ZECHOR YEMOS OLAM

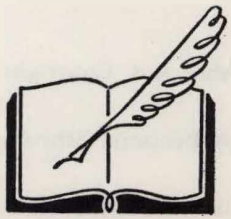
(REMEMBER THE EARLY DAYS)

זכור ימות עולם

בינו שנות דור ודור

Incorporating Stories of
Jewish Life, Customs and Folklore
with many illustrations

BY BENJAMIN SCHREIBER



Digitized by Project Zikaron
Touro University-NY Libraries
www.zikaron.tourolib.org
2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In its original form, this book was translated by Dr. Paul Forchheimer. It has undergone much condensation and rewriting and appears in its present form thanks to my lovely cousin, Miss Marti Kanner, and my son Julius Schreiber, proofreader.

Gratefully, B.S.

Published and Copyright 1969

By Benjamin Schreiber

155 W. 81st St., New York, N.Y. 10024

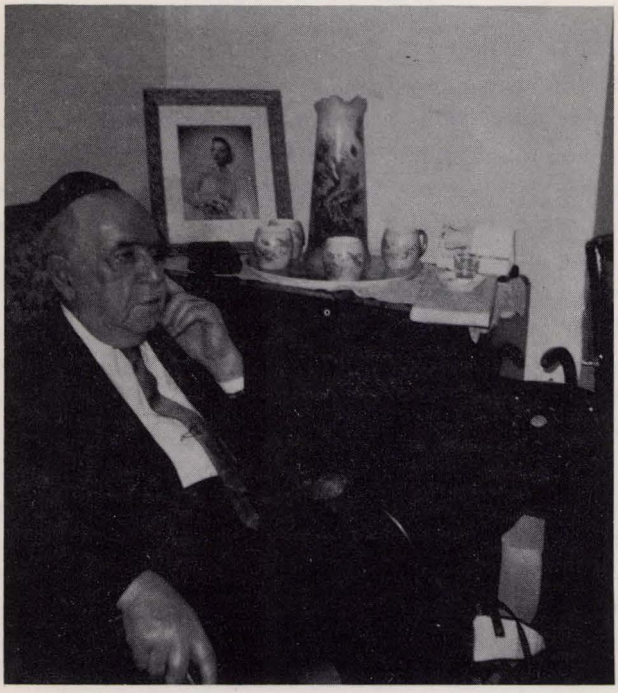
By Benjamin Schreiber

V'HIGAD'TA (English)	1951
KSOV ZOS ZIKARON (Hebrew)	1957
GENEALOGY of the HOFBAUER FAMILY (English)	1962
BASS PLONI LEPLONI (English)	1966

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of my blessed father-in-law, the well known merchant, Bernhard Hofbauer, founder of a famous department store in Vienna which employed over two hundred people and which was closed Saturdays.

Both the Hofbauer and Schreiber families came from Pressburg and were related through previous marriages. As a nine year old boy, I was once taken along to a wedding at the home of the Hofbauer's and was placed as is usual, at the table for the children, across from the petite daughter of the house, Cecilie. On the table was a great bowl with magnificent fruits. We children ate little of them and found more pleasure in employing them as ball for play. Unfortunately, one of my apple-missiles missed its target and struck Cecilie. Crying, she hurried to her father to accuse me of the misdeed. To my extreme horror I saw Mr. Hofbauer, his daughter in his hand, approaching our table. Distorting his voice, the usual genial old man asked for the culprit, who was duly pointed out. Oh was I frightened! But, to my unspeakable astonishment, he patted my cheek and said with mock severity: "As punishment, this dreadful boy must become my son-in-law".



The Author, Mr. Benjamin Schreiber

UNFORGETTABLE DEAR CECILIE ע"ה

Today December 8, marks the day of our wedding, since which sixty years have passed. If it had not been G-d's will to take you from me through cruel death, today would have been our happy "Diamond Wedding Day". Now, however, I must live it all in my mind with sorrow and a broken heart. I will exchange this day's euphemistic title, and call it, "Black-Chupah-Day".

"But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."(Daniel 12:13)

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
	INTRODUCTION	11
1	ROSH HASHANAH IN OUR SHUL	13
2	A TRIP TO THE TZADIK	27
3	A VISION ON KOL NIDREI NIGHT	45
4	SUKKOT	59
5	PASSOVER	79
6	SEDER CUSTOMS	97
7	A SURPRISE AT THE SEDER OF MY TEACHER	109
8	RABBI ISAAC OF KALLO	115
9	BLOOD ACCUSATIONS	121
10	SHAVUOT	149
11	IN THE SPAS OF BOHEMIA	169

INTRODUCTION

Praised be the Almighty for his grace in giving me the strength to publish this book. For this introduction, I have chosen the topic of Rosh-Hashanah Holidays, which celebrate the birthday of the world. May it be a good omen for the birthday of this book.

It is not my purpose to write of my own exploits in this book, but to commit to writing the stories that have lain dormant in my brain with such a lethargic sleep, that I no longer know whose spiritual children they are.

I have called this book "ZECHOR YEMOS OLAM", (Remember the Early Days), because these words of the Torah impose a duty of remembering by-gone times, of extracting their educational elements and writing them down.

Many of the records of the development of the world have come down to us by the holy wise men or by word of mouth, and it is up to us to delve into them more deeply.

To clarify this idea, I would like to give the example of the moving "Piyut" "UNSANE TOKEF". This liturgical poem is generally considered to be a prayer and is recited with great fervor. Actually, it is only a martyr's bequest for a sin committed in the past; it is but the confession of a penitent.

To avoid the possiblity of this book becoming dull, I have added some legends, memories from my youth, children's literature and folk tales.

ונמצא חן ושכל טוב בעיני אלקים ואדם

1

ROSH HASHANAH IN OUR SHUL

As I am setting out to describe my memories of our little shul in Vamia, my hometown in Hungary, I am overwhelmed by all the magnificent scenes that come to life again in my mind. The first thing in our shul that caught the visitor's attention was the poroches, the curtain in front of the Aron Hakodesh (Holy Ark), which occupied the central place, facing the entrance. The shul owned quite a number of such curtains, but whichever one happened to be in use at the time was apt to dominate the first impression. With it's decorations of awesome beauty it contributed to the overall dignity of this house of prayer. Texts, unpretentiously embroidered somewhere on the poroches, usually referred to a sad motive which had prompted some person or family to donate it; however, more obvious at first sight were the rich gold and silver embroideries in their combination with glittering coloured stones and fine, lustrous metal scales, artistically sewn on and blended in with the embroidery.

I was especially attracted by an old poroches of dark blue brocade which was set aside for holiday use. It was beautifully embroidered with an oriental pomegranate pattern. Its top was covered by an overhanging lambrequin of the same material and colour, embroi-

dered with a golden "Magen David" (Star of David). The lower rim ended in rich golden fringes. (The lambrequin is also called "kapores".) This particular set of poroches and kapores was the donation of the "kotsin" (rich man) ר' שמואל בן ניסן in memory of his late parents, whose names and dates of death had been nicely embroidered thereupon. The centre part of the poroches was formed by a rectangle of velvet. A lion, portrayed in rich gold embroidery, bared it's great white teeth, with a tongue of red cloth realistically hanging out of it's mouth. In it's paw it held the tablets of the Law under a beautifully worked crown, symbolizing the crown of Torah.

I also remember with awe the white poroches that was put up for "Maskir Neshomos" (Memorial Prayers). My heart was trembling whenever I approached it to kiss it. Often I stood in front of it for some length of time. reading once more the short, but touching text embroidered on it in silk. It conveyed the fact that this poroches had been made from the wedding dress of a girl named "Taube" ("Dove"), the daughter of Reb Menashe and his wife Miriam. The girl who died shortly before the day set for her marriage was barely eighteen years old and was sick only for a short time. Then her bridegroom, the Dayan Reb Chayim, had the poroches made in her memory. The poroches itself was of white silk, and in the centre it had a white dove embroidered on it, with a broken red rose in it's beak. In all it's simplicity it could capture completely one's attention and keep one's mind occupied for a long while.

Our institutions were, of course, strictly orthodox. The shul was built so as to face due east, toward the Holy Land, the Holy City, and more specifically toward the place of the Holy Temple. Again, everything in town, at least in our minds, was oriented towards this shul as it's nucleus. That there were shuls in other countries, e.g. in Persia, which actually face west (because they are located to the east of Jerusalem) was incomprehensible to me.

The Bimah (reading desk) was in the centre of the shul, as required by Jewish Law, so that all could hear the reading of the Torah equally well. This way no one spot was privileged and no distinction was made between rich and poor. We learn this rule



The Vamia Synagogue

which was burnt during the Second World War.

from the revelation on Mount Sinai, where the people had gathered all around the mountain. Similarly, nowadays, when the Holy Scroll of the Torah is lifted up after the reading ("hagbaah") as is done by the Ashkenazim, or before reading as is done by Sephardic Jews, everybody should be able to see the script when reciting "vezos Hatorah", i.e. "And this is the Torah. . ."

When donations were announced on the Sabbath in connection with the individual "misheberach" prayers ("Shnodern" from Hebr. shenodar, i.e. "that he vows"), the monetary units were transalated into Hebrew after a fashion, so as not to break the uniformity of the text. In this manner the introduction of the vernacular into the service as was practiced in reformed congregations was also avoided. The old guilders (from 'gold') had been correctly rendered by Hebrew 'Zahav'. Later the florin was introduced as official money. The 'Florins', from the City of Florence, derived from Latin "flos, floris' (flower) was transalated with 'Peruchim' (flowers). This coin, in turn, was replaced by the 'Crown' as a new unit. 'Crown' was transalated literally as "kesser". In many German congrega tions the unit "Mark", reminding of "Markt" (market), was transalated as 'Shuk' (market). Other names for currencies were 'Pag', the Hebrew initials of Prutoh Gedouloh, the Large unit, while 'Peshutoh' (plain, simple) stood for the smaller unit. 'Rat' was formed from German Reichsthaler and is still used by the Shearith Israel Congregation in Baltimore, Md., as well as 'Zal' which is abbreviated from the Hebrew "Zelem" meaning a cross, which appears on the coin.

The top of the Aron Hakodesh was framed by a cornice. Two carefully carved amphoras were placed near the two ends of the moulding. Further inside, there were two ferocious looking lions, which seemingly protected the Ark. On Hoshanah Rabbah these lions served as the target for the children who, in accordance with an age-old custom, threw the used "Hoshanos" (willow twigs) on top of the Ark. Apparently, however, the grim lions were not well informed of the ultimate aim of this procedure. Meanwhile, because they were made the temporary aim for this avalanche of greens, they seemed rather offended, and their faces looked even grimmer to the

little boys who would dare to feed them a vegetarian diet. It is reported that in a reformed synagogue similar lions which held the Tablets of the Law in their paws were placed on top of the Ark. Presently, this gave rise to a popular rumour which maintained that the only ones upholding the Law in that congregation were the lions on the Ark.

ROSH HASHANAH AT HOME

On the Eve of Rosh Hashanah our Synagogue presented to the eye an appearance similar to that of Yom Kippur. The color white dominated everything. The curtain in front of the Holy Ark and the covering of the readers table were of gleaming white satin, as were the materials of the women's headkerchiefs and the men's cravats. After the short, impressive evening service, everyone shook hands wishing one another a Happy New Year, with great seriousness.

We left Shul in an elated mood to have our festive meal, a meal where every dish enhanced the essence of that day. The symbolic value of any foodstuff was taken into account. Not only were sour dishes avoided, but event the desserts were not to contain dark fillings, such as poppy seeds or chocolate. Any food containing nuts was likewise avoided. On the other hand, the eating of the head of a fish was considered a doubly good symbol, since we wished to be at the head, during the New Year, rather than at the rear. Fish, again, multiply freely and, not having any eye lids, always keep their eyes open. Thus, G-d's blessing would increase the number of our children, and would increase our spiritual and material assets, and would help us keep our eyes open. Pike, however, though a delicious fish, was avoided because it ravenously eats little fishes. Barbels, on the other hand, were preferred because their German name (Barbe) sounds somewhat like "Erbarmen" (mercy).

Some people eat mutton, to emphasize the ram that took Isaac's place on the altar. The most widely spread custom concerning

Rosh Hashanah dishes, after the eating of a sweet apple with honey, is probably that of eating carrots. In some regions, such as the German-speaking part of Moravia, these roots were called 'Möhren'. This name reminds one of the German verb 'Mehren' (to increase). Along with the eating of carrots there developed a short prayer: "May our merits increase!". In other parts of the German speaking area carrots are called 'Gelbe Rüben' (yellow turnips). 'Rüben' reminds one of the Hebrew word for increase 'Ribui'. The 'Shulhan Arukh' mentions the custom of eating rubio, a kind of legume. German speaking Jews later applied this to turnips, which have a similar name in their language. If cut vertically the sliced carrots look like coins, another symbol for material progress. Many prepare all dishes with plenty of sugar, a sweet dish being symbolic of the wish for sweet in the year to come. Some eat the lungs, because this meat is light and easy to digest, and one would like the coming year to be just that. Others, again, eat honey in-the-comb. Honey, of course, is a symbol for sweetness. In-the-comb it is crude, and the Hebrew word for crude or raw is the same as the word for alive: "chai". On the negative side, at least one authority suggests the avoidance of veal on Rosh Hashanah, so as to avoid all reference to the sin of the golden calf.

The challahs, which are festive loaves of white bread, were decorated with a replica of a ladder, to suggest that the soul would ascend to heaven, after a happy verdict. In Western Russia a hand which was open to receive a clean bill of health was formed on the challahs. Others, again, decorated the challahs with wreaths or even baked them round, to signify that the new year must make its cycle without any disagreable interruption. Some even applied decorations in the shape of wings in the hope that the Almighty would protect them under His wings. As children, we used to slip notes under the challahs secretly. These notes were in Hebrew cursive script, but formed German words, and they extended good wishes to our parents and grandparents.

On Rosh Hashanah's second night a special problem is posed by the benediction called **shehecheyonu**, which is recited on every joyous occasion such as the eating of the new fruit of the current

season, or on the donning of new clothes, and on every new holiday. As the two days of Rosh Hashanah are legally considered but one extended day, the recitation of this benediction on the second night is debatable; Still, the universal practice is to recite it, but it is customary to provide an additional occasion for reading the **shehecheyonu**. Thus, on the second evening a new fruit, in many cases white grapes, is placed before the cantor and the head of the house when they pronounce the kiddush. A similar procedure is followed by the housewife lighting her candles. Then, when reciting the '**shehecheyonu**'. each person refers mentally to the fruit as well as the new holiday occasion. Similarly, Reb Yaakov used to wear a new garment on the second day for the blowing of the shofar, thus absolving himself of any doubt by combining into one his **Shehecheyonu** for both happy events.

It may be interesting to note that in some arid countries the **Shehecheyonu** blessing is pronounced when the rain falls, after a period of prolonged drought. In Egypt, where the rise of the Nile has the same importance as rain in other regions, it was greeted with **Shehecheyonu.** (When the locks of the dams were opened there, **Tachanun** was omitted, as on other festive days.)

In our shul everything remained the same year after year. The same people were honoured with conducting the prayers. The fact that they became increasingly older was hardly noticed by anyone. Their voices and even their tunes gradually deteriorated by their progressive aging, but no change of personnel resulted. The men were worthy, liked and appreciated by all. Everybody was used to their styles and no one would have wanted a change. Thus, time almost seemed to stand still. Similarly, the same men one of whom was Reb Yaakov, were called up to the Torah year after year. The supplementary reading from the prophets was awarded to the same childless gentleman every year. This particular passage related how Hannah, Elimelech's barren wife, finally was blessed with a son. It was a consolation for the man who read it, as well as a source of hope, for unfortunately his wife had died. Later he remarried a younger woman, an orphan girl. Soon the couple was blessed with a daughter who indeed was named Hannah.

I shall never forget how deep an impression the blowing of the shofar made on my young mind. Even today, after many, many years have elapsed, I can still see the august Rabbi Gasser ascending the platform. The venerable Rabbi, who held a large 'mahzor' in front of him, then placed himself at the right of the shofar blower, Reb Yaakov. There, one by one he read off the sounds to be blown. (Because we read in Zacharaiah 3:1, ". . .the Satan (disturber) was standing at his right side to disturb him", it became customary for a scholar to stand on the right of the shofar blower to maintain order.)

Before the blowing of the Shofar, the Rabbi mounted the pulpit in order to address the congregation in preparation for the solemn moment. First he explained that there is a difference in the wording of the commandments concerning the special holiday sacrifices. For all other holidays we are ordered "vehikravtem" (and you shall offer), whereas the wording for Rosh Hashanah is "vaasisem" (and you shall make). The point of using this expression on Rosh Hashanah is to urge ourselves to become unblemished sacrifices, by means of complete repentence.

The Rabbi paused and after a deep breath, continued his sermon. He cited the seeming contradiction in the Book of Genesis, between the one verse containing G-d's promise to Abraham, that only Isaac's children shall be considered the True desendants of Abraham and the other verse in which G-d commands Abraham to offer as a human sacrifice, his only and beloved, still yet childless son, Isaac.

The Rabbi, as had other Commentators before him, explained, that G-d never intended to let Abraham go through with this sacrifice. It was a test of Abraham's unquestioning devotion. Another important lesson was directed at the pagan world, that the then prevailing cult of human sacrifices was an abomination and that animals were the only sacrifices acceptable by the One and Only True G-d. For this reason a ram was prepared in the bushes, for Abraham.

The shul was filled to capacity. Even the girls were there to listen to the shofar. (The only other time that they attended was on Purim,



The Cantor of the Synagogue Blowing the Shofar (Ram's Horn)

to hear the reading of the Scroll of Esther). As they were not satisfied with mere listening, the women, who also wanted to watch, carefully opened the white curtains that separated the women's gallery from the main part of the shul. (Their heads were adorned with white lace, as the wearing of hats on that day was considered ostentatious and out of place.) However, as the Rabbi, did not tolerate the open curtains, the curtains were closed again, for one must not look into the face of the one who blows the shofar, just as one must not look at the Priests when they pronounce the Blessing of the Kohanim. In some places it is customary for the women to turn away from a view of the shofar blower. Similarly, in some congregations, the congregants turn away from Kohanim when they "duchen". The rendering of this blessing is popularly called, for the "duchen" (late Hebrew) on which the Kohanim stand.

Once Reb Yaakov had taken his position on the platform and had blown the first series, he remained there conscientiously until the end of the services. He would not even move to escort the Torah Scrolls when they were being returned to the Holy Ark, but he stood there in utter humility, mindful of Rabbi Levi's admonition that the functionary should be humble, just as the shofar is bent, instead of being straight and proud.

To Reb Yaakov's left stood our cantor, Reb Shmuel, whose well-groomed, long beard gave hime a majestic look. He held the white-cloaked Torah Scroll in his arm with devotion, pressing it to his heart.

The shofar laid in readiness on the lavishly embroidered white cover on the platform desk, secreted under a white cloth. The fact that it was first hidden, added a mystical air for us children, who hardly dared to breathe. The shofar reminded us of the ram that replaced Isaac as a sacrifice offering, a ram which was also hidden at first (Gen. 22:13). A second shofar was kept in reserve, should the first one fail to perform well.

As Reb Yaakov left his regular seat and approached the platform, the children trembled with excitement. Reb Yaakov proceeded as quickly as dignity permitted, for whenever one is about to fulfill a

mitzvah, one does so hurriedly to show eagerness in serving G-d. Reb Yaakov soon reached the wooden platform which, like the altar of the Holy Temple, was in the centre. Even the material of the platform, wood, was chosen with good reason, for when the King read from the Torah in the Temple, he did so from a wooden tribune. Similarly, a wooden platform is mentioned in this connection in the Book of Ezra.

When Reb Yaakov was ready, his features took on the appearance of a faithful shepherd recalling the sheep that had erred and were lost. Now the struggle against Satan was being launched, for we knew that the shofar was our traditional weapon for this action. The supernatural power of the shofar was such, we knew, could be relied upon for ultimate victory. After all, was it not the shofar of Joshua which had effected the collapse of Jericho's walls? Had not all mountains trembled from the sound of the shofar when the Almighty revealed Himself to the Children of Israel? Tradition tells how twenty-two thousand angels descended with G-d from Mount Sinai to quiet Israel. Gideon confused a whole Midianite camp by the sound of a shofar. An excommunication is announced by the sound of a shofar; the shofar is blown to ease a difficult case of childbirth, and the shofar is to announce the advent of the Messiah, and will be used to awaken the dead. Should this mighty shofar not succeed in defeating the Satan who is, after all, tiny enough to hide inside this very shofar? We may then pity the Satan for daring to fight us, when we are armed with this weapon.

With his slender fingers. Reb Yaakov held the shofar in a firm grip. The mouthpiece was at the right corner of his mouth, while the bend faced heavenward. Although he was an expert at his art, he did not blow at will. With devout patience he waited for the Rabbi's directive. When Reb Yaakov placed the shofar at his lips, we saw in his act a bowman aiming his weapon. With every perfectly rendered blast out faces grew brighter. We were celebrating the victory over Satan.

If, on the other hand, the shofar misperformed we became frightened. We visualized a little Satan sitting triumphantly inside

the shofar, firmly planting himself against it's narrow walls and grinning at us derisively. Some experienced blowers would then hold the shofar downward and blow air through it, or shake it out to clear it. Once in our Synagogue, it was necessary to resort to the strongest means to unjam a shofar, namely, having the verse "Vihi Noam. . ." whispered into the wide end of the shofar. On that Rosh Hashanah, however, when Reb Yaakov's shofar failed, we feared for his very life, he looked so ominous. However, the full sound of the shofar suddenly penetrated the air again allowing us to gasp with relief. Reb Yaakov, the great hero, had once more defeated a cunning enemy after a hard struggle.

There is little wonder, then, that we turned to the Additional Prayers in full confidence: Had not the Satan been removed?

The Additional Service was the only function which the cantor performed on these days. Even on Yom Kippur he officiated only for this service. Kol Nidrei, P'sukei dezimrah, Shacharit, Mincha and Ne'ilah were recited by worthy laymen who happened to have pleasant voices. After the Mussaf Service on Rosh Hashanah, the shofar was sounded again to complete the prescribed series of one hundred sounds, which were topped off with the long, drawn out "Great Tekiah".

