiencing a taste of paradise. There was constant shouting of, "What joy, what pleasure, have mercy, more steam." After 15 or 20 minutes of this there was a running outside and jumping into the pool of water. In the winter time they rolled themselves in snow. Then back

into the bath house for more rubbing and beating, sighing with pleasure; then running outside for the plunge, doing it about three or four times one after another. This was considered one of the greatest pleasures which a Litvak or a Russian could experience. It was in such a bath that I was counting the money which I had stolen from my father.

31. (page 47) Here I should explain this work so that you can understand that I really earned my three rubles per week. Most of the profit in this business and in all of Russia came from the stealing from the government revenue department and this stealing was done by both the distiller and the jobber. The main effort in this affair was to fool the government inspector who would inspect the contents of the warehouse and the books in order to assess the tax. The warehouse usually had twice as much whiskey as the inspector was able to see and the books were arranged to support this deception.

This deceptive operation was known as "keeping the warehouse in order." My boss and I did this work together. Since the greatest risk in this operation was when the whiskey arrived or left the warehouse this was done at night. The work of taking the whiskey out at night was so hard that it is almost impossible for me to describe it. It was worse than the cruel penal labor in Russia of those days which was child's play compared to this nocturnal whiskey removal.

The delivery of this whiskey involved a trip of 26 viersts to the city. The job took place in the late evening when we felt the risk of meeting the government inspector was lowest. I usually planned to arrive in the city between 1 AM and 2 AM when the city slept. Rain, mud, snow, cold, darkness and icy, slippery conditions did not deter this nocturnal operation. I was alone on these trips. It was bad enough if there were no accidents of any kind but when for some reason the wagon broke down I alone had to make the repairs in the cold and in the darkness of night.

Once when I was half way to the city a wheel came off and I had to wait until nearly daylight until some peasants came along and helped me to replace the wheel and I had to return to the warehouse because it would have been too risky to make the delivery in the city in daylight. Whenever the trip was made without incident the return trip was quick. On my return I immediately donned my Tallis and Tefillin and quickly said my morning prayers, caught two or three hours of sleep and then back to the work.

32. (page 86) A Nicholevski soldier was a soldier in the time of the tyrant Nicholas I. The term of service was 25

years. Jewish children of only eight or ten were taken for this service, kidnapped with intension of forced conversion. The actual start of their 25 year stretch began when they reached 21. In return for this service they received the greatest privileges, one being that they could live in parts of Russia which were forbidden to other Jews.

33. (page 126) Here I have arrived at a point where I must mention a matter of great heartache. Today, when I remember how much money I lost, how much time I lost, how much of a possible rich career I lost, all because of a foolish ideal, I can look back on it with good humor, but when I recall that on account of this foolish ideal I lost a sweet and lovely child it is heart breaking. It happened in the following way. Whenever I let the cows out of the barn one of my two daughters (Rose was 15, Sarah was 13) would watch them. One day when Sarah was on that job the cows suddenly ran off to a field of corn where they had previously strayed. This field was more than a mile from the town. Poor little Sarah, knowing how irate the farmer would be even if only one ear of corn was taken and fearing also my wrath, ran after the cows with all the strength she could muster.

As soon as I heard about it I ran after them as quickly as I could. Finally I caught up with them and found Sarah tearful and with her last strength and completely out of breath trying to get the cows out of the field of corn. When she finally got home her pain was so intense we called the Rosenhayn doctor who said her heart had been severely damaged. From that time on her condition worsened, she suffered great pain, and after two years of suffering she drew her last breath.

We were then living in Philadelphia. At that time I thought I would go out of my mind with grief and heartache and pangs of conscience. I must have been made of iron to survive this tragedy. Even now after the passage of twenty years I remember vividly and in great sorrow an incident when she was momentarily free of pain sitting at a window on a bright sunny day and wistfully looking at the life going on in the street, when she said these heartrending words, "Yes, it is a beautiful world and soon I must leave it. Oh God, why is my fate so tragic? Why should my fate be worse than the other ten children in my family?" Whenever I recall these tragic words of hers, and thinking I was somewhat responsible for her early death, my heart is torn in pieces. I cannot forget this and I shall not forget it until my last breath.