A visiting Rabbi from Poland once suggested that we introduce the custom of reciting "Ledavid Mizmor" after the evening service on Rosh Hashanah. This Psalm serves to express our prayer for sustenance and prosperity. The suggestion was accepted, and a gentleman who had moved to our town from Poland recently, volunteered to recite this Psalm. He did so in such a booming voice that it provoked some criticism. He retorted sarcastically that the native members did not find it necessary to recite this prayer for maintenance so earnestly, as they all had sizeable bank accounts.

After the Minchah Service everybody, men and women, young and old, went down to the little river for the "tashlich" prayer. During the entire year we used to fish in that river, but we abstained during the month of Elul. On Rosh Hashanah, as we stood at the waterfront, we asked G-d to thrust our sins into the deep, there to be forgotten forever.

For symbolic reasons we prefer a river or other water where there are fish. This had led to a misinterpretation by ignorant people: Using the Hebrew word "tashlich" (throw), the performance of the ceremony was termed "tashlich machen", but this reminds of the German word for pocket, especially in it's colloquial diminutive form. This then gave rise to the practice of shaking one's clothes at "tashlich". From a cabbalistic viewpoint, this is symbolic of shedding one's cloak of desire that smothers the inner man. Consequently the less learned would fill their pockets with crumbs, which pockets were turned inside out to feed the fish. Actually this practice is a violation of the sanctity of the day, as it is only permissible to feed one's own animals on the Sabbath or Yomtov. But this mistake found even further support in another fact: Tashlich is postponed if the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, just as is the blowing of the shofar and, on Sukkot the taking of the Lulob. The mistaken notion developed that just as the shofar and lulob are not used on the Sabbath to prevent the transgression involved in their transport, so too tashlich is postponed because no crumbs may be carried on Shabbat. However, the only correct reason for this omission of Tashlich is that tashlich belongs to that category of prayers called "techinnot" (supplications), which are omitted on Shabbat in most congregations. To further establish the mistake, people noticed that a "eruv", which permitted carrying on Shabbat was in evidence in cities that did recite tashlich on Shabbat. In truth, tashlich does not have anything to do with carrying crumbs to the fish.

On Rosh Hashanah we read the section on Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son. The shofar, too, reminds us of this singular act of devotion. Concerning this section, the Midrash tells us that, as part of the temptation, Satan assumed the form of a deep river, to tempt Abraham into non-compliance with the Divine command. The reciting of tashlich on the bank of a river recalls this incident. Another reason for tashlich relates to our asking G-d to multiply our merits and to make us as fertile as the fish. In addition, tashlich has us take notice of how fish are unexpectedly removed from their habitat by an invisible net. This serves as a perennial

reminder that we must be ever ready for the hour of departure. Then again, just as fish always keep their eyes open, so should we have our eyes open toward G-d. Some say tashlich before Rosh Hashanah, the exact day varying. In some places, it is said on the day when the Slichot Prayer 'Shlosh Esre Midot" is recited; in other places it is recited three days before Rosh Hashanah. It can even be said until Hoshanah Rabbah, if need be.

After tashlich it was already dark, and no further learning or praying was possible. This gave us an opportunity to join Mr. X, a much travelled gentleman, who told me many interesting things about foreign countries, and about their Jewish customs or "minhagim". He told me about a locale where Spanish Jews had found refuge and full liberty. Nevertheless, with the expected pride of Spaniards, they were rather reserved about integrating into the local Jewish community. Instead, they erected their own shuls, where Spanish customs were carefully preserved. On Rosh Hashanah, when the time came to blow the shofar, they closed doors and windows with the greatest care "that the holy sounds should not penetrate into the unclean street". They attributed this to an old Spanish tradition, but they had forgotten that in Spain it was a necessary security measure. As marranos they had pretended outwardly that they had been converted to Christianity, but in secret they had practiced the Jewish religion. Suspicious Church authorities had eyes and ears, and the sound of a shofar in the street could have meant the doom of every worshipper.

In Yemen, instead of a ram's horn shofar, that of an ibex is used. These horns are black, about two yards long, and give a frightful sound. Whenever the Shlosh Esre Midot prayer is recited in Yemen, the shofar is sounded, even during seasons other than the High Holidays. Another Yemenite custom has it that the Additional Service is only recited by the cantor, while the congregation merely listens carefully. This procedure was once introduced to Yemen on the authority of Maimonides, as the average Jew was unable to contend with this complex prayer, at that time.

* * * *

2

A TRIP TO THE TZADIK

The dream of my childhood was to come true. My grandfather was going to take me with him for a Yom Kippur with the Rebbe of B... . I was speechless when my grandfather broke the news. The words "Rebbe" and "Tzadik" had referred to imaginary superior beings for me, but now these would become realities.

The preparations for the trip were made with great care. We eagerly began working at it long before the day of departure. Ample provisions had been set aside and made ready. The last night before we were to leave, the excitement and expectation were so great that I could not sleep. The dreams of my childhood had revolved around just such an experience and it was hard to believe, now, that I was really going to see the face of this holy man, that I was actually to meet him in person. I would be able to talk to him. Maybe I would even have a chance to witness and experience some of the great miracles he was said to perform!

After a strenuous trip we reached, in the early morning of the day before Yom Kippur, the town of B.. . In front of the train station there was an extraordinary array of outmoded vehicles. Coaches fit for a museum, cabs weakened by old age, stage coaches,

rack-wagons, innumerable Jewish-owned hackney-coaches for hire, as well as carriages of strange construction drawn by one or two horses, all these could be seen rolling along. Bundles of straw served as seats. Everything on wheels had been mobilized that day to accomodate the crowds of visitors that were arriving to join the Tzadik. As the railway coaches discharged their passengers, the calls of the coachmen and those of the arriving guests swelled to an ocean of noise. As grandfather walked slowly, refusing to push, it was natural that only few carriages remained when we reached the parking area.

Slightly to one side, a strong, good-looking, coachman was still waiting for passengers. His hair was white at the parting, his beard was grey, and his sidelocks were rolled upwards. A velvet skull-cap stuck to the back of his head. From his silver watch chain there dangled a medal that might also have served as a seal. The coachman's high boots were freshly greased. He was unbuckling the horses' corn sacks and putting on the bridles as we approached. Two tefillin bags were lying on the seat next to the coach box. "Very nice," my grandfather said to himself, "he also puts on Rabbeinu Tam's tefillin!"

The coachman was none other than our old friend Yoine whom we had met at an earlier occasion, and whose Polish-Jewish costume was very becoming. The joy of meeting this acquaintance again was great, indeed. My grandfather greeted him with a friendly "sholom aleichem", extended his hand, and asked him whether this was his carriage, and whether it was still available. Yoine countered with an equally friendly "aleichem sholom" and invited my grandfather to get on. In this manner we mounted the squeaky carriage.

Two feeble horses were in the harness. Their overgrown tails hung down to the ground, as Yoine had never docked them. This stemmed from his consideration for the animals. The holy Rebbe had told him to allow the tails to grow naturally, as docking them would deprive the horses of their natural defense against annoying flies. Similarly, our sages have permitted the cutting of the hoofs of animals in some cases, even on the intermediate days of holidays.

My grandfather seemed to enjoy talking to the unsophisticated Yoine. To get the conversation going, he asked him whether he had had breakfast already. Yoine answered him with a smile of surprise: "Sir, you must have noticed that the horses have just finished eating, so how could I have had breakfast already? Or do you think that I don't know that our Holy Torah orders us to wait with our meals until our animals are fed? One verse says: "The righteous have mercy on their animals", and another verse says: "The Lord has mercy upon all His creatures". The Ethiopian Jews have the custom of strewing the roofs and roads with seed for the birds when returning home from the services at the end of Yom Kippur. This too teaches us that even when we are hungry we should first feed the animals. As a matter of fact, our holy Rebbe tells us that consideration for animals leads to love of men. And love of men leads to the love of G-d.

In spite of this speech, my grandfather was sorry that he had taken advantage of Yoine's services before the latter had had a chance to eat breakfast. But Yoine put my grandfather's mind at ease, saying: "Don't feel badly on my account. I had my glassful of 96-proof, and a cup of hot tea. In so far as drink goes, man comes before the animals".

Meanwhile, Yoine kept tightening the reins and smacking his tongue loudly, to make the horses go faster. The carriage was now rolling with considerable noise. The horses soon ended their full gallop and fell into a comfortable trot. Actually we were driving so slowly that I could observe everything, and the impressions clearly remained in my mind. Yoine would not use a whip on the animals, as this could never have met with the approval of the holy Rebbe. Rather, he used a freshly cut willow twig. There still was a long way ahead of us, as the railway station was quite some distance from the town itself. The surrounding countryside was desolate, but a noisy crowd of traffic was heading toward the station. Traffic on this main artery was always heavy both ways. A dusty and heavily loaded rack-wagon was going in the opposite direction. A team of white oxen was harnessed to the yoke and driven by a small Polish farmer boy. His only clothing was a pair

of shorts, made from the coarsest home-made linen fabric, and a short shirt, open at the front. His head was protected by a broad-brimmed straw hat. He was barefoot. It looked as if he had not yet dressed completely, or else was getting ready for bed. This little boy hit the big beasts with the whip so mightily that they threw their necks hither and thither in pain.

A stage-coach, with all its seats taken by chassidim, overtook us with a clanking and rumbling, rolling into town ahead of us. It's rusty wheels rattled miserably, they certainly had not seen grease for a long time. The coach was loaded with baggage to the roof. In this coach the passengers had had an argument with the coachman back at the station, because he had wanted to accept only five passengers, the vehicle's capacity, whereas a group of eight men that insisted on using it. This argument had mingled with another one nearby that involved one group of men who claimed to have reserved a vehicle, and another group that disputed this, claiming they had already reserved the same carriage by calling to the coachman from afar.

On the highway, newly planted trees which marked off small-foot paths on either side of the roadway, also afforded some shade for the many pedestrians. Bearded men in coarse, high boots were marching along in small groups. Their loud talk seemed to fill the entire surroundings, while their long side-locks and **tzitzit** waved in the wind like so many flags. An old Gentile beggar who was sitting on the curb-stone, and operating a barrel organ, had taken on a Jew as a partner to collect alms from the mostly Jewish passers-by. Similarly this Jew, who was not musically gifted, himself depended on the Gentile partner since Jews could not obtain a license for barrel-organs.

Barefoot, shabby-looking young fellows virtually fought for the people's baggage, so that they could make a few cents as porters. Carriage followed carriage in a slow procession, creeping along the congested road into town. Along the streets there was nothing but small, grey, straw-covered bungalows of the poorest type. Stretching out both arms, one could almost touch the houses on both sides. As one stood in the street, one could easily reach up and touch



The Rebbe On His Way To The Spa.

the edges of their roofs. The only question was whether these huts, in early stages of decay, could be called houses at all.

As we rode along, my grandfather asked Yoine to tell us some episodes from the Rebbe's life. He could not have done Yoine a greater favor; Yoine was most happy at every opportunity to tell some stories about the Rebbe. He unbuttoned his coat and pulled out a dried skin which he used as tobacco pouch. From a side pocket he now took a short pipe with a meerschaum head and cleaned it by knocking it against the sole of his shoe. Then, without waiting for a second invitation, he began in his slow and cautious mode of speaking: "I shall tell you a few episodes that happened only recently.

A POOR CHASSID

"A poor chassid in Galicia received information that the holy Rebbe from B... had arrived in Carlsbad, because the water there had medicinal qualities. The chassid pondered how he could raise the travelling expenses to Carlsbad to see the Rebbe, and how he could provide for his family during the time of his absence. His irregular earnings barely met his day-by-day expenses, but it was now vital for him to see the Rebbe. It had to be done as only the Rebbe could bless him and put an end to his extreme poverty. There is a saying that one may have to pawn one's last possession in order to start out anew on the road to wealth. Convinced that a blessing by the Rebbe would right everything, he began to act in accordance with this maxim. He pledged his pillows, his Shabbat candlesticks, and the little silverware he had left for use on Shabbos for a small loan to render possible this essential trip. It was more a pilgrimage than a voyage, as he hiked along the highway, and every now and then a sympathetic coachman gave him a lift.

Two weeks later, weary and half starved, he arrived in Carlsbad. Without even bothering to find a place for the night, he immediately went to the Rebbe's quarters; however, admittance to the Rebbe's

presence was harder to secure than he had imagined. The attendants on duty watched the entrance with great vigilance. Since admittance was only granted by appointment, or for a big tip, our penniless chassid began to think of a way to get in without appointment. He understood that arguing would not get him anywhere; neither were the watchmen impressed by his lamentations. Only one procedure was left: Using sheer force he pushed his way through. He suddenly found himself in the Rebbe's presence.

The Rebbe who sat hunched over a holy book, absorbed in his study, was shocked by the unusual mode of entry. Immediately the attendants came rushing after the intruder to remove him, but the Rebbe quickly grasped the situation, rebuked the attendants and ordered them to leave the man alone. Then, with a warm "sholom aleichem", he greeted our chassid. In his overwhelming gratitude, the chassid stared speechlessly at the Rebbe. An uneasy moment followed, but the Rebbe soon took the chassid's hand, then bade him farewell with the prayer that the Lord might bless him with prosperity.

Once outside the chamber, the poor man suddenly felt dissatisfied. Everything had happened so suddenly! Again he turned toward the door that led to the Rebbe.

At that moment the attendants opened the door wide, and the crowd parted like the waters of the Red Sea. All this was to admit an impressively dressed man to the Rebbe. The chassid inquired who this dignified gentleman was. and was informed that the gentleman was the owner of a large country estate and a steel mill, a millionaire who made his home in the city of W.... The chassid stood petrified. He looked at the beautiful coach that was waiting for the rich man, and again at the attendants. He was at a complete loss. He only could shake his head. He was quite unable to leave the scene of this spectacle. Half an hour had passed. A whole hour passed; and again another half hour. Finally the door opened again, and the rich man slowly stepped outside. The crowd receded politely before him, and he marched out like a king reviewing his "Guard of Honor".

The poor chassid said to himself: "I had to sell my belongings and had to undergo the drudgery of this long trip. My feet are sore from walking so much. I had to suffer many a hardship to come to see the Rebbe, and I left my family in despair. Then the Rebbe, dismissed me after two minutes with only five or six words of blessing. This rich man, on the other hand, arrived in a comfortable coach. The greedy attendants bowed to him, and they immediately led him to the Rebbe's presence. Well", he thought, "I can understand the conduct of the attendants but does the holy Rebbe himself distringuish between the rich and poor?" This was more than he could understand.

Disheartened, he left the scene, but he decided that he would take leave of the Rebbe before returning home, and that he would make use of that occasion to ask the Rebbe for an explanation of his strange conduct. He knew that the way of Rebbes were beyond ordinary comprehension, and that a chassid had to accept everything in full submission and without questioning. However, he was sure that he was entitled to call such a gross injustice to the Rebbe's attention, nevertheless.

On Saturday night, when the time had come to take leave, he stood before the Rebbe trembling and with bowed head. "Rebbe", he said hardly able to talk for excitement, "how did it happen that you dismissed me, a poor man, with a few words in a matter of two minutes, while you saw the rich man for hours? Woe unto me, if even before you, holy Rebbe, not all men are equal!" He wept, bitterly, and the fright, when he realized how freely he had spoken to the holy Rebbe, prevented him from uttering another word. He sobbed quietly.

Then the Rebbe said, "I am glad that you told me so freely of your grievance. Otherwise you would always have thought me guilty of an injustice. But I want to explain it to you:

"That rich man told me of so much of his big dealings, that I could not immediately see how he stood. It took me some time to realize that he was really bankrupt, and in need of blessing. As to you, I could see immediately that you are a very poor man, and that the appropriate thing was to bless you with future

prosperity:"

The chassid looked at the holy Rebbe, full of admiration. He began to leave the Rebbe's chamber reverently walking backward. But before he reached the door, the Rebbe said, "let me teach you something. The Talmud tells us that Rabbi Judah the Prince would honor rich persons. This does not mean that Rabbi Judah the Prince discriminated against the poor in giving preferential treatment to the rich. But he honoured the rich because if G-d gives one wealth, he must have earned it in terms of meritorious deeds. It is evidence of possessing merit before the Lord, that Rabbi Judah the Prince honoured the possessor of wealth."

Listening to this fascinating story, we had hardly noticed that we had entered the town already. We were inclined to go on listening to Yoine, but it was Erev Yom Kippur, and we had arrived at our destination.

My grandfather asked Yoine, how much longer it was until our arrival at our quarters in town. Yoine replied that would take about another half hour. After a few minutes my grandfather asked Yoine about the outcome of the court trial concerning the substituted children. Yoine cleared his throat and started his story:

Most of the Jewish townsmen in Vamia were well-to-do business people. There were, however, also quite a few intellectuals among them, such as talmudic scholars, authors, and journalists. Whereas religious studies played an important part in the life of the Jewish population and were eagerly pursued. Business life in Vamia depended on the fact that the town was close to Vienna, the Capital.

Many of the Slovak women in the town made their living as wet nurses. Some commuted to Vienna, others took infants in board. Once this led to an incident which developed into a famous case:

A mother had given her infant son in board but changed her mind, and came to claim him the next day. The nurse handed her a baby girl. The mother quietly called the mistake to her attention, but the nurse insisted it was no mistake. Consequently the mother started to shout. In spite of this, the Slovak woman firmly maintained that the boy in the house was her own child, while the girl was the child of the visitor. As a matter of fact, the nurse had given

birth recently to a sickly baby girl, but with the help of the midwife she conspired to have the newborn child registered as a boy.

Finally the case was taken to court. Many curious women followed the quarrelling mothers to the judge's office. This rural court room looked completely august. Every seat was filled with attentive spectators, who eagerly waited for the sensational drama to begin; all eyes watched the judge with curiosity and expectation.

The local judge, like most rural officials, was a simple, elderly farmer, of less than medium height. When he entered the room, he put down his black hat and swept back his long hair, the sign of a free man, with a bony hand. He was clean shaven in the traditional Slavic manner. Before sitting down behind his massive desk, he carefully lifted the shiny tails of his greasy black coat. Then he rested his round, fleshy head on his left hand. As he proceeded to concentrate on this extraordinary case as evidenced by his knit brows, his sly eyes wandered all over the courtroom. When absorbed in his thoughts he twiddled a ruler, and every now and then he drummed his pencil on the two copper candlesticks in front of him. The fact that the candles were snuffed out seemed to fit well into the whole scene. Nearby was a heavy Bible, for use in administering oaths.

Embarrassed and nervous, the judge was now playing with his long, greying mustache. The small golden plates in his ears, worn as a talisman against the evil eye, shined. This case was obviously causing him considerable discomfort. Although he would have liked to come up with a judgement like that of King Solomon, he could not think of any solution. His hand kept dropping down heavily on the table top with considerable noise, as he puffed heavily on his meerschaum pipe.

Mattes, the old beadle, stood behind a nearby table of aged oak wood, as he busily assembled volumes of closed files and moved blue folders with documents. He moved slowly and clumsily, humming almost imperceptibly. He understood the predicament of his superior and gazed at him with sympathy, but he, Mattes himself, felt he could save the judge from his predicament.

Jokingly the judge addressed Mattes: "Well, Mattes, what's your opinion of this case"?

"Sir" Mattes replied, "as for myself, I do not know; but my neighbour, Aunt Chajke, could surely give valuable advice".

Aunt Chajke, as all the people called her, was as bright as the day. Everybody in town agreed to that. She spent all of her time reading her Jewish books of wisdom, it was said that she even mastered the "small letters", but the meaning of this last statement was not even understood by Mattes, as he readily would have admitted. Aunt Chajke, it was true, told everybody the moralizing stories she had heard from her late husband. As for her husband, many in town said that he had been a holy man, a cabbalist perhaps. Mattes suggested that one of Aunt Chajke's books might contain a lesson that could be applied to the present case.

The judge was inclined to ask for the Aunt's advice. He sent Hajduk (police officer) Walek to ask her to come to his office, so that they could discuss the matter. The old lady, who felt honored when she learned of Walek's mission, promised to make an appearance in court within an hour's time. First, she had to complete her daily reading in Tsenna Urena, a Judeo-German rabbinic anthology which was popular among women; and she wanted to search for an analogous case in the literature, she said.

With visible impatience the judge learned of her answer. He repeatedly looked at the clock on the wall. To pass time, he asked Mattes to tell one of the many stories he had heard from the Aunt; however there was no need to repeat this request as Mattes was always ready to oblige with a story:

"Once upon a time, a rich Jewish merchant had to travel to a distant land. He packed a box with money, precious stones, gold, and silver, and entrusted it to the young servant who was to accompany him. This servant, the son of a maid, was born in his own house. When still a boy, he had become an orphan, and then the master had taken complete charge of his education.

It was difficult for the merchant to part with his dear wife and his son, who was still a tender youth, for the man was embarking on what he knew would be a long and dangerous voyage. Down

at the pier the family parted movingly, with tears sparkling in their eyes.

Soon the boat weighed anchor and sailed onto the high seas. The ship encountered several storms on the ocean. The sequences of terror and anxiety affected the delicate health of the merchant who fell gravely ill. As his health worsened from day to day, the ship's physician advised him to disembark at the next port of call. When that harbor was finally reached, the man had fallen into unconsciousness. In this condition he was carried to the house of the Parnes (President of the Jewish community) for the Parnes was in the center of communal life and his house was the first stop for all visiting strangers. The local community took to him all problems that did not require a rabbinical decision.

"At the Parnes' house the servant posed as the son of the distinguished guest, thinking of the likelihood of his master's non-recovery.

"The merchant, indeed, soon died, and was buried by the local community with great honors. Although the Parnes was somehow suspicious, the local authorities accepted the servant as the legitimate heir and handed him the box containing the riches of his late master. With this capital the servant founded a firm of his own, assuming the name of his master's son. Gradually he acquired great wealth and also gained influence with the civil authorities. The Parnes, however, never quite trusted the newcomer whose occasional strange conduct served to strengthen this suspicion.

"Meanwhile, the son of the merchant had grown to manhood but his life was overshadowed with the disappearance of his father who had left on a business trip and had never returned. Consequently the young man decided to hire a ship and to sail into every port in the world, if necessary, to learn about his father's fate. In this way he also came to the port city where the cunning servant had set up his business. Making the rounds of the city he also entered the business house of the usurper. He immediately recognized him, without, however, being recognized himself. In a matter of minutes the son grasped the whole situation. His next stop was at the house of the Parnes, where he sought advice and help. He

was quite surprised when he learned that this man was an old friend of his father's, and that his father had died in this house.

"It gave him some satisfaction to know that his father at least had not spent his last hours among strangers. After visiting his father's place of rest, he wanted to confront the servant with his claim. Should the servant not return everything willingly the young man would go to court. The Parnes, however, told him that there was no point in asking the court for help. The judges were all open to bribery, and the usurper was a man of wealth and influence in town. The Caliph, however, was known for his sense of justice. If necessary, he should turn to the Caliph directly. This just ruler was 'one of the thirty-six righteous men in the world' who appear in every generation among the nations to justify their continuous existence.

"The Caliph who was extremely conscientious in enforcing right and justice in his country listened to the story of the young stranger with great attention and sympathy. As the case concerned Jews, however, he delegated the judicial powers to the rabbi of the community, as was the established custom.

"This rabbi was none other but the famous Gaon Saadya, a man of extraordinary intelligence and learning. The Caliph himself had installed him as supreme judge of the great Jewish court and had invested him with the full authority of a civil judge.

"As soon as Rabbi Saadya had heard the story of the young man, he started proceedings. The Parnes was also called in as a witness. After both parties had been questioned by the associate judges, Rabbi Saadya asked the Parnes whether he could tell of any particular characteristics, or skills of the deceased. After a moment of reflection the parnes said that he remembered him to have been an outstanding marksman with the bow and arrow. Rabbi Saadya then asked whether anyone had a picture of the deceased. The real son, who always carried one with him, handed it to the rabbi, who now sent the court attendant for a bow. The picture was affixed to the wall. Then Rabbi Saadya addressed the parties as follows:

"It is a well-known phenomenon that the characteristics of the father are often inherited by the children. We shall have recourse to this experience to help us in this difficult case. Let us see now which one of you two shows the skill of a marksman. You will aim at the picture of the deceased which you see affixed to the wall."

"The servant, being the son's senior, was given the first chance. As an expert with the bow, he bent it without the slightest hesitation and aimed at the portrait calmly. The arrow landed with precision in the center of the picture. Certain of his victory he handed the bow to the young stranger. When the rabbi indicated that it was his turn now to show his own skill, he refused with indignation to aim at the likeness of his father. Immediately, Rabbi Saadya announced: "By the respect this young man shows for the portrait he has clearly proven that he is that man's son."

"The usurper, however, refused to accept this decision as final. The wise rabbi agreed to apply a second test. He sent the court-attendant to the cemetery to bring a bone from the tomb of the deceased merchant. Soon he returned with such a bone. Next, the rabbi ordered to collect the blood of both claimants in separate dishes. This having been done, he seized the bone and dipped it first into the blood of the one-time servant. Everbody watched attentively. Nothing happened. There was absolutely no change noticeable. Then he repeated the same procedure with the second dish. To everybody's amazement the bone absorbed the blood and turned red. The rabbi explained that the bone of the kinsman absorbed the blood of kinship.

"This experience was more than the perfidious servant could stand. Engulfed in a fit of trembling, he prostrated himself before the rabbi and admitted the truth with complete repentance. The rabbi then advised the young man to leave a small sum with the servant, enough to make a modest living. When the Caliph had learned of this Solomonic judgment, he appointed the wise Rabbi Saadya as his closest personal counsel".

The judge had listened carefully and looked as if he had been trying to commit every word of the story to memory. Now he

watched the clock impatiently, waiting for Aunt Chajke to appear, since Mattes had concluded his story too soon. The silence was embarrassing. The judge had noticed that Mattes had been as eager to tell the story as he, the judge, had been to listen to it.

Presently Chajke entered limping, leaning on a thick cane. Her large spectacles were pushed up on her forhead. Conscious of the fact that she was making an official appearance, she was decked out in her best clothes, and felt very important. On her head she wore her Sabbath bonnet, which was interwoven with gold and which drew attention as it tottered back and forth. Her shawl was trimmed with long fringes. The judge welcomed her politely and invited her to sit down. Returning the greeting in her friendly way she sat down slowly.

Now the judge presented the case to her and asked for her advice. Aunt Chajke was conscious of her official status. First she wiped her glasses, then, quite sure of herself, she declared that she had read in a holy book that the milk of the mother of a boy is heavier that that of the mother of a girl.

The judge had a pair of delicate scales brought in, as well as two cups of equal weight. The he ordered each of the women to fill one cup with her milk. Both these cups were then put on the scales, and one side sank decidedly lower. Aunt Chajke commented: "The woman whose milk is heavier is the mother of the boy. G-d has arranged nature so that the milk for boys is heavier because boys need stronger food."

The judge listened with amazement and appreciation. He thanked Aunt Chajke and escorted her to the door, while the audience applauded loudly.

We finally arrived at our quarters and thanked Yoine for the pleasant ride.

THE BIG BETH HAMIDRASH

In the afternoon we prepared ourselves for the divine service. Far away from the main street, amidst a confusion of narrow

streets, situated higher than all the Jewish houses, stood the schul. It is said that misfortune can very easily happen to the inhabitant of a Jewish house which stands higher than the schul. It is also said that because a house owner's house was higher than the schul, many of his children died. He drove to a Tzadik who told him the following: "You take away G-d's light, so he takes away your light. Therefore, make your house lower." For this reason the house-owner erected a long pole which is similar to a lightning rod, on the roof of the shul. Thus the schul stood higher than all the Jewish houses.

As one approached the synagogue through the narrow streets, the great roof came into view gradually. The massive building had a plain front, as there were no symbols or inscriptions of any kind engraved upon it. The romanesque windows of the shul were protected by iron bars. A handwrought iron gate opened into the outer court. After crossing a wide courtyard, paved with large square bricks, and surrounded by iron fences, one reached the vestibule, called the "polish". There three granite steps led down to the interior.

Next to the entrance of the Beth Hamidrash stood a tremendous barrel filled with water, to which a two-handled tin jar was affixed with an iron chain. Beside the barrel there was a drain over which one could wash one's hands. All this was far removed from the splendor of its prototype-the wash basin in the ancient temple in Jerusalem.

The mikvah was built adjacent to the shul. Prior to Yom Kippur the men went there to achieve a combination of physical and spiritual purity.

After the early afternoon service, some of the men presented themselves in the synagogue courtyard for a lashing. Not that these lashings (**malkos**) were ordered by the court-for our present-day Rabbinic courts do not consider themselves authorized to administer this penalty. But the men presented themselves in the afternoon-which coincides with the time of day true lashings could have been administered for a lashing in quest of forgiveness. The men got down on their knees, facing north, and covered their eyes with their

hands. A tall man with a full beard administered the lashes, using a wide leather belt. This belt was never made of calf-leather, for this might recall to the recipient of the lashes the sin of the golden calf. Thirty-nine stripes were feebly administered, to the count of the verse "VEHU RACHUM....", repeated three times.

This verse dwells on G-d's mercy, in not destroying the sinner, for pain is not the purpose of this lashing, but rather humiliation and repentance, and the men would confess their sins (**Vidui**), and beat their chests at every stripe. After this procedure everybody went home to eat the festive meal, called "S'udah Hamafseket" which was the last to precede the Fast.

It is stated that eating and drinking the day before Yom Kippur has the same merit as fasting. The following may explain this anomaly: We know that the **Anshei Maamad**, the delegates of each town who assembled four times for services, would ordinarily fast; but Sunday they could not fast, because after the rich Sabbath meals, fasting would have been too difficult. Thus perhaps we eat better than usual the day before Yom Kippur to indicate our acceptance of the most rigorous Fast Day.

The confession, called **VIDUI**, as mentioned before, is recited in the Yom Kippur afternoon service (**Minchah**) as well. This is done in recognition of the possibility of someone dying before he has had a chance to repent during the evening service. On Yom Kippur itself, after the silent recitation, this **Vidui** is sung melodically in a manner that hardly seems fitting for penance. It has frequently been suggested that a more supplicatory tune would fit it better, but the reason for the beautiful tune is that we are sure that G-d's mercy will forgive us our sins. We also consider that our sins, often accrue us merit, because doing right after having erred is harder than continuing on the straight and narrow road of righteousness. It is in this spirit that the Falashas dance on Yom Kippur, singing hymns of gratitude.

The synagogue was overflowing. The voices of praying filled the air; devotion to G-d could be sensed all about. The interior of the shul impressed me, for at the approach of Kol Nidrei the shul was densely crowded. Even people that usually demonstrated but

little solidarity with the Jewish community came on this day. Nobody would have thought of excluding them. After all, even the "ketoret" (frank-incense) in the Holy Temple required an admixture of gal-banum, a resin which, by itself, gives a questionable odour. Similarly, it is said that a fastday, which is intended for repentance yet in which no apostates join, is not worthy of being called a fast-day.

Kol Nidrei is even preceeded by a formula ("Biyeshivo shel maloh....) by which a Bet Din of three, including the rabbi, officially permit the congregation to pray together with the "Avaryonim". This word "avaryonim" has various interpretations. Some say that it means repentant sinners. Others take it more technically as referring to the Spanish Marannos who pretended to be Christians, but who came secretly to join in the Jewish services.

The word could also refer to those who had been declared as under a "cherem" (religious ban) for a certain transgression or breach of communal discipline. The excommunicated were not, ordinarily, allowed to enter the synagogue. As they had shown disrespect for Jewish Law, they were not admitted to services all year round. For the one day of Yom Kippur an exception was made, however, Otherwise the cherem was very strictly enforced.

* * * *

3

A VISION ON KOL NIDREI NIGHT

Finally the Tzadik, the seer, who during his very life time had become the subject of legends and myths, was about to enter. The silence in the synagogue became heavy; it was a reverent quiet. I feared that the beating of my heart could be heard and that it would disturb the solemnity. Then I saw his holy face and was totally permeated by a deep calm. The sense of security, which emanated from him, filled me. His bearing was patriarchal, which was enhanced by his silvery, flowing beard - but in the main he was the embodiment of a prince.

A remarkable enthusiasm emanated from the rabbi and engulfed the congregation. Everybody present felt a loss of contact with the mundane world. Each felt free for an attachment to something spiritual, for the rabbi communicated his holy inspiration to everyone. All felt close to G-d. The prayers they were uttering led them ever closer to Him. Radiating from the rabbi's face was a supernatural brightness. He had the reputation of experiencing prophetic visions. People also claimed that he had power to protect them from Hell.

Suddenly, there was agitation, there was pushing and pressing

in the crowd. All eyes turned to the door through which the Tzadik entered. Those nearby began to call "Make way!" as they pressed backwards. The throng parted leaving open a passageway through which the rabbi could pass and the people imagined themselves as the two immovable Red Sea walls through which the Children of Israel had passed. As the Tzadik approached, men were trying to grasp his hand reverently in order to kiss it, for could anyone imagine leaving the Holy Temple after Yom Kippur without touching the hand of the High Priest? However, the Tzadik who was too modest warded off such attempts with a kind smile. Nodding his head right and left, he acknowledged each greeting with dignified friendliness.

The Rebbe was wearing a brand-new chalat of white satin which reached down to his slippers, and which was bordered with silver hooks and silken eyelets. Under it he wore white knickerbockers and white stockings. The chalat was topped with a snow-white tallit. As was his custom, the Rebbe carried a Holy volume. People were always rising for him reverently and he was afraid that these ovations might lead him to haughtiness. For this reason he always carried a Holy Book, so that the honor could be seen as directed to the book's sanctity. The tallit in which he had wrapped himself hung down in long plaits, and was decorated with a wide band of silver. His clothes were held tight by a wide belt with a silver buckle.

The Rebbe prayed differently from us all, as his prayers were rather like dialogues in which he, as the attorney of the Jewish people, pleaded their case before G-d. The Rebbe disputed with Him, whose very name one does not even dare to pronounce! His prayers were like accusations against G-d. With clever arguments he demonstrated the merits of Israel, as he sought to press Israel's claim to mercy. No one doubted that his words ascended straight to Heaven. In the manner of the Holy Berditchever Rebbe, he would call: "G-d Almighty! You have ordered us to eat and to drink on the day before Yom Kippur. I have gone through all streets and alleys of the Jewish neighborhoods yet nowhere did I find a drunken Jew—a formidable tribute to the temperance of Your people. Then how can you be angry with Your people? If



Yom Kippur in the Synagogue

any other people had been ordered to drink, would there have been ten men present for Kol Nidrei?"

This frail figure of the Rebbe showed the results of his frequent fasts. In spite of this his stature was imposing and majestic. His delicate face accentuated his spiritual qualities. It was pale beyond description like ivory perhaps. His gleaming eyes, glowing like fire, enveloped everybody with warmth and benevolence. They were hypnotic, and they shone as if capable of penetrating darkness. Their charm escaped no one. His voice, too, had a supernatural aspect, and a delicate smile surrounded his lips.

Now he went quickly to the Holy Ark, to maintain his custom for this night: He asked forgiveness of the Torah, while embracing the Holy Scrolls with two hands, beneath the multi-colored glow of the Ark's candles.

With a lively gesture the Rebbe now raised a pair of pale hands toward Heaven. Suddenly his look became restless. His eyes wandered among the faces of his devoted in search of someone. His eyes betrayed the anxiety in his heart. All this happened as he was about to give the signal to start the holy services. Now he trembled as if seized with horror. He was invoking his prophetic powers. Finally he became motionless. His features were stony, his eyes were sharply focused. His lips quivered, his voice petrified behind pale lips. A silence set in.

Salke, the shepherd, came into view. With widening eyes the Rebbe stared at Salke. The shepherd had come down from his cabin in the mountains earlier that day. Next to Salke a large memorial light flickered brightly. He had lit it for his pet lamb.

Browned by the sun, with bony hands and with weather-beaten face, Salke stood in front of his seat, a firm passion agleam in his black eyes. He had been crushed and overwhelmed with grief over the murder of his pet. Like a gladiator in the arena, he held in his strong hands the heavy, leather-bound prayer book which he had inherited from his father. He held it like a weapon, like something to throw at the eagle that killed his little lamb. The tragic event was being relived in his imagination, and the picture oppressed his soul.

He could clearly visualize the time on that summer day when a voracious eagle fell upon his herd of sheep, and carried off his little pet lamb. He could still hear the bleating of the lamb's mother, could still see the searching look in her eyes. It all haunted him. The loss had caused him profound grief, and in his memory, he experienced again the sudden, painful moment. He was again reliving that cruel hour, oblivious to the present. His deep emotions were betrayed by the shaking of his robust limbs. Silently, he gesticulated with his hands, and tears slowly rolled down his sun-baked cheeks. His face, however, was immovable and he was not praying. He was silent because the pain was too much to permit words. His eyes, which were opened wide viewed the Tzadik in expectation. In Salke's gaze frear and hope mingled. He had faith that the Tzadik would comfort him. He wanted to bring a suit against the eagle, in which the Rebbe would represent the Almighty.

The Tzadik had been observing him intently. With his gift for sympathy, the Tzadik understood the shepherd's emotions. The Rebbe exchanged looks with Salke. The latter, still standing, let a sigh escape.

A feeling of uneasiness had developed. Expectantly the congregation silently looked at the Rebbe with reverence. Then there came a low murmur questioning the delay in the start of services. Leibele, the cantor, was standing impatiently in front of the reader's lectern, which was right of centre, and on a little lower level than the rest of the synagogue. Inscribed in front of the lectern was the Hebrew verse: "From the depth have I called you, O Lord!" The two candles on the cantorial stand had already burnt low. Nervously, Leibele turned the pages of his oversized prayer book and impatiently peered at the colorfully inscribed verses on the board known as the "shivisi board".

This "shivisi board" was an upright slab painted with cabbalistic symbols and verses. It was done by some gifted yeshivah student, and was really quite artistic. It's motif was established by a seven-branched candelabra, outlined solely by the letters of cleverly arranged quotations from the scriptures. On top, in the centre, there were the Tablets of the Law given at Sinai; next to each tablet there

hovered a cherub, holding a fiery sword. They looked as if they had just descended from the clouds pictured above them. A third angel hovered above these clouds, holding open a copy of a **Code of Law,** the **Shulchan Aruch,** showing on it's front page the quotation: "Shivisi Hashem lenegdi tomid", the verse in **Psalms** 16.8, that urges us to keep the thought of G-d before us always. This should appropriately confront the chazan so as to remind him constantly of his place and responsibility, and for this purpose it was woven into a pleasant work of art. The edges of the drawing were decorated with a pattern that on close inspection revealed peculiar winged animals, the likenesses of angels, pheasants, and some imaginary fauna.

Leibel the cantor began to study the faces of his choir as if he were a general reviewing his men. Then he looked at the clock and shook his head impatiently. His exceptionally long neck jutting out of his tallit, made him reminiscent of a swan, but the gift of an ample throat was not matched by the gift of a good voice. The hour was advancing now; it was becoming dark. Kol Nidrei should be recited while it is still light. A wave of growing impatience went through the synagogue.

Meanwhile the Tzadik had begun to pray with great devotion out of his prayer book, it's pages yellow with age. Next to it, he had opened a memorial booklet which listed the names of martyred brethren to be remembered. He was now reciting the "Av Horachamim" prayer from the memorial booklet. This prayer is devoted to the memory of all those who had suffered a violent death because of their Jewishness. It refers to the men and women who courageously recited psalms while ascending a burning pyre, their deaths being termed a "Kiddush Hashem" a glorification of G-d's Holy Name. Such martyrs are termed "Kedoshim", from the word for sanctity, "Kadosh", and such souls gain immediate entry into Heaven.

In increasing excitement, the Tzadik began to stamp his feet. He slapped his hand onto the open prayer book and then raised the hand with an elaborate gesture toward Heaven. He then turned his face upward. Those nearer caught snatches of his phrases about

"those who died martyrs' deaths", and repeatedly "the holy ones". Suddenly, his facial expression lost it's tension, and his eyes shone noticeably. Serenity was in evidence upon his face. Turning toward Salke, he proclaimed in a comforting voice: "I have rendered it a sacrifice. In virtue of these holy prayers, it is being well-received on the high altar. It is acceptable to the Almighty as a sacrificial animal. It's soul is to receive the same accord as the soul of one who gives up his life sanctifying the glory of G-d."

Perceiving all this, Salke looked gratefully toward Heaven. His face brightened. His lips developed a smile. Contentment beamed forth in his eyes. He mumbled unintellegibly, then cried out in joy. Filled with hope he turned his eyes to the ceiling, intently studying the allegorical representations painted on it. In his imagination he could see the mighty lion tearing the eagle apart. He listened. With his inner ear he heard silvery enchanting music drifting down from Heaven. He listened with ecstatic joy. Now he imagined invisible hands, perhaps of King David, playing the harp. He also heard a sound from the ram's horn pictured on the ceiling. It must be the shofar announcing the coming of the Messiah. These sounds of harp and horn blended into a Kaddish-prayer accompanied by flutes. All the voices fused into one.

Salke turned to the book which he had been clasping and flipped the pages. He opened it to the memorial prayer, and his eyes filled with tears. The Tzadik turned to him and siad: "You have made your peace. The contention in Heaven is ended." He finally gave the long awaited sign to start Kol Nidrei, and the cantor began singing the well-known, sad melody.

It is said that the melody was first intoned by those condemned to death by the Spanish Inquisition. The sang it with their last prayers on the way to the Autodafe. Rabbi Yitzchok of Messina introduced it in Italy after a visit to Spain.

At the time of my own escape from the Nazis, I felt an intense desire to revisit the Schul, where I had been forty years earlier with my grandfather during Kol-Nidrei and where I experienced a mysterious vision.

I did not mind the trouble and the discomfort, because I had

a presentiment that something mysterious would reveal itself. At that time I remembered the "silent" dialogue, which the Rabbi had had with the shepard Salke, the dialogue concerning a little lamb who was murdered by the evil eagle.

With shock I stepped into the schul again. It was totally devastated and nothing was left whole. Even the wooden floor had been used for fire-wood. No even a little spot to sit could be found anywhere. A shiver chilled me as tired, I fell into a corner. A faint-like dream came over me and I started to understand that at that time heaven showed me my future misfortune, the murder of my beloved son by the Nazis.

Melancholy and broken, I left the once-holy spot, which was now profaned and quickly went about my emigration.

THE PRAYERS OF YOM KIPPUR

During the afternoon there was a short break in the services. Nevertheless, an activity was arranged in the adjoining hall to insure that the recess would not be used for anything inappropriate to Yom Kippur. Accordingly a number of men went to the adjoining hall where an elderly scholar, seated in a corner, was giving an instructive talk on the "Piyyutim", the complex poetic additions to the prayers. Undoubtedly, he was confining his discussion to those "Piyyutim" which are recited on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. When I came in, he was explaining the five points of the Kol Nidrei prayer to eager listeners.

PIYYUTIM

Yehuda ben Barsili has preserved for us the reason for the introduction of Piyyutim, as the late poetical additions to our prayers are called. Barsili tells us that during times of religious

persecutions, when the study of the Torah was prohibited, these poetical prayers, which contain allusions to the laws of the Torah, were composed and inserted into the prayers. From these piyyutim the people could recall the laws and requirements of the particular holiday.

KOL NIDREI

Kol Nidrei originated in Babylonia. For this reason it is composed in Aramaic, the vernacular of that locale at the time. Technically, Kol Nidrei is not as much a prayer as a legal declaration. In Roman times it was recited in Hebrew because the Aramaic language was incomprehensible to the masses. Kol Nidrei is now said three times over, because basically it is a formula that dissolves vows. This dissolution requires a triple pronouncement. Two men, usually the Rabbi and another distinguished person stand beside the cantor as he recites Kol Nidrei thus providing the 3 persons required for constituting a religious court.

This formula declares all future vows to be void from the outset. Thus, if one were to make a vow, he could disregard it. Ordinarily, a dissolution after the vow, called "Hatarat Nedarim" would be in order, and customarily such "Hatarat Nedarim" are invoked before Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. In face of this last custom, some authorities, including Rambam and Rabbi Isaac Alfasi opposed the recitation of Kol Nidrei entirely. Rav Hai Gaon, however, did maintain the Kol Nidrei custom, because it was so widely accepted. Consequently, he did away with having "Hatarat Nedarim" performed. In addition, Hai Gaon changed the Kol Nidrei text somewhat, giving it a more prayerful and less legal character.

Kol Nidrei has been the object of various slanders and slights. One common charge is that no Jew's promise is valid, since Kol Nidrei cancels all vows. Of course, there is no basis for this charge since Jewish Law provides for the annulment or dissolution of those vows that concern only the person making the vow, but not

a vow which entails obligations toward another person. The latter can never become void without the consent and indulgence of the other party. Still, a Russian imperial edict of 1857 ordered an addition to the Kol Nidrei formula that would make it clear that no vows which involve an obligation to someone else would be dissolved by Kol Nidrei.

In some communities, such as that of Posen, there was special stress on not wearing a tallit for Kol Nidrei. A questionable reason is recorded for this in Posen. It is said that once departed souls stealthily entered the synagogue on Kol Nidrei night. As everybody had his tallit drawn over his head, as had been the custom on this holy day, no one noticed the irregularity. But suddenly a pushing and shoving took place. The rabbi, uneasy, began to investigate what had happened. Then he shuddered, and began to call out in his sonorous voice: "I order the souls to leave the synagogue immediately." At once there developed enough room for everyone present. Consequently, the wearing of the tallit was done away with in Posen.

UNESANE TOKEF

The following report of how the Unesane Tokef prayer came into being is contained in the "**Shalsheles Hakaboloh**":

Rabbi Amnon of Mayence was both a rich man and a great scholar. He was also held in high esteem at the court of the archbishop, who also was the secular head of the city government. The archbishop had many of his business dealings handled by Rabbi Amnon. One day the archbishop demanded of Rabbi Amnon that he submit to baptism. Rabbi Amnon asked for a respite of three days to think it over, as he was hoping to find some way of dissuading the archbishop from pressing his demand. However, the situation seemed hopeless, and Rabbi Amnon did not report back to the archbishop at the end of the three days. The bishop dispatched officers to bring him in, and the archbishop had Rabbi

Amnon's fingers and toes chopped off. He was then put in a coffin and sent to his home. Rabbi Amnon accepted these tortures unflinchingly.

Rosh Hashanah arrived and the Rabbi's disciples came to greet him. He had a cup of wine handed to him so that he could recite the **kiddush**. With maimed hands he clasped the cup as best he could. Then he asked for sweet apples. He dipped some apple in Honey, and proclaimed: "May it be you will, our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that you renew for us a good and sweet year".

In the morning, the students came again to pray with their teacher at his home. After the morning service, Rabbi Amnon expressed a desire to be brought to the great synagogue for the sounding of the shofar. The students were given explicit orders, and he was placed back into the same coffin, which still contained the severed fingers and toes preserved in salt, and the Rabbi was carried into the synagogue, where he was placed next to the cantor.

When the cantor reached the **kedushoh** prayer, Rabbi Amnon signaled him to stop, and Rabbi Amnon addressed the tense congregation with the following words: "G-d is just! My punishment was well deserved. How could I allow even the shadow of a doubt? I should have refused the request of the archbishop right then and there." The he continued with what is now known as the **Unesane Tokef**, the prayer which introduces the **kedushah** of our Additional Service. When he finished the prayer, he disappeared from before the eyes of the congregation. Three days later he appeared to Rabbi Klonimos ben Rabbi Meshulem in a dream, taught him his **Unesane Tokef**, and ordered him to spread the prayer all over Israel. While this prayer is still confined to the Rosh Hashanah service in the South and West German Jewish rite, many places feature it on Yom Kippur too, and today it is one of the highlights of the High Holiday services.

OLENU

The Olenu prayer, which is said three times a day the entire year, is often treated lightly because of the familiarity, but this is

not the case on Rosh Hashanah, fortunately. Who composed it? Some consider Joshua it's author, but others, including the Kol Bo, credit it to the Men of the Great Assembly. Others, again, date it's origin much later.

One important school would make Rav the author of Olenu. Rav was living in Babylonia. In his day, the heretics were tagged "minim", and this term is the one used for heretics in Olenu. While some later church authorities claimed that "minim" refers to earlier Christians, there were in fact no Christians in Babylonia at that time.

Olenu has often been attacked or censored by the authorities. At times, it's recitation was altogether prohibited, and at times only shortened versions were permitted by the censors. What provoked censorship, inter alia, is the verse that contrasts G-d with idols, ridiculing, of course, the idols. Some over-zealous, unthinking persons developed the habit of spitting during the interval between the mention of the idols and G-d (an interval is prescribed by the Tur Orach Chaim). This spitting is quite unbecoming and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levy notes as much in the Talmud: "He who spits in the House of G-d is spitting in his own eye." The saintly Shaloh ordered a stop to this nonsense, calling it an unqualified prohibition.

Idols are described as "empty", "rik" being the Hebrew. Now, "rik" coincidentally was found to have the same numerical value as the name of Yeshu, and some charged that it was an allusion of Yeshu. Such an interpretation could hardly be valid with Joshua being the author of Olenu.

Olenu was often recited by martyrs on their way to the burning pyres. Thus perhaps it is understandable that it disturbed the conscience of many a brute, who would then demand it's abolition. Toward the end of the fourteenth century, there were agitations in Spain against the recitation of Olenu.

A German edict of 1702 required the cantor to render the Olenu aloud so that an attending official could check for compliance with the censorship requirements. This is the origin of the custom that Olenu is recited aloud and in a solemn manner by the cantor on

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

There are some persons who observe Yom Kippur for two whole days, there being doubt about the exact day of the holiday. They fast and observe all prohibitive laws of Yom Kippur on the second day, but they put on tefillin and must say the weekday prayers. If Yom Kippur falls on a Thursday, they duly observe Thursday and Friday, and on the next day, Shabbat, they do not partake of dishes that had been prepared on Friday.

On the afternoon of Yom Kippur we read from the Torah scroll those passages that deal with the forbidden marriages. The reason for the selection is that on this day it can be done without evoking any improper thoughts. Others suggest that the reason is that at this time even women and the youth are in the synagogue, and that the point is to read this important section for those who are not found in the shul very often. In our town, only the rabbi, the cantor and the shochet would be honoured with the reading of this section, on Yom Kippur afternoon, since the people would know them to be in conformity with the reading. It is interesting to note that a new bride may, for the first thirty days, wash her face on Yom Kippur, so that she pleases her groom, just as she may use make-up on Shabbat for thirty days after the wedding.

The sounding of the shofar at the termination of the Yom Kippur service signals that Yom Kippur has ended, and that one may eat again. It also serves to proclaim victory over Satan's forces. It is not, as many claim a carry-over from the sounding of the shofar at the close of the Yom Kippur on Jubilee years. Obviously, not every year is a Jubilee year. However, some still maintain this explanation, reasoning that now we are in doubt as to which years are the Jubilee years.

The shofar blast intoned for Yom Kippur's end is the **Tekia Gedola** (a single drawn out sound). This is due to the fact that the **Tekia Gedola** had signaled the end of a great event in Jewish history: the revelation at Mount Sinai. Some use the greeting, "gut Yom Tov", on the evening after Yom Kippur. This seems related to the fact that the high priest invited his friends to a celebration, after all had gone well on Yom Kippur. The Mishnah

terms this celebration "Yom Tov".

My travelled grandfather told me about a peculiar custom he had noticed among Turkish Jews. In the midafternoon on Yom Kippur they set an opulent table, in the room adjoining the synagogue. It was full of succulent fruits and various other delicacies. They interrupted the services, and took seats around the table, where they ate nothing, of course, but recited the Psalms.

Other Eastern communities have the following rather striking custom. The women, at one point, interrupt their praying to withdraw to an ante-room. There they take a ready deck of cards out of a drawer, and proceed to spread cards over their open prayer books. This custom serves to commemorate the unfortunate epoch during which the Jews were officially forbidden to assemble for public services. They gathered on Yom Kippur anyway, but when officers of the law came by, they camouflaged the prayer books with playing cards.

* * * *

4

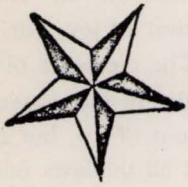
SUKKOT

Yom Kippur had passed, and people who on the High Holy Days had worshipped with their voices in prayer, turned to serving by building huts for the Sukkot holiday. In our literature Sukkot is very fittingly termed the festival of joy. For us children this name was especially appropriate. The pleasures of this festival were many and varied. We were particular in our observance of all laws concerning the Sukkot not only out of joy, but also because we were told that anyone who observed all the laws relating to the Sukkot would be guaranteed year long protection against ghosts.

Sukkot is also called the festival of harvest. To the children this introduced the nut-playing season, and it was through this activity that we related Sukkot to the gathering of fruits. The fun began with the decorating the Sukkoh. We devoted ourselves to this task with fervour and devotion which only children can show. And how proud we were when our efforts were duly recognized! Dark green, fragrant twigs of pines had been carefully arranged on top of the small, square lattice openings, which the framework for the roof effected. At night the pine branches were checked to make sure the stars could be seen through it. Hanging from the framework

were bouquets of flowers, guilded nuts, red apples, grapes and citrons. In the middle, giving prominence to the fruit of Eretz Yisroel, were small bottles filled with flour, honey, wine and oil, in accordance with an old custom.

The walls were covered with bright cloth. Fixed to these were homemade paper chains, stars, and garlands. Outstanding among the other decorations were Magen Davids, or Stars of David, and Magen Solomons (pontagrammes). There were also little flags in the Jewish national colors. Both the Magen David and the Magen Solomon have many mystical interpretations assigned to them. But the Magen David, a hexagramme, is plainly formed by two superimposed triangles and may thus represent a combination of two shields, Magen meaning shield in Hebrew. It may also be a symbol of G-d's double protection for Yisroel, through the Shield of Abraham and the Shield of David. The Magen Solomon, was a precious stone, starlike with five points. Upon it the name of King Solomon was engraved, it was suspended on a golden chain. It served its owner as a seal and emblem.



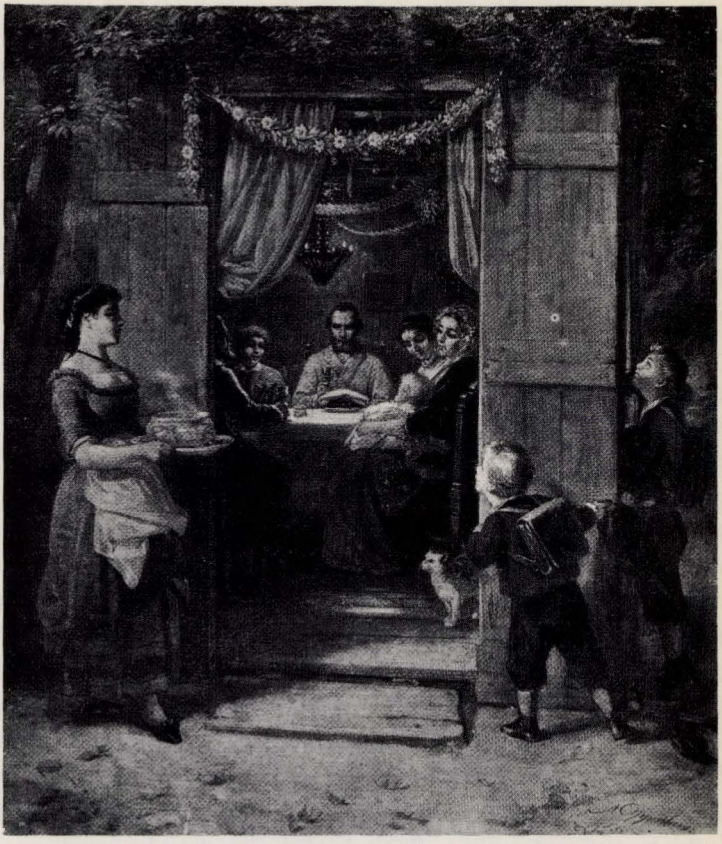
ציור מגן שלמה
Magen Solomon



ציור מגן דוד
Magen David

Then there was a tablet in the Sukkoh with the names of the seven special "guests", called "Ushpisin", after the Aramaic word for guests. This tablet was centrally placed near the entrance. A hollowed-out pumpkin housed the light, its walls having been scraped clean, and a Magen David having been cut out of them. There were some other lanterns, with Hebrew texts attached to them.

Once a completely new kind of decoration appeared. It had been



Eating of the Holiday Meal in the Sukkah

imported by a student from lower Hungary. This was a little paper bird that was suspended from the ceiling. As there was ample space in the Sukkoh, such birds could float back and forth. As I suspect that some of my younger readers may want to make these little wonders, I will disclose here the method of their construction.

Empty egg-shells formed the body. The heads of the birds were modelled out of the wax, for which purpose wax drippings of the Yom Kippur candles were saved. The most essential part of a bird is, of course, it's instrument of flight. For wings we used glazed paper, which we folded into fanlike plaits and glued to either side of the body. Since the creatures had wings, we could well imagine them birds.

Although birds were always part of the Sukkoh decor, I could not understand what birds had to do with the Sukkoh. Then one year, I spent Sukkos with a friend in the town of E..... . I noticed something out of the ordinary in his Sukkoh, which was brightly illuminated and richly decorated. From the top there dangled an onion which had two chicken-wings stuck onto it's sides. It was an unusual decoration! My friend noticed my bewilderment. He then pointed out to me that the ornament stems from a little pun on a verse in the Psalms, which is often quoted in connection with the Sukkoh, and reads: "Ubetsel kenofecho tastirenu", meaning: "And hide us in the shade of your wings". "U-be-tsel" can also be read "u-botsel", meaning 'onion", hence the custom, especially in Alsace, of hanging winged onions in the Sukkoh. Remembering the little birds in the Sukkoh at home, I supposed that I had found the origin to their place in a Sukkoh. Actually, the play on these two words originates in a talmudic comment, "Echol botsel veshev botsel", where the word for onion and the word for shade are alike.

The following custom, mention in the **Agodos Eretz Yisroel**, by Z'ev Wilner, under the title of "Ostrich Eggs in the Synagogue in Safed", may be of interest. Generations ago there was the custom of hanging ostrich eggs from the synagogue ceiling. Rabbi Menachem Mendel, who lived in Safed around the year 5595 (1835), writes as follows about the Safed synagogues: "Among them were also two shuls in which the Holy Ari, of blessed memory, had

prayed. Each maintains the custom of hanging the shell of an ostrich egg from the ceiling." Today one may see eggs placed over the tombs that are holy to both the Jews and the Arabs, such as over the tomb of the Patriarch Jacob, now in the building erected over the Cave of Machpeloh in Hebron.

Rabbi Yaakov of Motsin (Yavets), in the eighteenth century stated as follows concerning the custom of hanging ostrich eggs in places of prayer: "I have heard that the Jews in Turkish lands hang up beautiful eggs in the synagogues in order to arouse people to greater devotion, so that they should not look hither and thither. Ostriches hatch their eggs without doing anything but look at them. From this fact it is obvious what the power of sight can achieve. This consideration is important for prayer."

In some places empty egg shells are hung up in the Sukkoh, and next to them a piece of paper with the inscription: "basukkos teshvu shivas yomim" (you shall dwell in Sukkot seven days) or "konesher yoir kino" (as an eagle arouses his brood). The latter verse would imply in this context that we associate G-d's protection through the Sukkoh, with the way a bird protects it's chicks. We are also reminded of this Divine protection by having the "s'chach" or Sukkoh ceiling, over us. But the egg, as explained by the quotation mentioned above, drives home the message of our week's sojourn in the Sukkoh. Some people however, object to egg-shell decoration because of it's use by others with a non-Jewish theme.

Coming back to the onion, my host told me that there were regions where an onion, spiked with four goose feathers, is hung in the Sukkoh. The onion is said to absorb evil spirits, thereby removing the evil from the atmosphere. He also told me that Syrian and Bukharian Jews enter the Sukkoh without shoes, as they considered it a holy place, or a "mikdosh me'at".

On Erev Sukkot we were given little to eat. The purpose of this was to maintain the appetite for the meal to be eaten that evening in the Sukkoh. The Ramo, Rabbi Moses Isserles, did not eat anything during the afternoon of Erev Sukkot. Many, however, have a divergent view. They say that on Erev Sukkot appetizers should be eaten so as to arouse the appetite for the evening meal. However,

those who expected to sleep in the Sukkoh, would not sleep at all on Erev Sukkot, in order that they may sleep soundly in the Sukkoh.

Hoshanah Rabbah, also called Yom Aravah (Day of Willows), is the seventh day of Sukkos. On this day the people marched jubilantly around the altar while carrying willows during the era of the Holy Temple. In our own day, on the night preceeding this day, usually we stayed awake, in the spacious community Sukkoh. Instead of everybody reading the "Tikkun" individually, as is done in some communities, in ours a Sefer Torah was used and the Reader rendered aloud the whole Book of Deuteronomy. In the community house, which the Sukkoh adjoined, a great bunch of willow twigs was piled up, and everybody picked a bunch for use the next morning. Then some people gave short, interesting talks on Torah topics. Hoshanah Rabbah customs were most often the subject of these talks. One speaker mentioned a custom of kissing the ethrog on that last day before it was put aside. This is to show that we only reluctantly put aside this mitzvoh.

The Cabbalists see in the days before the New Year until Hoshanah Rabbah, a uniform heavenly trial period (see Zohar Lev. 32). Others mark Hoshanah Rabbah as the day of the ratification of the judgement (R. Jehuda de-Chassid, Sefer Chassidim, 1544). From this there arose the belief that a person can see in the night of Hoshanah Rabbah his destiny for the coming year in the shadows of the moonlight. For example, one who is fated to die during the following year will see his shadow without a head. This popular belief is already mentioned by Nachmanides (commentary to Numbers 14.9) who calls the night of Hoshanah Rabbah, "The Night of the Seal". R. Moshe Isserles (Sch. Ar., Or. Ch. 664.1) mentions this popular belief as an ancient tradition, but added that many people are of the opinion that one should avoid such a situation. Instead, the Cabbalistic writer prescribes to stay awake the night of Hoshanah Rabbah and to read in the holy books.

On the long way home from shul on that Hoshanah Rabbah morning our talk touched on the legend concerning the splitting of the Heavens at midnight of Hoshanah Rabbah, and the fulfillment of any wish at that moment. Caucasian Jews believe that at midnight

on Hoshanah Rabbah all rivers cease to flow and that anyone who voices a wish at that moment will see it come true. The basis of such legends is the statement that the judgments are finalized and proclaimed on Hoshanah Rabbah, at the end of the period that is inaugurated with Rosh Hashanah.



Shadow Without A Head

When my host arrived back home, he handed his wife a beautiful bunch of Hoshanot, as if it were a bouquet of roses. Five willows are usually used. This number may correspond to the Five Books of Moses, or may have another cabbalistic significance. Some take seven or more, but never an even number. Thus it has been said: "Being even is always good, except with the Hoshanot".

Beating the floor with the Hoshanot is the final act of their use. This is restricted to five whacks which symbolize the punishment due for any transgressions of the Five Books of the Torah. Thus, when we beat the floor with these twigs, we do not seek to knock

off the leaves, for we want G-d to punish us with indulgence, instead of beating us to the bone. Because the willow symbolizes the lowliest or most ignorant of men, the interpretation, then, is that the lowly are to reprimanded but not totally discarded.

Some, however, interpret the beating of the willow differently. They note that the ancient peoples, such as the Egyptians, worshipped the willow as the goddess of fertility. On Sukkot we pray for rain and we use willow twigs; however, in order to show that there is no connection whatsoever with any idolatrous practice, we beat the twigs on the ground. After the service these twigs are collected and saved for another mitzvoh: that of the baking of matzot. Because an object that has once been used for a mitzvoh may not be slighted, but should be used for another mitzvoh where possible, the dried willow twigs are appropriately used to fire the oven for matzoh baking; or to make the fire in which chametz is burnt before Passover.

On Hoshanah Rabbah morning the services started early. In spite of the early hour the synagogue was filled to the last seat. Candles that had not burnt down on Yom Kippur, and that had been used again the previous night in the community Sukkoh to bind the aravah-bunches, were lit again, now for the last time. The Shulchan Aruch mentions the custom of lighting candles on Hashanah Rabbah as well as on Yom Kippur, because on both days the Divine judgement on the year's rainfall is formulated. The Ark is again adorned with the white curtains of Yom Kippur. The men once more put on their white "kittel's", which we called "sargenes". I thought this word was derived from the word "sarg" for coffin, because these garments are used as shrouds for the dead, but a friend told me that the word is rather derived from the name of a material called "serge", which is "sarge" in Old French. In most places, however, only the cantor wears white on Hashanah Rabbah.

A short break occurred before the recitation of "Hallel". Those who had not yet made their blessing over the Lulov did so, after first having taken off their Tefillin. I remember once seeing a young married man performing the prescribed Lulov movements clumsily. In his case it turned out that the reason for his clumsiness

was not lack of erudition, for I found out later that this man was left-handed. Although in the case of Tefillin he switched his right and left hands, he correctly did not do so for the Lulov, for otherwise collisions would have become inevitable in the synagogue. Thus, the sequence in which we thrust the Lulov toward the four cardinal directions and up and down, is the same for all regardless of whether one is left-handed or not.

The question of which hand a left-handed person should hold the Lulov in for the blessing is undecided. If he has said the blessing while holding the Lulov in the left hand no harm is done, since even with regard to sacrifices, it would not matter which hand is used, except for the Minchah offering. There the use of right hand is expressly prescribed. Anyway, any left-handed Priest was excluded from functioning in the Holy Temple.

I noticed how careful everyone was taking Lulov and Ethrog. First everybody picked up the Ethrog with his left hand, then the Lulov with his right hand. While putting them away, the Lulov was put down first and then the Ethrog. Similarly, if someone handed over his set to somebody else, he put them down first. Otherwise, had he handed them over directly, either he would have handed over the Ethrog first, while still holding on the the Lulov, or else the other party would have taken the Lulav in his hand before taking the Ethrog.

In this particular synagogue, six steps led to the Ark, which was surrounded by four columns. The finely carved double door of the Ark with it's golden grating, was wide open for the event of the day. The Torah-scrolls had been taken out and were being held on the platform by the students who had come home from the yeshivoh for the holiday. The men walked around the platform in solemn procession, holding their Lulavim. the chazan, who marched in front, repeatedly called in a tone of sad supplication: "Hosha-na! Hosha-na!", swinging his body rythmically back and forth.

Several candles were now burning in the otherwise empty Ark. Previously I always had thought that there was a connection between these candles and the verse stating, "Torah is light". However, a friend of mine, maintained that the reason was more prosaic

and of historical origin: He related that once an unknown person entered the synagogue on Hoshanah Rabbah. Seeing all the men taking part in and quite absorbed in their procession and prayer, he made his way to the empty Ark. Protected by the darkness inside, he was able to deposit a large package there. Then the Sexton noticed the stranger and became suspicious. As the man was just about to leave the shul, the Sexton blocked his way and locked the door. Two strong young men grabbed him, while the others checked the Ark. When they found the large package, they opened it, and were horrified to find the corpse of a Gentile child. The constables were notified, and arrested the man. Ever since, lights were burned in the empty Ark.

The popular custom of returning one of seven Torah scrolls to the Ark after each of the seven marches, was observed in this synagogue. Thus, the number of scrolls in use decreased progressively, just as did the number of sacrifices required on each progressive day of the Sukkot holiday. When the service came to a close, and the happy anticipation of a festive breakfast was written all over the faces of the congregants, they quickly and skillfully folded away their Tallit shawls. However, in spite of the rush, each of them would not forego the asking of the other how he liked the looks of the "guests". "But there haven't been any" the other would reply. "Of course", the first fellow would say", "I mean 'Mizmor Le'todah' and 'Lamnatzeach' ". This is a reference to two Psalms that are never recited together in services, close to each other except, on Hoshanah Rabbah.

Then there is this beautiful custom observed by oriental Jews. When they read the Torah and come to the passage which mentions the Ethrog and Lulav, they hold them both in their hands.

At the end of the service we sang "Adon Olam" again, the hymn with which the service had opened. This custom is parallel to that of beginning with Genesis immediately after completing the reading of the whole Torah.

After the shul I glanced at my friend's Ethrog. I was surprised not to see as beautiful a specimen as I had expected of him, for he always prepared to spend what was necessary to fulfill a mitzvah

par excellence. All the technical requisites of an Ethrog could be found on the fruit; it had indentures shaped like rings; its "pitum" (protuberance formed by the stylus of the hypogynous flower) was as prescribed: the shape of the Ethrog was slender; it's stalk-end was properly concave; the 'ukotz' (stalk) also was undamaged. Yet still, all in all, it was not a beautiful Ethrog. He must have noticed my amazement, for on the way home he said: "There are people who, at the Seder, are not very particular with eating the full measure of bitter herb, because this is not taken in public, but in shul, where everybody sees, they must have the biggest, most magnificent Ethrog. I do not care for this mode of conduct".

This made me think of a very good, short anecdote which deals with just that point, however, I do not remember its author. It is said to have happened in a small eastern town. In the said town a pious rabbi lived in great poverty. Although it was rather hard for him to meet the living expenses for his large family, he nevertheless made sure that on Sukkot, the most beautiful Ethrog to be found anywhere in that country would be his own. To be able to buy it he had a special coin bank, and every week he would put one rubel in it. The first day of Selichot he used to open the box and would rejoice with the fifty-odd rubels that had thus been accumulated. He would then spend forty-five rubels for the Ethrog, when not even the richest man would think of paying such a price for an Ethrog. Thus is occurred that he would have the finest Ethrog that money could buy. The remaining seven or so rubels went to Don, the coachman, who took him to town to make his purchase. Don, knew well in advance the day on which the rabbi, abounding with joy, would be making his trip for an Ethrog. Don would arrive uncalled, with his little carriage. In honor of that day he would provide fresh bundles of straw for the carriage to make it more comfortable. However, one year, Don came all by himself without his coach. He asked the rabbi to postpone his trip for one or two days, because his horse was not in good health. As he was taking his leave he even mentioned that he was thinking of becoming a Hebrew teacher should the horse die. (There was a popular saying: "If a coachman loses his horse, he becomes

a Hebrew teacher".)

A few days went by, and Don did not report back to the rabbi. Finally the rabbi went to see him. Don told him the good news that the horse was better, and that on the day after tomorrow, Thursday, they would be able to make the trip.

When that day finally arrived, Don came with his horse, and the rabbi mounted the small carriage ceremoniously. Don climbed quickly on to the turned-over water pail which he used as a seat. For the rabbi he had built a seat from a board, which was not really comfortable because it hurt his back as the carriage shook along the road. Don put his pipe into the side of one of his high boots, grasped the reins, which were but plain ropes, and, with them, he hit the horses gently. Inciting the animal with his continued hoarse calls, he started the carriage which rattled loudly on the freshly metalled road. At first the mare sported a few jumps, but then it failed suddenly as if someone had cut the reins. Consequently the rabbi and Don had to walk. Don led the horse, holding its head-gear, and the rabbi helped by pushing the carriage from behind. When they finally reached the town, they had walked more than they had driven.

As they were just turning into the Jewish street, where the Ethrogim market was, the poor nag suddenly collapsed. It had been dragging itself along with great effort, and now, as if it had been hit by lightning, it fell straight to the ground. Its four legs were up in the air as if pleading for mercy. Its eyes looked skyward. The tongue was hanging out the side of its mouth. Its lean ribs could be counted. Don was crying bitterly as he unharnessed the animal, for the horse had been his bread and butter. The rabbi stood sadly at the scene of the disaster. But suddenly, as if haunted by some horror, he straightened up and left hurriedly. But he did not go to the Ethrogim market. Instead he went to the horse market where, for the forty-five rubels, he bought another horse for Don. From his remaining seven rubels he bought, in the company of Don, a set of Ethrog and Lulav. How the little town was surprised when the rabbi returned at night, holding a Lulav in his right hand and leading the horse with his left hand through the main street!

After the holiday, the rabbi, stroking his white beard, exclaimed: "This year's Ethrog was the most beautiful one ever".

Upon reaching our destination, my host entered his home before me as is the proper Jewish custom for the Head of the house.

He was eagerly greeted by his wife and his aged mother. He handed his wife the Ethrog, Lulav and Hoshanot. However, before placing the Ethrog and its container into the silver closet the wife bit into the Ethrog. This strange custom is said to go back to the traditional opinion held by some rabbis in the Talmud, that the Ethrog was the fruit Eve had offered Adam. This bite by the daughters of Eve is considered as an atonement.

I had to smile inwardly, when I noticed that my host's elderly mother broke off the Ethrog's pitum and swallowed it. The reason for my amusement was that this is normally only done by superstitious expecting mothers hoping to assure the birth of a male offspring.

As an Ethrog easily becomes injured and unusable by damage to the pitum, people say: "The pitum of the Ethrog is the most expensive part, yet the Lulav rates the brachah." There are, however, Ethrogim, the best of which, as a matter of fact, grow without a pitum. These are perfectly kosher as well, for only when there once was a pitum that had been broken off does the Ethrog become unusable.

Neither the name "Ethrog" nor the name "Lulav" occurr in the Torah. Ethrog is Chaldaic for "hadar", while the Lulav is referred to in the Torah as "kapas tomorim", a "hand-loaf of palms". This name has a deep meaning, for the palm tree is a symbol for the righteous man, the tzadik. As a palm tree bears fruit only after seventy years, thus a tzadik receives his real reward only after seventy years, as we read in Tehillim 90: "Our days are seventy years".

After Sukkot, many cook the Ethrog with sugar and honey, thus making a preserve that is refreshing, and medicinal for sick people in winter time. We do not pronounce the "shehecheyonu" over the preserved Ethrog because this blessing had already been recited over it on the first day of Sukkot. Another custom wants

these preserves saved for the fifteenth of Shevat, the New Year of Trees, to add the distinguished Ethrog to the fruits of trees which we enjoy on that day.

For dinner "kreplach" soup was served, as is customary on that day. (The word is derived from an old German word for "claw" and means "bent-over", i.e. folded-over and filled.) My friend tried to account for the introduction of this dish on Hoshanah Rabbah, Purim, and Erev Yom Kippur. Its origin has not been established definitely as yet, but several theories have been formed about it. One has it that these days are not full holidays, on which it would be a mitzvoh to eat meat, consequently the meat is served in an unobtrusive way in the "kreplach". There is also a simpler and more economic explanation. These days fall in seasons when much meat is consumed. The finer cuts or parts are used for the holidays on the main courses. Kreplach, then, are a by-product in which the left-overs are put to good use.

As for "Kreplach" on Purim, some say the Megillah is called, in Hebrew, "igeret", meaning "letter". The folded kreplach with their mince-meat inside reminds us of sealed letters. On Erev Yom Kippur they can, with some imagination, be taken for reproductions of books, while on Hoshanah Rabbah this letter or book shape reminds of a "qvittel", letters of petition. "Kreplach" has caught the public imagination. People that show up wherever there is something to gained, but who cannot be found when there are duties to be performed, are popularly characteriezed by the following saying: "He sits down with us to eat meat-kreplach, but he is missing for the clapping (Megillah) and flogging (kaporot)."

The next day was Shemini Atzeret, and the following day would be Simchat Torah, with its happiness. Thus, a happy mood was clearly discernable even in the serious prayer for rain. It seemed as if this "geshem-bentshen" was aimed against the Ashkenazim (i.e. non-chassidic) Jews who still ate in the Sukkoh that day.

After Minchah an exciting auction was held in shul. All the honours of Simchat Torah were put up for public sale. Among the honours were the privileges of donating wine for Kiddush and havdalah, of donating the candles and oil for illuminating the

shul, and also the right of reciting Pesuke deZimroh on Shabbat morning. In this last case, this right was not excercised by the successful bidder, but was conferred by him on qualified persons of his choice. The highlight of the auction, however, was the sale of tomorrow's cantorship. These special distinctions on Simchat Torah were usually acquired by the rich, who could outbid the poorer competitors, yet at times enterprising young men formed a pool and bid higher than even the rich men were ready to go. They would then honor a deserving scholar of lesser means with this distinction, and would also defray the cost of the customary reception and entertainment.

At times it had been too late by then to make the necessary preparations. In such cases the young people took to raiding the pantries of the rich, especially of those who had entertained hopes of obtaining these honours, and had prepared for them. Their pantries were thoroughly emptied while they were in shul. It even happened once that an unfortunate miser had to buy back his own food. This ransom money was used for the young peoples' Simchat Torah party. There were ample delicacies, such as fried duck filled with chestnuts; "golubzi", a South-Russian dish of filled cabbage; and an abundance of Simchas Torah cakes. Many a man drank beyond his limit. It must have happened that even old people drank too much on Sukkot, for how else could Eli, the High Priest, have taken Hannah for a drunk?

In many places the Priests' Blessing of Simchat Torah is performed during the early morning service, instead of in the usual additional service. In some communities is is omitted altogether. Both customs result from the fear that the Priests might eventually drink and get intoxicated. Since any Priest who imbibes an alcoholic beverage is not allowed to pronounce that blessing, it was considered a wise precaution to change the custom for this one day.

My host began to describe Simchat Torah in Worms. The celebration in former days involved a bonfire in the shul yard, around which the young people would dance. Even the famous Pnei Yehoshua (Rabbi J. Falk), used to take part in this merry-

making, but he ordered that some coffee be warmed on that fire, because a yomtov fire may be made only for the purpose of preparing food. He personally drank some of that coffee.

Some quite singular customs were observed on Simchat Torah. For example, women would enter the main shul to decorate the Torah scrolls. The Sifrei Torah were adorned with veils and women's jewelry, originally a Spanish custom. In Jerusalem, on the other hand, the Sefer Torah is used without a cover in mournful remembrance of the death of Moses, for the death of Moses is read from the Torah that day.

In a Sephardic synagogue I observed an interesting custom. When the person that was called up for the reading returned to his seat, the others called to him: "chazak ve-ematz". When the Sifrei Torah were taken out and returned, the sexton marched along with lit candles. As one must not extinguish candles on yomtov, the sexton placed these candles in the empty Ark during the dancing, and then he took them out again to escort the holy scrolls back.

One of the guest remembered that he had once spent this holiday in Eisenstadt, on of the famous "Sheva Kehillot", the seven communities founded by the Jews that had been expelled from Vienna. They were granted full autonomy by the local counts and had their own Jewish law courts. The Eisenstadt Jewish quarter was closed off with iron chains every Shabbat and Yomtov to keep out all vehicular traffic. These seven communities which always remained in close contact, still have an old custom of eating a peculiar kind of noodle in the soup which was called "rain-worms" (German "Regen-wurm", for earthworm). This custom, of course, alludes to the prayer for rain, and was also known in old Bohemian communities.

I was amazed when I was first told that the custom of calling up a "chasan maftir" is unknown in the Orient. They do have Chasan Torah and Chasan Bereshit. Two close friends or two brothers are selected to symbolize the close connection between the end of the Torah and its beginning. Both "Grooms" are assigned places of honour next to the Ark. The Chasan Torah is

called for by the usher, holding a flaming candle, and led to the platform, and the same is repeated for the Chasan Bereshit. I told these people that in my home town on the night before Simchat Torah young boys of eight to ten years of age were called to the Torah. First a Cohen was honoured with a **hakafah**, then a Levi, and then a Yisrael, in that order. After these, men whose names were Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, David and Shelomoh were honoured.

Simchat Torah is a popular holiday in the true sense of the word, since the people themselves have created this celebration in recent centuries. There is no reference to it in either the Bible or the Talmud. The conclusion of the periodic reading of the Torah always has been an occasion for celebration, but it was not necessarily on that day and in this fashion.

On Isru Chag, the day after the festival, my friend observed his "Yahrzeit", the anniversary of the death of his late father. It used to be customary to fast on that day, but many arranged to have a **Siyum** instead. (A siyum is a party given when a Talmudic tract is completed.) The reason is not only that by partaking of this meal, one is permitted to overcome the fast, but also that the special merit of studying a treatise adds to the merits of the one being memorialized. My friend invited ten people, for the greater part poor scholars who studied Mishnah all day, who told of the good deeds of the departed. The letters that spell the Hebrew word "mishnah" are the same, though in different order, as the letters that spell "neshomah", the Hebrew word for soul. Then at noon my friend offered a rich meal to these gentlemen, for it is an important good deed to be a host to the poor, especially in a dignified manner, and such an act is appropriate for such an occasion. People who could not afford to offer meals at their homes, would bring some honey cake and liquor to the vestry room of the synagogue, so that all those in need could partake. This may be the origin of "tikkun-drinking" which has become a custom among the Chassidim.

At the time of the Gaonim it was a general custom that on the anniversary of the death of a scholar, the rabbi, followed by distin-

guished men of the community, would go to the scholar's grave and would honor him there with an address. The Falashas in Abyssinia arrange a memorial meeting for each departed at least once yearly. They call it "tazkar" (from Hebrew "zechor", to remember). First, prayers are said for the departed, and a special banquet in his honor follows. Only men are admitted to its preparation.

In Bagdhad, kosher inns have been erected near the Jewish cemeteries. In addition to their own meals, mourners have meals served there to the poor. In oriental countries it is also customary to arrange formal meals at the end of the mourning week and the month of mourning. In former times a glass of wine was served to all those returning from a funeral to the house of mourning. In the East Indies a funeral is followed by a special banquet.

In German, I also observed the custom of mourners wearing a tallit, even for minchah, when they came in front of the Ark to recite the **kaddish**. The fact that this custom is restricted to the West and is unknown in eastern countries is probably due to their differences in costume. In the East, where long coats are worn, there is no objection against officiating without a further cover, while the shorter jackets worn in the West are not considered a sufficiently dignified attire. For this reason, probably, a tallit is also worn.

I am told that in Egypt the custom calls for wearing **tallit** and **tefillin** for the afternoon services. Thus, even persons who only come to shul when they have **yahrzeit**, benefit by putting on a **tallit** and **tefillin** once a year at least. The cabbalists of Safed also wear a **tallit** for Minchah. As a matter of fact, the Gaon of Vilna wore his **tallit** all day long.

Before leaving the subject of the diverse customs of the various Jewish communities, I wish to return to the aforementioned practice of the Falashas of slaughtering an animal especially for the meal after a funeral, the slaughtering which is termed **Korban**, or sacrifice. This practice would certainly be condemned by our Sages as constituting "Sacrifices of the Dead," prohibited in that it is a heathen practice. The Greeks, we know, observed this pagan custom

of offering a sacrifice after a burial.

Our Sages took note of the many pagan practices, and prohibited their adoption. One such interesting practice is that of the Aleutians whereby the name of the deceased becomes taboo, and may not be mouthed. Even related names are avoided. Persons with the same or similar names have them changed. In addition, because the Aleutians fear the return of the departed, or the return of his evil spirits, they tie up or enmesh the body of the dead.

Before I left my friend's hospitality, I had to promise him to commit all we had discussed to writing. This I have now done.

* * * *

5

PASSOVER

FIRST SEDER

Looking back, it seems to me that practically our entire year was bound up with Passover. The cycle began in midsummer when the wheat for the Sh'mura Matzot would be cut in the fields on Reb Aaron's estate. Reb Aaron insisted on scrupulous compliance with all the minutae of Jewish law pertinent to these special matzot, particularly that the wheat used in its preparation should be cut before it was fully ripe, to minimize the risk of fermentation, which would have rendered the finished product unfit for Passover use.

On a cloudless summer afternoon Rabbi Gasser would lead a group of yeshiva students out into the fields to cut the wheat. They worked slowly, although their wits had been sharpened by years of Talmudic studies, their scythes were usually on the dull side. When, at last, the task had been done, they brought the wheat to the rabbi's attic, where it was stored under a cover of bags to protect it from moisture. Later, the wheat was ground by hand-mill, with the rabbi watching every step of the way. What was left of the Shmurah flour after the matzot had been baked, along with ordinary matzah flour, was allocated to the poor of the community. Part of the flour was used in the baking of hallah to be distributed among

the poor for Shabbat Ha-Gadol, the Shabbat immediately preceding Passover. In some households the flour would go to prepare the soup dumplings that were eaten on the last Friday night before the holiday. This odd custom was a way of making sure that any hametz which, by some accident, might have developed in that flour should be disposed of before Passover.

Great care was taken that enough matzoth should be baked before Passover to fill the needs of the community.

As with the baking of Sh'mura Matzoth, painstaking care was taken also in the preparation of 'yomtovdig' wine at Rabbi Aaron's estate. Incidentally, I wondered for years why the term used in our part of the country for Passover foods and dishes was 'yomtovdig' (holiday) rather than the more accurate designation 'pesachdig' (Passover). I finally found the following explanation: In the days of the Temple in Jerusalem the term 'shel Pesach' (for Passover) was used not to denote the opposite of chametz but exclusively to refer to the Passover sacrifice and the objects that came into direct contact with it. By way of distinction from the Passover sacrifice, all other non-chametz foods or utensils would be designated as shel yom tov, hence the colloquial Yiddish yomtovdig.

To return to the preparation of the matzot for Passover, the baking started in our town on the day after Purim. The bakery had been thoroughly scrubbed and the long work tables covered with tinplate tops polished until they fairly gleamed. Our regular year-round master baker had been temporarily raised to the exalted rank of matzah baker. It seemed to us children that his promotion had wrought a visible change in the man. His face, indeed his entire bearing, reflected the glory of Passover. Even his assistants - the shover, the kneader, and the mixer - gained new stature in our eyes and we felt honored to be permitted so much as a peek into the shop from the door.

The water for the matzah dough had to be drawn before nightfall on the day before the baking and had to be allowed to stand overnight ('mayim shelanu'). The drawing of the water for this purpose was a ritual act in its own right, performed by the rabbi himself. Accompanied by a few respected members of the community,



Passover at the Seder Table

he would go to the well at dusk. The water was drawn up in buckets and taken directly to the bakery, where it was poured into one large barrel to stand undisturbed until the next morning.

In ancient times matzot were not prepared at a bakery but in the home, with the husband grinding the wheat and the wife doing the kneading and baking without any outside help. This was, in fact, the way of the Yemenite Jews until very recently. They baked their matzot fresh for every meal as poor people did who could not afford to bake large quantities of matzah at one time. Their "bread of affliction" was a far cry from the crisp, elegantly packaged matzot of our own day which is delivered into the home without a moment's effort on the part of the master of the house or his family.

The final search for chametz on the night before Passover eve never failed to intrigue us children, the mystery of the rite being heightened by the lighted wax taper with which the head of the household would search every nook and cranny of the home for the last traces of leaven.

In the morning of Passover eve our Gentile janitor decked out in his Sunday best, would appear to conclude the "sale" of the chametz, rummaging in his wallet for a bill to serve as a deposit on account. Since he was unable to write, he signed the contract of sale with three Stars of David - instead of the usual three X's, which looked too much like crosses to be appropriate for this sort of transaction.

Morning services on the eve of Passover were held at an unusually early hour, so that every family would be able to remove the chametz from its household in time.

We all envied those friends of ours who were first-born sons. These privileged young men were invited to the rabbi's home on Passover eve for a siyum, a festive meal marking the completion of the study of a Talmudic tractate, and exempting them from the fast devolving on all first-born sons on the day before Passover (To commorate the slaying of the first-born in Egypt). However, the dishes already put away and the household in a general state of pre-holiday shape, that banquet consisted of only one modest course - a plain roll, without even the benefit of butter.

By right, in fact, the fast also should have been observed by all heads of households, for tradition had it that in Egyptian families with no first-born sons the oldest member of the household was smitten instead. However, Rabbi Jacob ben Moses HaLevi Moelin, the German codifier (1360-1427) (known by his initials as the MaHaril) and Rabbi Jacob ben Asher (1270-1343), (known as the **Baal HaTurim** from the code **Arbaah Turim** of which he was the author), explain that in view of the fact that heads of households were usually older men, who might find fasting difficult, it was decided to limit the fast to first-born sons. Rabbi Abraham Abele of Gombin (1635-1683), author of **Magen Avraham**, a partial commentary on the **Shulchan Aruch**, opposed the fast of the first-born altogether, and Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz (1556-1630) went so far as to forbid it because in the times of the Temple Passover eve was the day on which the **Korban Pesach**, the Passover sacrifice, was offered. Accordingly, the day before Passover could be considered a minor holiday in its own right. As a matter of fact, all work was stopped by noon on that day. Besides, it was the day on which the first-born of the Children of Israel were spared from death. Accordingly, the learned rabbis reasoned, first-born sons had every reason for rejoicing rather than for fasting, as if in sorrow. And to clinch the argument, it was pointed out that the entire month of Nissan was, in fact, a joyful season during which all fasting was forbidden.

Meals on the day before Passover were meager, since bread could no longer be served and matzoth could not be eaten until that evening. Besides, it was proper to save one's appetite so that one could eat the matzot, at the Seder with the relish appropriate to the observance of a **mitzvah**. At our own home, I recall, Passover eve lunch would be borsht and potatoes.

An important task reserved for the day before Passover was the baking of the special Sh'murah Matzot set aside for use at the **Sedarim**. The preferred hour for this activity was the time when, in the olden days, the Passover sacrifice had been offered in the Holy Temple. All the men of the community, regardless of age, flocked to the bakery in white aprons, their sleeves rolled up,

eager to perform what all of us considered a sacred act.

Each time we started on a new operation, we would be careful to pronounce the words "L'shem matzah mitzvah" (This is for the matzah of the commandment) to remind ourselves of the special character of the matzot we were helping prepare. These, the Seder matzot, were the only unleavened bread we were explicitly 'commanded' to eat. While the ban of chametz, of course, applies to the entire week of Passover, matzot have to be eaten on the two Sedarim only - during the remaining six days we may have them, or not, as we prefer.

The kneading had to be done quickly, without interruption, lest the dough turn into chametz. Since this required complete concentration, the kneaders were not permitted to talk as they worked - not even in Hebrew. Those of us boys who had passed the age of Bar Mitzvah acted as 'pourers'. Ever so slowly we poured the water into the flour while one of the grown men worked the mixture into dough. The windows of the bake shop were thickly curtained to protect the dough from direct sunlight which might have caused it to ferment.

We always had a large party at our Seder table; relatives, friends and some poor people from our town who were our regular holiday guests. We children had to go to bed and get some sleep earlier in the day in order to be able to stay awake and follow the Haggadah that night. According to some authorities it was customary to eat dairy dishes on Passover Eve because milk was thought to induce sleep, which was considered good for the grownups, too, in preparation for the long evening ahead. On the other hand, we were not allowed to sleep too late that afternoon, lest we oversleep.

We children did not care much for this enforced rest; we would have preferred to stay up and watch the rest of the family get ready for the holiday. I remember that once, when I was very young, I asked my father whether he could not arrange to have the Seder during the day so that we would not have to sleep in the afternoon. He patiently explained that there was nothing he could do about it - Jewish law required that the Seder be held at night. In the first place, the Exodus itself, which the Seder commemorates, occurred



Rabbi Meyer Frey (the Shuraner Rav)

cutting the wheat for the Passover Shmura Matzot.

at night (Numb. 9:3.). Besides, the Seder takes the place of the Passover sacrifice of old, which had to be eaten at night, accompanied by the recital of the historic events linked with our miraculous deliverance.

Only much later did I come to understand that we children were very important people indeed at the Passover Seder. As a matter of fact, most of the Seder ritual was designed to arouse our interest, in keeping with the explicit command addressed to every Jewish parent: "And thou shalt tell thy son...." In order to make sure we would stay awake all through the long narrative, we would be given nuts, dates and other special treats. This was supposed to keep us alert. The same purpose was served by the little game of hiding the Afikoman.

If Passover came early, when spring still seemed far away, we would have a fire going in the big white-tiled stove in the room where the family was gathered for the Seder. But there would be a fire also in every other room that had a stove, even if the room stood empty. This was done in accordance with a time-honored custom dating back to the days of the dreaded blood accusations. It was the only way the Jews could keep Gentiles from dropping the bodies of dead Christian children down the chimneys of Jewish homes and then accuse the Jews of ritual murder. A masterful portrayal of one such incident may be found in the Meshumed Heinrich Heine's novel "The Rabbi of Bacharach".

In this novel he describes how two Gentile strangers, disguised as poor homeless Jews, enter the Rabbi's house on the Passover night, asking to be permitted to take part in the Seder.

When, upon examining a suspicious package brought by the strangers into the Rabbi's home, the Rabbi finds to his horror that it contains the corpse of a Gentile child. He and his wife leave the festive table under a pretense and flee for their lives from their home town. Thus escaping the blood libel stage-managed by the local Jew haters.



The Two Strangers

RABBI JUDAH LOEW

The allegation that Jews murder Christians in order to obtain blood for the Passover or other rituals was already known in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria. At that time the rumor was spread that a Greek man was being kept in the Temple of Jerusalem and fattened until he had reached a certain weight, when the Jews would cut him open and eat his entrails.

Rabbi Judah Loew Ben Bezalel (known as Der Hoche Rabbi Loew or the Maharal), the famed Cabbalist of Prague (1525-1609) made it his life's task to combat these utterly unfounded accusations which abounded in his days, for his own birth in the ancient city of Worms had taken place under the shadow of the blood libel. It seems that at the time the clergy of the city found that the people were becoming dangerously liberal and independent in their views. Consequently, the priests decided to create an "incident" which would cause sufficient consternation to re-establish their authority in the eyes of the masses. The approaching festival of Passover afforded them an ideal opportunity. They made plans to take the body of a dead Christian child, and on the first Seder night, to hide it in the home of Rabbi Bezalel, the most respected Jew in the city, who was to become the father of Judah Loew. Rabbi Bezalel's wife was then in the seventh month of her pregnancy. During the Seder, she suddenly began to feel labor pains. The guests all rushed out to find a midwife. As they sped through the dark, deserted ghetto street, they noticed a lone man, obviously a Gentile, with a bag over his shoulder. Thoroughly alarmed at the sight of a Gentile in their street at that late hour, they began to shout. The man with the bag who was startled by the noise, stopped in his tracks and looked around cautiously. Meanwhile, the commotion brought the night watchman running. Within minutes, the stranger was under arrest. The fears of the Jews proved well-founded. When the suspect's bag was opened, it was found to contain the body of a child which had been exhumed from the local cemetery and which the man intended to smuggle into Rabbi Bezalel's home. Only the premature birth of Rabbi Bezalel's son had prevented the Gentile from carrying out his evil errand.

The infant, who grew up to become Chief Rabbi of Moravia and Bohemia and the friend and confidant to Rudolph of Hapsburg, Emperor of Austria, never forgot the story of his birth. Legend has it that he created the Golem.

RABBI LOEW AND THE GOLEM

In the early part of the sixteenth century the Jews of Bohemia suffered severe persecutions. Nearly every Passover there were ritual murder incidents, in which the body of a dead Christian child would be smuggled into the home of a Jew, who would then be accused of having killed the child in order to use its blood for preparing matzot. Rabbi Loew enjoyed the full confidence of the Emperor and as a consequence was in a position to convince the latter that these accusations were false. However, there was at the Emperor's court a priest named Thaddeus, a notorious Jew-Hater, who brought all manners of false accusations against the Jews. Rabbi Loew searched for a way to expose him for the liar that he was.

One night, in a dream, he asked for Divine guidance in this endeavor and was instructed to make a robot (golem) of clay. The next morning he summoned his son-in-law and one of his students and requested them to help him make the robot. At four o'clock in the morning of Adar 20, 1580, the three men went to the banks of the River Moldau just outside the walls of Prague to gather clay, which they proceeded to shape into a human form, three ells long, complete with hands and feet, and face turned heavenward. Rabbi Loew then instructed his son-in-law to make fourteen circuits around the robot, seven to the right and seven to the left, reciting certain sacred incantations the while.

When the young man had completed the circuits, the golem turned fiery red. The rabbi then instructed his student to make the same circuits around the golem but with new incantations. Thereupon the golem lost his fiery color; a mist went up from his body,



Yossele the Golem

he grew hair and fingernails, and took on the appearance of a young man of about thirty. Rabbi Loew then made fourteen circuits around him and, together with his student and his son-in-law, recited the verse from the Book of Genesis (2:7): "And he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." At this, the golem slowly opened his eyes and looked about him. Rabbi Loew commanded him to rise from the ground and to stand on his two feet. Next, he dressed him in the clothes of his beadle. The golem was now like a man in nearly every respect. Although he had a mind, and could see and hear; he was, however, unable to speak.

Before dawn, the three men returned to the city with the Golem. On the way, Rabbi Loew said to him: "Know that we have created you out of dust so that you may protect the Jews from trouble and misfortune. Your name shall be Joseph; and you will live in my beth din chambers as my servant. You will carry out all my orders implicitly, no matter how strange they may seem to you." Naturally, the rabbi kept the robot's true purpose a secret. He identified the golem to the members of his household as a poor young man whom he had met in the street early in the morning on the way to the mikva and whom he had taken up out of pity. The man, he said, would be employed exclusively as his personal servant in the beth din chamber.

The Golem settled in a corner of the beth din chamber, where he sat quietly until summoned by the rabbi - his head buried in his arms which were folded on the table. For this reason he was generally called Yossele Golem or Yossel Shtumer (Yossele the Mute). His body was insensitive to fire and water and impervious to bullets. On some occasions, when he felt it necessary, the Rabbi would hang an amulet (kemea) around the golem's neck, which rendered the robot invisible to the human eye. Rabbi Loew used the golem to expose the trumped up ritual murder accusations made by the priest Thaddeus against the Jews of the land. In this manner the Rabbi was able to save his community from dire catastrophy.

The end of the Golem and his return to a mere clump of clay was caused by the withdrawal of an amulet by Rabbi Loew.

The Golem, then became a lump of earth, and was buried in a locked attic of the Altneuschul, where he was covered with earth.

Once an American tourist wanted to see the Golem. The Shames refused him in spite of the large money reward that he, the tourist, had offered. The somewhat spirited Shames took the wall mirror and held it up, so that the man could see his face in it.

The Noda-Beyehudah also wanted to see the historical lump. He wanted to first use the sacred immersion bath, but Shames Salamon Natanzon advised him against entering the sacred place.

There was no lack of curious questions. One wanted to know if one could consider a Golem a part of a Minyan (quorum). Another, who was a Cohen, wanted to know if he could go into the Altneuschul as Cohen.

RABBI JUDAH LOEW'S STATUE

On the wall of the new Prague City Hall, which was built between 1908 and 1911, there is a niche containing a statue of the great Rabbi Loew. This sculpture is on the main facade of the building. On the other corner of the building there is a similar niche, containing the legendary "Iron Man". There are various explanations for the location of these two statues. One is, that the two equal locations of these two monuments, symbolize the equality of all of the city's citizens before the city's authorities. Most probably, however, these statues merely are decorative expressions of the city's best known legendary figures, the Rabbi of the Jewish town and the knight from the old town. The placing of a monument of Rabbi Loew on the site of the old Jewish Town Hall, would have been prohibited by the Jewish religious ban of three dimensional representation of human or animal forms.

Other figures surrounding the statue of Rabbi Loew have their origin in legends surrounding his life. It is told, that one year, while pestilence ravaged the city, Rabbi Loew came upon the Angel of Death, and wrested from his hand a list of people destined to

die, thereby saving them from death's hand. The Angel of Death thereafter assumed various disguises in order to harm the Rabbi. However each time the Rabbi was able to penetrate the disguise and was able to save himself. The dog sitting on the lower left side of the Rabbi's statue, represents one of these disguises. Finally on the Rabbi's ninetieth birthday, death found a way into the holy man's heart by being hidden in the scent of a rose, handed to Rabbi Loew by his young granddaughter, who is represented by the mourning prostrate figure of a young girl on the right of the statue.

With regard to the monument of Rabbi Judah Loew, I would like above all to inform you of the opinion of Prof. Ladislaus Saloun. (You will find the same in the collection, "The Jewish Prag", Prague, the Publishing Company of the Selbstwehr, 1917, p. 40.)

In it Saloun mentions how his careful study of the construction and site of the monument helped him in his choice of motives for its artistic embellishments, for which he had been commissioned. The monument is, in fact, situated on the border of the old section of Prague and the Prague Ghetto. Since construction could begin only after these parts of town had been cleared, he wanted to erect an enduring monument to them.

He was to symbolize the old section of town by the iron man, who is known through folklore to both the indigenous population as well as to strangers. The Ghetto, on the other hand, he symbolized by the statue of the "learned and mysterious high Rabbi Loew", who embodied all that was most noble in the old Prague Ghetto. Saloun himself writes:

"To me Rabbi Loew was the symbol of the Ghetto. A symbol too, was for me the figure of the young girl, who, freed from the constraining bonds of her clothing, hands her grandfather a rose from which emanates the odour of his oncoming death. Exactly as this beautiful maiden with its aromatic flower leads to the death of Rabbi Loew, so too has the new free era of the present, with its breath of fresh life, unwittingly destroyed the old memories of the Past. It also brought about the end of the Ghetto of Prague.



Monument of Rabbi Judah Loew (Maharal) of Prague

THE POSEN VERSION OF RABBI LOEW'S DEATH

(From Knoop's Sagen und Erzaehlugnen aus der Provinz Posen, 1893, retold in J. Bergmann's Die Legenden der Juden, 1919)

One night before the High Festivals, Rabbi Loew noticed a light in the Synagogue opposite his house. He went there and saw on the center dais a man of sinister appearance, sharpening a glittering knife in front of a scroll with a long list of names. Rabbi Loew turned away in terror, but when he recovered his self-possession, he saw clearly what was the matter. The plague had begun to spread amongst the community and that apparition in the Synagogue was the Angel of Death, threatening the members of the community. He took courage and went again to the Synagogue, snatched the list away from the Angel of Death, and hurried back to his room.

He looked at the list containing the names of the men and women of the community whom he had saved from death by the plague. However, a piece of the list had remained in the hand of the Angel of Death, and on it was the name of Rabbi Loew. When the Festivals were over, the Rabbi fell ill and died.

* * * *

6

SEDER CUSTOMS

But let us return to Passover as it was in a generation nearer to our own. Our father looked like a king as he conducted the Seder. He was regally enthroned on a plush sofa (Hessev Bett) amidst piles of pillows so placed as to allow him to recline comfortably on his left in the manner of a free man as the law required. Only the day before he had been anything but a king in his own home. During the final, hectic days of house cleaning he had been forced to do without his warm meals and had been chased from one room to the next, finally taking refuge in the hall amidst a confusion of buckets, brooms and dustcloths. It was as if he had been reliving the Exodus from Egypt in a very personal way. But now order had been restored in the household, and Father was a king once again.

We children, too, had undergone a complete transformation. Like Father, we too, had been in temporary exile. Now, after what seemed like centuries, we were once again in our regular places in the dining room, happy to see our silver forks and spoons again, all bright and shiny after days of kashering.

The "centerpiece" of our seder table, of course, was the seder

plate, with the symbolic foods arranged upon it in the form of the six-pointed Magen-David, an allusion to Cabbalistic tradition.

First, there was the haroseth. A mixture of nut-meats, almonds, apples and wine. We also added finely-chopped figs and dates. The name of the mixture derives from the Hebrew hereth, literally "earthen", for it was meant to resemble the clay with which the Children of Israel made their bricks in Egypt. As a matter of fact, we actually molded our haroseth into the shape of a brick. Into this mixture we would dip lettuce by way of an appetizer.

For karpas, the Passover greens, we used parsley, since the first part of the name of the herb, "Petersilie", sounded like "bitter", recalling the bitterness of slavery in Egypt. The custom of dunking the fresh greens into salt water is a symbol of our freedom, for in Egypt this was permissable only for priests and high officials. The only fresh vegetable permitted to slaves was garlic, hence the custom in some localities not to use garlic during Passover week, when we celebrate our deliverance from slavery.

The z'roa or shankbone recalled the Paschal lamb offered as a sacrifice in the days of the Temple.

The roasted egg symbolized the hagigah, the festival sacrifice. If the seder fell on a Friday night, we would omit the egg from the seder plate, for when a holiday fell on the Sabbath, the festival offering could not be made.

The Passover meal itself is begun with hard-boiled eggs. Some eat them only on the first seder night, pointing out that the first night of Passover always falls on the same day of the week as Tisha b'Av, when the last meal before the fast is concluded with hard-boiled eggs. In Jewish tradition, the hard-boiled egg symbolizes mourning, the unending cycle of human life, rolling hither and yon. At the same time, it is taken to represent man's hope for a better future, for the seemingly inanimate egg which brings forth new life reminds us of the ultimate resurrection of the dead. Accordingly, mourners returning home from the funeral of a close relative are served a hard-boiled egg (se'udas havarah). On Passover, the hard-boiled egg has still another historic connotation, namely, that of our exodus from Egypt, for in Egypt no one was permitted to eat

any food derived from animals.

At the seder, the head of the family wears the **kittel**, the white garment which will serve as his shroud when he dies. On this night, however, he dons it not to remind himself of the transience of human life but to signify his status as the "priest" of his family, clad in the white garments of purity and righteousness similar to those worn by the priests of old when they officiated in the Holy Temple.

Immediately after reciting the Kiddush, the head of the family washes his hands preparatory to handling the Passover greens and breaking the **matzah** for the Afikomen, in accordance with the law requiring anyone about to dip food into a liquid or about to touch a sacrificial offering to purify his hands before. Hence, in our family the head of the household who conducted the seder would perform this little ceremony with a sterling silver basin and a special towel of light blue silk embroidered with Passover themes.

After the host has extended his invitation to all those who are hungry to come to his table and join him in celebrating the seder, the second of the traditional Four Cups of wine is poured. Hebrew directions in the Haggadah at this point use the term **mosgin**, for the act of filling the cups with wine. This Hebrew word is related to the Greek **misgein**, literally, "to mix". Its use here indicates that the wines of ancient Palestine were too strong to be drunk without an admixture of water, and that it was customary for every guest at the table to have his own "mixture" of wine and water made up to his taste.

Rabbi Sholem, the learned talmudist who was our perennial guest, had in his possession a beautiful old Haggadah. Its pages were yellowed with age and stained with drops of wine and matzah from at least a hundred sedarim. It contained innumerable sidelights and commentaries to enable the reader to gain a better understanding of Passover observances.

In the preface, the editor had set out to explain that the Haggadah had not been compiled all at one time but that it had evolved into its present form over many generations. The first version of the Haggadah has been variously attributed to the Tannaite Rabbi

Yohanan ben Zakkai, and to Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. Since the language in general use among Jews in those days was Aramaic rather than Hebrew, the first paragraph of the Haggadah, Ha lakhma anya, "This is the bread of affliction", was composed in Aramaic to enable even children and converts to understand the basic motif of the seder.

Rabbi Sholom's Haggadah brought some interesting descriptions of seder customs observed by Jewish communities in far-off lands. In the mountains of Central Asia, Jewish women would sit down at the seder table without the veils they wore the rest of the year, because on that night of special divine protection they felt they had no need to shield their faces from the "evil eye" and from evil spirits.

Bokharan Jews take off their shoes and sit down to the seder in their stocking feet, and the women go barefoot altogether, in keeping with the practice to remove one's shoes when performing a sacred rite.

Tunisian Jews perform an unusual little ceremony with the traditional recital of the Ten Plagues. The oldest woman of the household brings in an empty basin and a pitcher full of water. As the head of the family reads out each plague, he spills drops of wine from his cup into the basin,* to which the woman would then add water from the pitcher. After the plagues had been enumerated, she takes the basin away and empties it into the gutter outside the house. If the mixture of wine and water went down the gutter without a sound, it was considered a good omen. If, on the other hand, there was a noise, it was deemed cause for alarm. No wonder, then, that the guests, inside the house waited in suspense for the woman to return and report whether or not there had been undue noise. As a rule, she would give a "good" report, regardless of what had really transpired.

---

* See also our own custom of spilling drops of wine from our cups during the recital of the Ten Plagues. This is a symbolic act to show that our cup of happiness cannot be full when creatures of G-d, even if they were our enemies, had to suffer and perish for our sake.

Incidentally, the practice in more "sophisticated" circles to use a spoon rather than one's finger to spill the wine from one's cup runs counter to tradition, which explicitly bids us to use our fingers to recall the "Finger of G-d" אצבע אלקים, of which, the Plagues were a clear indication. It was the custom in Ancient Rome to dump out any water that was in the room where unpleasant or unclean language had been used, as it is usual even today with some people lacking manners, to show their disapproval by spitting.

In some Jewish homes, a basin of water is placed on the seder table to recall the crossing of the Red Sea. Others jump over a basinful of water on the morning of the seventh day of Passover to commemorate the bravery of Nahshon ben Aminadav, the first of the Children of Israel to march forward into the Red Sea at the command of Moses.

Others turn the recital of 'ha lakhma anya' into a highly dramatic portrayal of the Exodus from Egypt. They recite the passage walking up and down the room, wearing a belt, holding a staff and carrying a piece of matzah in a cloth slung over the left shoulder in the manner of a knapsack, as if about to start a long journey.

Rabbi Sholom himself had an inexhaustible fund of wise Talmudic commentaries and amusing stories of which we children could never get enough. Once he got started, we would cajole him into going on and on, until he called our attention to the lateness of the hour.

"You know", he would remind us, "we have to get to the Afikoman before twelve, because the Paschal lamb which it is meant to replace in our day, had to be eaten before midnight. (However the Chatam Sofer was not concerned with this time limit.) But he would always promise us more stories for the next day.

Following the Grace after the festive dinner, we came to the passage in the Haggadah calling on G-d to pour out His wrath upon all those who refused to worship Him and persisted in hounding His people Israel (Sh'fokh hamothekha). At this point I, as the youngest member of the family, would be sent out to fling open the gate of our house.

The most popular explanation for this custom is that the door

was opened for the Prophet Elijah who, it was hoped, would choose that very moment to appear in every Jewish home to proclaim the coming of the Messiah.

There is the touching story of the simple Jewish tailor who had spared no pains and expense to arrange a proper seder table in hopes that G-d would reward him by sending the Prophet Elijah in person to his home. At the proper time the tailor sent his youngest son to open the door of his little cottage. And lo and behold, a visitor did enter. However, it was not the venerable patriarch with a long white beard and flowing robes whom the tailor had been expecting, but a goat, which made straight for the head of lettuce on the tailor's seder plate. In its dash for the lettuce, the goat knocked over the Cup of Elijah which the tailor had lovingly prepared for the Prophet. The poor man was terrified lest the visitor break the modest display of Passover crystal and china on his table, but he did not dare stop the animal, for there was no doubt in his mind but that this was truly the Prophet Elijah, albeit in disguise. Finally, when he could stand it no longer, he blurted out: "Go right ahead, Mr. Prophet Elijah, Sir. Eat and drink all you want, but please, Sir, if you can help it, don't break any of my dishes." The following year, having realized by then that his seder visitor had not been Elijah after all, the tailor was afraid to go through with the seder altogether. Taking the Haggadah in his hand, he opened it, skimmed through its pages and then put it down again. "It's the same text as last year," he said to his wife. "Not different at all. Now, serve the fish."

Other authorities did not associate the opening of the door with the Prophet Elijah but considered it a gesture of absolute faith and trust in G-d on this night when all the Children of Israel enjoyed His special protection. However, this explanation leaves open the question why, under the circumstances, the door is not left open all evening long. Therefore, this theory has not found widespread acceptance.

A more plausible explanation would be the one to the effect that it was a gesture of frankness toward the non-Jewish world, a symbolic invitation to the Gentiles to come and see for themselves that

the Jews had no heinous crimes to conceal from them. The elaborate Passover preparations, particularly the ritual surrounding the baking of the sh'mura matzot, frequently gave rise to ugly rumors among the uneducated Gentiles, who were only too willing to believe the worst of the Jews. Hence, we have the willingness of the Jews to celebrate their seder in full view of the public, as it were, which was the best possible way of giving the lie to such tales, particularly the infamous blood libel. If, even while performing this act of sincerity and good will, the Jews, as the eternal scapegoats of history, pleaded with G-d to pour out His wrath upon those who did not keep His Law, that was only too understandable.

However, my own favorite explanation for our custom of opening the door after we have partaken of the Afikoman is the one linking it with the practice observed in ancient Jerusalem to open all the gates of the Holy Temple at twelve midnight, when the sacrificial meal, which the Afikoman is meant to recall, had to be ended.

Contrary to the popular notion, the Cup of Elijah is not a symbolic gesture of hospitality to the hoped-for-visitor, but a part of the Passover ritual that is held in abeyance, pending a ruling to be handed down by the Prophet. The Rabbis have been unable to agree as to whether the cup over which the kiddush is recited at the opening of the seder is to be counted as one of the prescribed Four Cups to be drunk at the seder. If it is not, there would have to be a fifth cup. Since the Rabbis to this day have not decided whether we are indeed required to drink a fifth cup, we have it in readiness on the seder table, awaiting the verdict of Elijah who, according to tradition, will act as the final arbitrator on all unresolved questions of Jewish Law.

Like the hoped-for visit of the Prophet Elijah, the Afikoman, the present-day symbolic substitute for the Paschal sacrifice, has held special fascination for Jewish children the world over.

The Afikoman-the larger piece of the middle matzah on the seder plate-is set aside at the opening of the seder to symbolize the bread of affliction. A poor man cannot afford a whole loaf. With luck, he can get half of one. The Afikoman is wrapped in a napkin to recall the way in which the Children of Israel carried

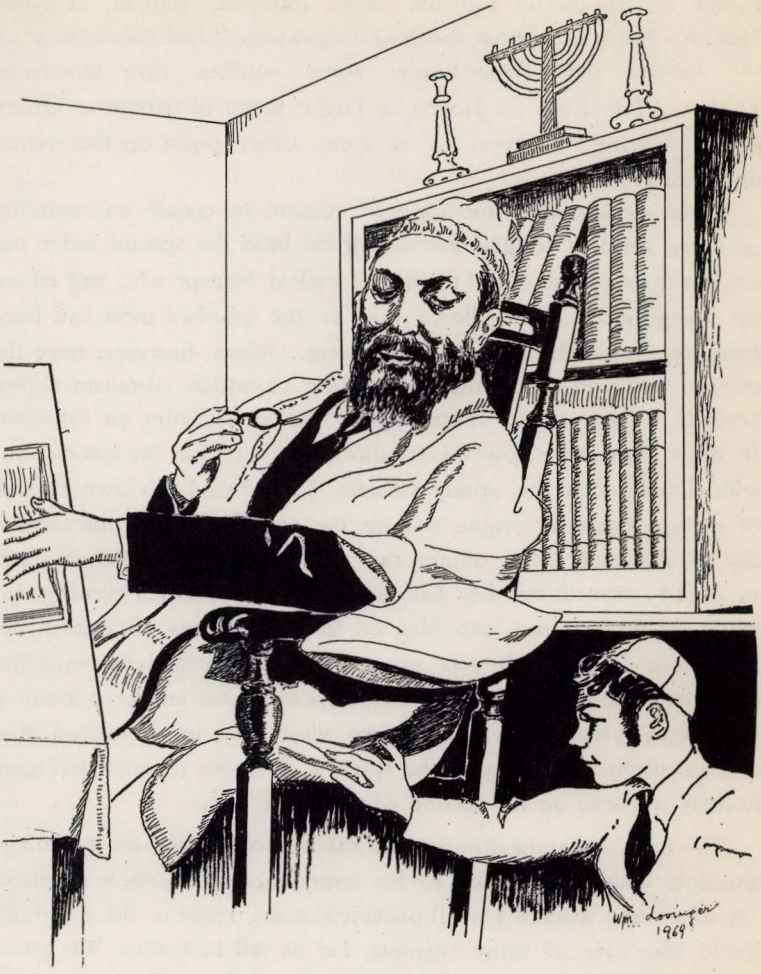
with them from Egypt the dough that had no chance to leaven - in a cloth slung over the shoulder. The Afikoman is then placed some distance away from the Seder table to emphasize that it serves a mitzvah of its own, separate and distinct from the purpose of the other two matzot, and to make sure that it will not be confused with the other matzot and eaten before the time assigned for the eating of the Afikoman.

These rules make the Afikoman an ideal project for pranks and tricks. Usually, the children in the family try to get hold of it sometime during the seder and hide it, demanding ransom in the form of money or some gift for its return. Since the seder cannot be continued without the Afikoman, the father has no other choice but to promise the children whatever they want. Sometimes, however, the father is a step ahead of the children and hides the Afikoman before they can get to it, so that the children must first find the Afikoman themselves before being able to hide it in their turn.

The term Afikoman is probably derived from the Greek epikomon, which denotes a post-banquet entertainment or dessert. It is so named because it is the last food that may be eaten on the Seder night even as it was forbidden in the days of the Temple to partake of other food following the eating of the Paschal lamb. Some Rabbis hold that the word is not a Greek derivative but a composite of the initials of the Hebrew terms for desserts and post-prandial treats popular in the ancient world; namely Egosim (nuts), Peroth (fruit), Yayyin (wine), Qlayot (roasted corn), U-basar (and meat), Mayyim (water) and Nardim (perfume). This interpretation, which is cited in the Toseptha, a supplement to the Mishna, has been incorporated into the Haggadah of the Yemenite Jews.

An infinite variety of customs - some justified by tradition, others based on local superstitions have evolved in connection with the Afikoman.

The second seder was an even jollier affair in our home than the first, for by that time the grown-ups had had a chance to rest from their ardous pre-Passover preparations. The second day dinner was popularly referred to as S'udat Esther (the Banquet of Esther) because tradition had it that the final banquet tendered by Queen



Stealing the Afikoman

Esther to Ahasuerus and his prime minister, Haman, at which Haman's evil plot against the Jews was exposed, had taken place on the second day. Accordingly, some families sing Shoshanat Ya'akov (The Rose of Jacob), a Purim hymn of tribute to Queen Esther, during the meal or at some other point on the second day dinner.

Some explain the time-honored custom in certain communities to serve smoked tongue for dinner on both the second seder and on Purim as a reminder of the fate of wicked Haman who had ended up hanging on the gallows just as the smoked meat had been hanging in the chimney all winter long. Others, however, trace the custom back to a tradition according to which Abraham served smoked tongue to the three angels who visited him on Passover. It must have been on this tradition, rather than on associations with Purim, that the saintly Chatam Sofer based his own custom of eating smoked tongue not on the second, but on the seventh day of Passover. After dinner the men would light up their pipes or cigars, something they had not done the previous evening, for while smoking is not forbidden on festivals (unless of course, they fall on a Sabbath) it was not considered particularly respectful behavior at a festive board. However, since most smokers found it difficult to forego their pleasure two whole days in succession, they did not deem it contrary to the spirit of Passover to relax stringent holiday etiquette on the second day of Yom Tov.

The next day at the dinner table Rabbi Sholom told the promised anecdote which goes back to his experience as a prison chaplain: "A man, who lived in a small provincial town, came to the metropolis to take care of some business. Let us call him Max. We prefer to keep his real name secret in order not to offend any of his relatives that might still be living. His affairs were not of the cleanest type. One business was more involved and complicated than the other, and the last one was finally so confused and crooked that he could not straighten it out anymore. To give hime time and leisure to solve and straighten his financial involvements and entanglements, the police gave him undisturbed free quarters.

At first he had written to his wife that his affairs were proceeding

well, and that he would, with the help of G-d, certainly return home for Pesach. But as his conflict with the law did not appear to be of the easiest kind, the preliminary investigation already was consuming much time. His file was swelling into large volumes. Pesach was approaching, and the man had to strain his brain to find answers to more than the traditional four questions. It appeared that the law enforcement officers were capable of asking more and harder questions.

His ritual board was taken care of by the "LONELY"-club. The name of that association is not derived from the fact that it feeds people who live in solitary cells. Its charter purpose was to provide for lonely people who had nobody to look after them. The homme d'affaires now had to invent all kinds of excuses to explain to his wife why he could not come. Without mentioning the exact name and nature of his hotel, he bitterly complained in a letter that he could not celebrate this beautiful festival with his wife and children. He was quite desolate about it. He wrote to his wife that his food was good and carefully prepared and was strictly kosher. A high class kosher restaurant delivered the meals to his secluded residence. Not even mead, the festive drink, was forgotten. Thus he celebrated the Seder in a strictly exclusive society. He was observing every minute custom just as at home, with one exception, however. He could not open the door for "shefoch chamos'cho".

As soon as Rabbi Sholom ended, his host's young grandson embraced him and pleaded for yet another story. Rabbi Sholom, unable to refuse the little boy's pleas, acceded to his wishes, remarking, that the following story was a special reward for the boy's faultless recitation of the "Four Questions" earlier in the evening.

YOUTH COMPANION

In the town of K. there lived a rabbi who was known far and wide for his great scholarship and genuine piety. Meticulous in the observance of even the minutest ritual detail, he insisted on preparing

his own matzot each Passover, personally supervising the harvesting of the wheat and then grinding it into flour for the baking of the unleavened bread. The wheat came from the farm of Yoshka, the rabbi's good friend, who set aside part of the field for the rabbi's use. Each spring, several weeks before Passover, the rabbi would travel to the village where Joshka had his farm. There, in the room reserved for him in Joshka's house, the rabbi would find the wheat in a white sack, and the hand mill, carefully covered with a white sheet, ready for the work. With Joshka's help the rabbi would go about the strenuous task of grinding the wheat into flour, which he would then bring back to K., where it would be used to make the matzot for the rabbi's household.

One spring, returning to K. with his sackful of flour, the rabbi heard the sound of weeping from one of the houses on the way. He stopped and went into the house to see whether there was anyone in need of help. Inside, he found some children, barefoot and wrapped in tatters, crying bitterly. It seemed that their mother had left early that morning to go into town and had not yet returned. In the meantime, the children had become hungry and there was no food in the house. The rabbi found a large kettle, filled it with water and set it on the fireplace. Then he took the sack with the flour which he had ground for his matzot, emptied all its contents into the kettle and made a meal pap. The children fell upon the meal hungrily. After they had eaten their fill, the rabbi recited the Shema with them, put them to bed and then quietly left, happy at this unexpected opportunity to perform a good deed. When the mother of the children got home and heard of the visitor who had come to their hovel, she was sure that he could have been none other than the Prophet Elijah, who frequently appears at times of great need.

Since he had used up all of Joska's wheat, the rabbi had to bake his matzot with matzah flour bought from the place where all the other villagers obtained theirs. On the Seder night, his face beaming with happiness, the rabbi assured his family that this matzah differed from his matzot of years past because of the good deed from which it resulted, and was the best he had ever tasted.

* * * *

7

A SURPRISE AT THE SEDER OF MY TEACHER

One Passover, on the second seder, someone suggested that every guest present should tell of the most beautiful seder he had ever experienced. Of all the interesting Passover stories told that night, the one I remember best is that related by Rabbi Sholom. His story dated back to his yeshiva days.

"As a rule" he began, "I would go home for Passover, as most of my yeshiva classmates did. But that one year I asked my parents for permission to spend the holiday with my rebbe, Hagaon of Hunsdorf. To my surprise, they acceded to my request, and instead of going home to Vamia, I went to Hunsdorf, Hungary. It was an unforgettable experience for me, I can still see the rebbe's shining face, and the far-away look in his eyes. It seemed as if he was communing with the angels. His tall white cap and gleaming white robes, gave him the appearance of a High Priest, and the fervor and devotion with which he chanted the Haggadah completed the illusion that one was actually witnessing not an ordinary Seder, but the offering of the Paschal sacrifice in the ancient Temple of Jerusalem".

"Suddenly, late in the second part of the seder - by then it was close to dawn - something very strange happened. The rebbe stopped reading from the Haggadah. Gazing skyward, and stretching out his clasped hands as if trying to touch the heavens, the Rebbe began to sing, not a devotional tune but a Hungarian shepherd song. His eyes still had that far-away look, and his face shone with a great inner light. I thought I must be dreaming. Here was my saintly rebbe, interrupting his prayers to sing a worldly song, and in Hungarian, at that. In those days it was practically regarded as a sin to speak Hungarian, particularly on Sabbaths and Holidays. The only two languages that were considered fit for use by Jews were Hebrew and Yiddish, and here was the rebbe, our own holy rebbe, sitting at the seder table with his Haggadah closed before him, singing a song that might have been all right for peasants of the Hungarian countryside, but certainly not for Jews.

At last the rebbe stopped singing. His excited features calmed again, and he lapsed into serene silence. A few minutes later, he opened the Haggada again and resumed the Seder service as if nothing had happened.

It was only much later that I got an explanation for the rebbe's strange behavior on the seder night I spend at his home. And this is where my Passover tale begins.

"The hero of this story is Rabbi Isaac Taub, the holy rebbe of Kalev (b. Tarczal, Hungary 1752, d. Nagy-Kallo) who was one of the founders of the Chassidic movement in Hungary. He had a habit of taking the melodies of Hungarian love songs he heard from shepherds and writing holy texts for them. One seder night, as the rebbe was chanting the Haggadah with his family, the door of his house opened, letting in a strange cloud of what appeared to be mist. But then the mist cleared away, revealing a man bent with age, dressed in the costume worn by Hungarian shepherds in those days. He wore a cap of white lambskin, a warm white sheep fur cloak over a coat of coarse cotton, wide trousers of white homespun linen, and sandals. In his right hand he held a shepherd's staff. On his back he carried a knapsack, from which a flute protruded.



Rabbi Isaac of Kallo greeting Elijah the Prophet
dressed as a peasant

"When I was a child", Reb Sholom continued, "I always thought that this is exactly what the Prophet Elijah would look like. The rebbe of Kalev must have had the same idea, because he gave the old man a hearty welcome, offered him a seat near the warm stove, and brought him wine and matzot. While the rebbe went on with the seder, the old shepherd remained in his seat near the stove, and kept on eating and drinking.

"Finally, the rebbe of Kalev asked him whether he was not in the habit of reciting prayers. In reply, the old man took the flute from his pack, put it to his lips and began to hum. It was a strange and haunting melody.

"The rebbe listened with his eyes closed, absorbed in deep thought. His family stared at him in bewilderment. Tears flowing from his closed eyes and rolled down his pale cheeks.

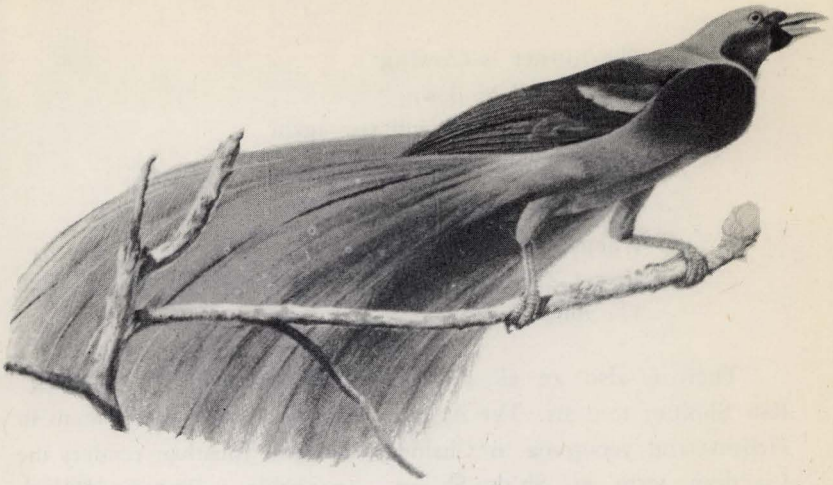
"When the shepherd had finished playing, the rebbe asked him to teach him the text of the tune.

"And so the shepherd began to sing the Hungarian song we know today as **szol a kakas már**, the hymn to the wondrous bird which, according to mystics of the Cabbala, will herald the coming of the Messiah.

"The rooster is crowing:
Soon it will be dawn;
Flitting about in the green forest,
In the gay meadow,
Is a wondrous bird.

What manner of bird is he?
What manner of bird is he?
His beak is of gold,
So are his feet,
And so he waits for me.

Wait for me, O bird;
Do not cease to wait;
If G-d only wills it
I'll be by your side.



SZÓL A KAKAS MÁR („kállói változat")



The rooster is crowing;
Soon it will be dawn;
The Holy Temple will rise again
And Zion will be rebuilt.
When will the day come? When?
When, will we ascend
Mount Zion, rejoicing, singing a new hymn of praise?
The time is ripe. Let it be soon."

"There is also an allusion to this tradition in the Talmud," Reb Sholom told us. The Aggadah tells of a bird called raham in Hebrew and yeraqreqa in Chaldean. Targum Jonathan renders the Chaldean term as Sh'raq-Sh'raq (probably pelican or kite) cf. (Lev. 11:18).

אמר רב יהודה... רחם זה שרקרק אמר רבי יוחנן למה נקרא שמו רחם כיון שבא רחם באו רחמים לעולם אמר רב ביבי בר אביי והוא דיתיב אמידי ועביד שרקרק וגמירי דאי יתיב אארעא ושריק אתי משיחא שנאמר אשקרה להם ואקבצם. **(Zech. 10:8)**

"The Talmudic reference is in Tractate Hullin (63a): 'Rabbi Judah said: Raham is the sh'raq-shraq. Rabbi Yohanan said: It is called raham because when it appears, loving-kindness (rahamim) comes into the world. The commentators interpret rahamim as loving-kindness in the form of rain to moisten the parched soil. Rav Bebay ben Abbaya said: We have a tradition that if this bird were to sit on the ground and hiss "sh'raq-sh'raq", the Messiah would appear, for it is said: I will hiss (esraqah) for them, and I will gather them (Zech. 10:8).

"Another Talmudic passage mentions a giant bird Yoknah, whose flesh will be served as food for the righteous like Leviathan."

At his departure the holy Kalaver pressed cordially the hand of the mysterious guest while accompanying him to the door. When the shepherd was gone, the company began to fathom who the mysterious guest was. The children removed the cover from Elijah's cup to examine the quantity by which its contents had been diminished.

* * * *

8

RABBI ISAAC OF KALLO

The Biography of Rabbi Isaac of Nagy-Kallo, is told in detail by the well known Jewish Author, Rabbi Chaim Bloch in his book "Priester Der Liebe".

THE APPRENTICESHIP

At three years of age, Isaac lost his father. His mother remained poor, and could not hire a teacher for him. She herself showed him the knowledge of the letters. But he hardly learned the prayers. He grew up wildly and at the age of seven he had to go to the pasture and tend sheep.

It did not escape the mysterious Rabbi Leib Saras, that in Hungary was a soul of a high level, which had to be saved. He wandered for a long time in Hungary to find it. Thus he came to Nyir-Bator in the Szabolcser district. Tired from hiking, he laid himself in the shade of a tree in the open field and rested. There he heard the sound of the boy's voice: "Lord of the world; Maybe you have a few sheep, I will watch them for you; O G-d, sweet G-d how I love you". Deeply moved Rabbi Leib went over to the boy and

said: "Yes, you will watch the sheep of G-d". Then he asked, "Whose child are you?" Isaac gave the name of his mother, and brought him to her house. Rabbi Leib begged the poor woman to let him have the boy, as the Rabbi would care for him as for his own child, giving him instruction and bringing him up to be a Rabbi. The mother agreed.

Rabbi Leib brought the boy to Rabbi Schmelke of Nikolsburg. "Here", he told Rabbi Schmelke, "You have a soul from the highest hall of songs".

In school, little Isaac was taught the secrets of the doctrine, and so he grew up.

For the duration of ten years Isaac learned at Rabbi Schmelke. When the ten years had passed Rabbi Schmelke told him: "Isaac I taught you the doctrine, but now it is time that you learn the essence of the fear of G-d. Therefore move to Lezajsk to Rabbi Melech,–through him your soul will reach perfection, but after five years you must return home, because your mother awaits you longingly."

It was difficult for the boy to leave Nikolsburg, but again Rabbi Leib Saras, came to guide him to Lezajsk. When he had completed the five years there, Rabbi Melech told him: "The time has come, you have to return home. Go joyfully and take a wife whom your mother will choose for you. Only then will your soul find perfection." After his marriage Isaac was ordained as the Rabbi of Gross-Kallo and its surroundings.

Isaac often strolled in a meadow in front of the town, and by his gaze into the distant green horizon, one could perceive that he was deep in thought.

Once he came to a meadow where he found a shepherd boy with his herd, singing a lovesong in the Hungarian language, the melody of which was moving, painful and longing. Rabbi Isaac sat in a haystack, but as he heard the melody he rose, approached the sound and listened.

The shepherd song:

Forest, Forest how big you are;
Rose, Rose how far you are;

If the Forest would not be so big
Then my Rose would not be so far.
Who will take me out of the woods
So that I can be one with my Rose?"

Hot tears flowed down the cheeks of the Rabbi. As the shepherd ended the song, the Rabbi gave him a coin and called: "Once more"; While the boy sang, Rabbi Isaac threw himself to the floor, where one could also hear him sing his own little song in Hungarian.

Galuth, Galuth, how big you are;
Schechinah, Schechinah, how far you are
If the Galuth would not be so big,
Then my Schechinah would not be so far.
Who will take me out of the Galuth,
That I can be one with my Schechinah?"

"Sing it again" Rabbi Isaac ordered the boy in great joy, and again he gave the shepherd a coin. This time the boy played a song on a willow flute. "Sing again" Rabbi Isaac said, but now the tune had disappeared from the thoughts of the shepherd. He could not remember it anymore. Finally, Rabbi Isaac got up. He was very happy and his soul was surrounded by light. Jubilant he called: "I have saved her;"

After a while he said to his faithful ones: "This is the melody with which the Jews sang their lamentations at the waters of Babel, it has also been thousands of years in Exile, but now I have saved it."

MIRIAM'S FOUNTAIN

On the eve of the Day of Atonement, at the hour, when one should start Kol-Nidrei, Rabbi Isaac stood in the prayerhouse in a white robe, absorbed in a book. Next to the pulpit the Chassidim stood wrapped in frocks and prayercoats. They were filled

with the day's thrill and recited a part from the book "The life of people". Suddenly, Rabbi Isaac turned and gave Chassid Jakob Fish a wink. As this chassid came to him, the Rabbi said: "Reb Jakob harness the wagons, a great desire has overcome me to take a short drive!" "At this hour?" the chassid thought. It was strange to him, but he said not a word, but whispered something in his son's ear. Soon Jakob's fine coach stood ready for the drive. Rabbi Isaac stepped quickly into the wagon, where Jakob himself took the reins in his hand. "To your fields", ordered the Rabbi. As they came to the big open fields, outside the city, Rabbi Isaac jumped quickly from the wagon, took off his robes for a moment and dipped his body three times into the flowing waters. Jakob stood astonished because he knew that the ground was constantly dry here. The Rabbi stepped out of the water, put his clothes on quickly and ordered Jakob to turn back. Then the Rabbi sang Kol-Nidrei.

At the end of Yom-Kippur, Jakob said to the Rabbi, "I have seen you do many strange things, but never did I venture, to ask you for information. However, today I cannot master myself. I beg of you to tell me the secret: How could a pond arise at that location? Never before did I see water there."

"At that moment," answered Rabbi Isaac, "the fountain of Miriam" opened itself at the spot, which was enclosed by a stone; This was the same fountain with which the Jewish people went through the desert. It is too bad for you that you did not understand to follow me into the water."

Rabbi Isaac had a beautiful voice and he himself composed many songs and melodies, which in their inner longing for Zion and sanctuary, aroused a deep love for G-d. Some of his favourite melodies are still sung today at gatherings of pious Jews.

Some of these follow here: First the above mentioned 'szol a kakas mar' sung in German:

Es kräht schon der Hahn,
Bald bricht der Morgen an.

Im grunen Wald, auf bunter Wiese
Hupft ein Voglein.

Was fur ein Vogelein?
Was fur ein Vogelein?
Mit goldenem Mund, mit goldenem Füessen
Wartet es ja mein.

Warte nur, o Vögelein,
Warte nur, o Vögelein!
Hat Gott mich Dir beschieden,
Werd ich vereint Dir sein.

Es kräht schon der Hahn,
Bald bricht der Morgen an.
Jibone Hamikdasch, ir Zion temalle
(Erbaut wird das Heiligtum, Zion wird erfullt)

Wann wird es sein; sagt wann?
V'schom noschir schir chodesch u'vernono naale,
(Und dort werden wir ein neues Lied
anstimmen singend Zion besteigen)
Die hochste Zeit, wohlan!

This song also in German was also very popular:

Es weinen die Schafe,
Es klagen die Hirten.
Saget dem Herrn.
Das Heu braucht die Herde.
Sei gegrusst, teurer Schafer,
Sind wohl meine Schafe?

Deine Schafe werden immer wohl sein,
Solange ich ihr Schäfer bin.

During Rabbi Isaac's illness the doctors ordered some medication. Because he refused to take it, his friend Rabbi Aron Jesaja told him: "You definitely must take it. It is Pikuach Nefesch. It is danger of life." Upon hearing that, Rabbi Isaac said: "Listen! Listen! That fool says: I must!"

Rabbi Isaac lifted his eyes to heaven and said, "Lord of the world,

to you it is evident that I can not lift a finger without devotion and meaning and this man ventures to say: I must!"

Forty years Rabbi Isaac led the community. He died mourned by a large following, on the Seventh of Adar in the Year 5582.

* * * *

9

BLOOD ACCUSATIONS

For us children, the holiday always ended much too soon. It seemed to us that our vacation from school had slipped away before we had sufficient time to enjoy it to the full.

However for the grown-ups there were other thoughts, as from the time when the baking of the Matzot started, until the very last day of Passover the Jewish communities everywhere lived in fear and under the constant threat of a new blood libel, which often raised its dangerous head in this season of the year in many parts of Europe.

They therefore breathed easier and thanked G-d when these days had passed by without any troubles of that sort.

I wish to describe a few of the more prominent cases of the Blood Libels.

At dusk on the last day of Passover we gathered in front of the synagogue, waiting for Yossi the Sky-Watcher to appear and to announce to us that three stars had become visible in the sky so that we could start the evening service. He would squint up at the sky with his right eye, keeping his left eye tightly closed. Why he did not use his left eye, I do not know. Perhaps his right eye was

the better one.

As we stood waiting at the synagogue gate we indulged in a little juicy gossip about the bad wine which Reb Hayim, the innkeeper, had sold for the sedarim that year and the burned matzot which the matzah baker had palmed off on our community. Then there was talk about the holiday fashions, particularly the new spring bonnets of our ladies, that had appeared in the synagogue. The rabbi's sermon, too, came in for its share of criticism.

When we entered the dimly-lit synagogue we could distinguish a tall figure, the head covered with a tallit, leaning against the reader's stand. This was not our reader but a straw scarecrow of sorts, which was put up in the synagogue each year at this time and which we had named the 'Hametzdige Barechu'. We children knew all about this apparition; still it struck terror into our hearts anew each year. It was associated with a near-disaster that had come to our community on a Passover many years before. That passover, when the sexton had opened the synagogue door to admit the worshippers for evening services at the conclusion of the holiday, he beheld an unknown figure leaning against the reader's stand. Coming closer, the sexton saw that it was a Gentile, fast asleep. Beside him, on the floor, lay the decanter in which the kiddush wine was kept. It was empty. Beside it lay another bottle full of bright red liquid. The sexton rushed out and called the police. After being rudely awakened by the tap of a policeman's butt, the intruder confessed that he had been hired by some unfriendly Gentiles to replace the kiddush wine in the synagogue with a bottle of blood to give substance to the charge that the Jews were using blood for their seder rites. As it happened, the man had become thirsty and drunk up the contents of the wine decanter he had found in the synagogue. Before long he had fallen asleep at the reader's stand, a lucky thing for our community. As it happened, the plot perpetrated by the man and his Gentile employers would have been exposed soon enough, because it had been concocted a week too late. It was this incident that the life-size effigy commemorated. I have since heard that some communities other than my own, observed the custom of burning straw puppets at the close

of Passover for similar historical reasons.

We did not go out to buy chametz until a full hour after the conclusion of Passover. This custom, which was observed with great care in our community, was based on the miraculous escape of Prague's Jewish community from death or at least serious illness. It seems that a Jew-hater had induced all the Gentile bakers near Prague's Jewish quarter to add arsenic to the bread they would sell to the Jews immediately after Passover. However, one baker's apprentice, apparently a decent soul, went to the rabbi at noon on the last day of Passover and informed him of the plot. Fearful that the material evidence might be removed if the crime were to be exposed prematurely, the rabbi pondered ways in which he could save his congregation from harm without making the danger known to them. He sent word to all the Jews in the city to be sure to come to afternoon services since he had an announcement of grave importance to make. When almost all of Prague's Jewish community had gathered in the synagogue, the rabbi announced that there had been an error in the calendar and that Passover would not end for another twenty-four hours. By the following night, the police had been quietly notified and the criminals were put behind bars. Only then did the Jews of Prague learn of the narrow escape they had had, thanks to the decency of one Gentile apprentice lad and the quick wit of their beloved rabbi. In order to perpetuate the memory of the event for posterity they instituted the custom of the hour-long wait before purchasing chametz after the conclusion of Passover.

A LETTER TO THE LORD

"Yankel" Mistress Mirel said to her husband, "How will I be able to do my Pesach shopping this year? I don't have a penny in this house."

"I suppose we'll just have to sell our blankets. It's all we have left," Yankel replied.

"And what'll we use for covers at night? "Our matzot, I presume?" Mirel demanded.

Yankel sat in silence for a while. Then he hit upon a bright idea. "I know what I'll do," he exclaimed. "I'll write a letter to G-d to send us some help." He went to his table drawer for a pen and some paper and began to write his letter at once. When he was done, he folded the letter neatly and placed it in an envelope which he addressed to the "Master of the Universe" care of the Milky Way. On the back of the envelope he wrote his return address. He sealed the envelope and threw it out the window. Carried off by a gust of wind, the letter sailed through the air until it dropped at the front door of a rich banker's mansion. There it was found the next morning by the banker's servant who, unable to read, thought that the letter had been addressed to his master and handed it to him with the morning's mail. When the banker saw the letter, he smiled, opened the envelope and enjoyed a hearty laugh as he read its contents. Then he took enough money to pay for a modest supply of Passover food, put it into an envelope and sent it to Yankel with a covering letter stating that the Lord had received his request and had been pleased to send him some money through His bank on earth.

When Yankel got the letter, he counted the bills carefully, stuffed the bills and the letter into his pocket and said to his wife: "Well, this is better than nothing, but I'd like to have the money which the scoundrel the banker must have kept as his commission.

THE LORD HAS PROVIDED

Many years ago there lived in a Slovakian village a Jew named Pinhas. Pinhas was a poor man, but being pious and learned, he enjoyed the respect of Jews and Gentiles alike including the Count who owned the manor. The Count enjoyed teasing the Jew in his crude way, but Pinhas had no cause for complaint, for the Count would send him handsome gifts of money, particularly on the eve

of each holiday. Without these gifts, Pinhas would not have been able to celebrate the festivals in the manner befitting a good Jew.

Each time the Count would appear at the house of the Jew with his holiday present, Pinhas would bow low and say: "The Lord has provided." After a while the Count came to resent the fact that Pinhas kept thanking the Lord instead of him, the Count, who had been giving him the money. One Passover the Count decided to teach the impudent Jew a lesson and to omit the customary gesture of holiday cheer.

Pinhas and his wife Rachel, who had counted on the money for their Passover purchases, were dismayed as the hours passed and no word came from their benefactor. Rachel had finished cleaning their little cottage, kashering her cooking utensils, and putting her chametz away, but without the count's gift there was no money for her to buy food for the holiday. Husband and wife sat by the window resting from their holiday preparations, hoping against hope that the Count had not forgotten them after all.

As they were about to give up in despair, a huge black sack hurtled through the open window and fell to the floor with a thud. For a moment Pinhas and Rachel were struck dumb with terror. Rachel was the first to regain her speech. "Let's open the the sack quickly. I think something's about to happen," she whispered. Pinhas brought a knife and cut the cord with which the sack was tied. When the sack was finally open, Rachel picked it up and let its contents drop to the floor. Something big, brown and furry fell out. It was a dead monkey, its face distorted in an ugly grimace.

Pinhas and Rachel immediately suspected a Passover plot, an attempt by unfriendly Gentiles to implicate Jews in some heinous crime. Accordingly, they decided to remove every trace of the dead animal from the house at one. There was a fire in the kitchen, but the monkey was too big to be thrown into the oven all in one piece. Pinhas therefore took a sharp kitchen knife and proceeded to cut up the animal. First, however, he skinned it carefully for he knew enough of the ways of the world to understand that he would be able to get good money for the monkey hide. As he turned the

animal around, he heard something fall to the ground with the clink of metal. It turned out to be a golden ducat. Pinhas and Rachel were overjoyed. And lo when they cut the monkey's throat, two more coins, as large and shiny as the first, fell out.

Pinhas and Rachel rushed out for some last-minute shopping, and when they sat down to celebrate their Seder it was a table laden with plenty of good food.

In the middle of the seder, there was a knock at the door. It was the Count, who had come to see how the two Jews managed to celebrate their holiday without his financial assistance. Naturally, he was more than suprised to see the the brightly-lit room and the festive table. However, the only explanation he could get from Pinchas was the old refrain: "The Lord has provided." It was only after much prodding from the Count that Pinhas told the strange story of the dead monkey and the golden ducats.

It turned out that the animal had been the Count's own pet monkey. Apparently it had choked to death on some of its master's golden coins, which it had taken between its teeth in much the same manner as it had seen the Count do many a time.

"Well, this explains the mystery of my missing coins," the Count said with an obvious note of relief. "I've been counting my money, and I noticed that there were three coins missing. Here I was, accusing one of my trusted servants of having stolen the money, when it was all the fault of this poor monkey of mine."

It seems that when the Count had learned that his pet had died, he told one of his servants to take the animal and throw it into the river. Instead of following his master's instructions, the man, who was seemingly in the mood for games, had thrown the dead monkey through the open window of the cottage of Pinhas the Jew.

"So you are right, after all, Pinhas," the Count conceded. "Your Lord always does provide for you. I'm glad the money helped you have a happy holiday."

THE GAON MORDECHAI BENET

Rabbi Mordechai Benet was born in the year 1753 in Csurgo, Hungary. He was the Rabbi in various larger communities the last of which was in Nicolsburg and at the same time he was Chief Rabbi of Moravia. He was also the author of many important Seforim. In Prague he functioned as a Klaus-Rabbi and as the dean of a large Yeshiva, as well as a member of the ecclesiastical court. He fought energetically, against the reform movement; He studied the Torah until deep into the night. Thus it often came to pass that vandals used the darkness to throw stones through his windows.

When coming home he was very cautious and he always examined each corner and closet so that no one would be able to have a cause for accusation.

It was a terrible event on the eve of Chometz-Batlen which served to undermine the Rabbi's health. As he sat in his study that evening immersed in research, a certain unrest overpowered him to such an extent that his studies would not progress. He opened the doors of the book case and to his unspeakable horror he became aware of a bottle containing a red liquid which turned out to be blood.

Suddenly he heard loud voices and heavy footsteps in the hall. He heard shouts demanding that he open the door, as well as dreadful threats. The Rabbi was in despair. There was no place into which he could pour out the contents of the bottle.

In desperation he drank its contents, rinsed out the bottle and also drank the rinse-water in order to obliterate any possible traces. The inswarming horde was disappointed when they did not find the hidden evidence.

This event undermined the Rabbi's health. Having to drink that blood aroused such a revulsion in him, that as a result of it he was completely debilitated.

In the year 1828, when he was 75 years of age, he visited the Karlsbad Spa on urgent advice from his doctors, because of his critical health condition. His health deteriorated so much that he made arrangements for his eventual funeral. The Rabbi expressed

the wish to be buried in his home town of Nicolsburg, by the graves of his parents, and if this were not possible, to be buried in Prague. Unfortunately, after a few days the feared death occurred.

However, the government did not allow the transport of the corpse without embalming on such a long journey, and they did not allow the body to remain in the town until the next day, because Karlsbad was a Spa. The government then ordered an immediate burial or transportation of the corpse.

It was decided to bury the body temporarily at the nearby Jewish Cemetery in Lichtenstein, against the wishes of the deceased, until all governmental regulations of exhumation were cleared. This matter was decided with the special consent of the Jewish community.

In Sefer "Chut-Hamschulosch" by Rabbi Sol. Schreiber of Beregszaz, we find the following story concerning the case of Rabbi M. Benet Z.L. He was at one time engaged to the daughter of the Rabbi of Lichtenstein. However, for a reason unknown to the public he broke the engagement according to a Din-Torah. The author of the Chut-Hamschulosch writes that because of this improper act, after his death, his burial at home was delayed for six months. The Gaon Hakodosh R. Jechiel Meyer of Gistnum Z.L. also related in his Sefer Merom Hurim, that Rabbi Simon Schreiber from Krakau heard it personally from his father the Bal Ch'tam Sofer, that after his death Mehram Benet appeared in the Gaon's dream and told him that he was condemned by heaven to be buried temporarily until he found his final grave at home. Because of the incident when he broke his engagement to the daughter of the Rabbi of Lichtenstein, the Rabbi was punished although, he did everything according to the Din-Tora; however, Mehram Benet was still unforgiven.

It also came to pass that his former bride was buried near his grave.

Hagaon Rabbi Hillel Lichtenstein, one of the most attached students of the Chatam Sofer told the following: After the temporary burial of Rabbi Mordechai Benet, the Chatam Sofer sat in his chair



Rabbi Mordechai Benet, Chief Rabbi of Moravia and Bohemia

the whole night through, considering the problem and troubling himself to find a legal reason for the exhumation and reburial permit of Mehram Benet in Nicolsburg. The late Rabbi Benet had expressed to the Chatam Sofer Z.L. the wish to be buried in his native land.

One day Rabbi Benet's famous son Awriel Z.L. decided to go to the Chatam Sofer concerning this matter. Even after repeated refusals, he begged the Chatam Sofer to do something in the case of his father. This time the Chatam Sofer told him that he hoped to give him good news that day. However, even at that time it was not possible for the Chatam Sofer to give Awriel, the desired answer immediately. He was awake the whole night, and still could not find a permissable reason for exhumation.

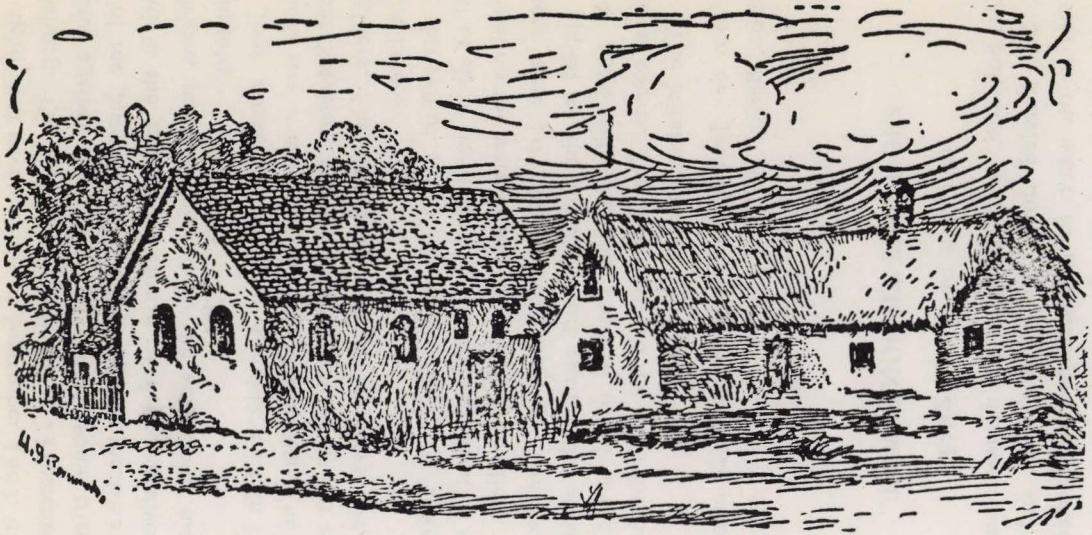
After a sleepless night, the Chatam Sofer finally fell asleep in his chair, in the morning. A vision of the Mehram Benet appeared and showed him a page in the Talmud which made the decision possible. He called the son and told him the good news immediately.

THE TISZA-ESZLAR AFFAIR

On the first of April 1882 there disappeared in T.E. (Hungary) Esther, the fourteen year old daughter of the widow Solymosi. Because of this, some Jews were suspected of ritual murder.

Indeed, the sexton Josef Scharf, his fourteen year old son Moritz, as well as his five year old son made extorted statements. Moritz related that through the keyhole of the temple door, he clearly observed, the killing of the girl, by the slaughterer Salomon Schwartz, who cut her throat. For the time being, not a trace of the girl, either dead or alive or even the smallest part of her clothing was found. But on June 19, 1882 the corpse of an approximately fourteen year old girl was dragged from the river Theiss, it was believed that this was the corpse of Esther Solymosi, However, her mother very determinedly contested the identity.

The interrogation of the above mentioned prisoners was held in



Synagogue of Tisza-Eszlar, with Home of Joseph Scharf.

a very strict manner and the accused were even tortured. On the twenty eighth and twenty ninth of September 1882, it came to riots in Pressburg. The anti-semites founded a "Protective Society" for Christians against Jews. Without results, some tried to speak in favour of the Jews: Kossuth spoke against the false blood accusation and in the Hungarian House of Representatives it came to a lively debate, partly influenced by the anti-semitic judge, in charge of the inquiry.

On June ninteenth, 1883, at a public trial in Nyireghaza, an indictment was made against fifteen defendants. The disappearance of Esther Solymosi was described as caused by her murderers and their helpers. The defendants had, as attorneys, Dr. Heuman and Dr. Karl Eotvos.

The thirty-third day of the trial, August 3, 1883, brought the acquittal of all of the defendants. In the argument, it was stated that the accusation for murder was completely groundless, it was clarified that there were no ritual murders at all. The attorney's for the State's appeal to the highest court against the acquittal ended on April 4, 1884 with the final acquittal of all of the defendants by the highest courts. The T.E. trial was the basis for Arnold Zweig's drama, "The Mission Samaels" (1918).

Copy from the Jewish Lexicon, Volume IV/2, page 953 (Jewish publication, Berlin, 1927)

FROM "THE MISSION SAMAEL"

(a Drama by Arnold Zweig)

Esther Solymosi, who was skimpily dressed came out of the bushes. She kneeled down at the river bank and pulled a rope which was in the water. As a basket rose, she looked at the inside and outside of her crab-trap, but nothing was caught so early in the morning. Singing, she walked away.

A stout man in a hunting suit and a gun came out of the woods, and stood still listening. The girl who was surprised to see the

gentleman supressed a scream. The gentleman then chided Esther for attempting to steal crabs, and asked her, "What's your name you little pig"?

"Esther Solymosi", was her answer, and shakingly she stammered, "Please pardon me Baron von Onody – gracious sir".

In his crude manner he told her to shut up and ironically he asked, "Whom do the crabs in the water belong to"?

She answered, "To you gracious sir, Baron von Onody".

With a rough voice he replied, "This is stealing. For this you could get arrested.

With folded hands she implored, "Noble and good Baron". Smilingly he leaned his gun against a tree stump and approached closer to the girl with the words, "I won't harm you". He embraced her and kissed her mouth. Because she was afraid, she let him do it. He asked her age which she gave as seventeen. He then commanded her to carry his hunting bag to his castle. The girl followed him through the bushes, for she did not expect anything evil. After a short while, she cried out, "No, please no sir"! Baron von Onody replied, "Be quiet, you animal, be quiet"! After a little pause he said to her, "Get up, get up Esther, Esther please. I'll give you money and a silk apron, if you get up right away." Onody then came out of the bushes with his shirt open.

"You only make believe because I held your mouth closed". With his open collar he reentered the bushes and then came out again. He threw himself to his knees and exclaimed, "I only held her mouth closed for a minute. Oh, to look at these glassy eyes in agony. I did not mean to do that. I could not help it". He looked about in despair, wringing his hands, and exclaimed, "What can I do now". However, suddenly he cooly decided, "Into the water with her". He dragged the dead girl from the bushes and threw her into the water. Then he took his gun and fled into the woods.

Baron von Onody was instrumental in getting all the Jews of the village arrested for complicity in the murder of Esther Solymosi.

The examining magistrate devised the plan of blaming Esther's death on a ritual murder in the temple. Moritz Scharf, only fourteen

years old and prepared as a main witness through starvation, beatings and terrible tortures, confessed that he witnessed the murder take place through the key hole.

The tortures which Moritz Scharf was subjected to were terrible. The following scene took place in the jail.

The hallway in the jail led into the cell, whose doors were wide open so that the Pandur could go in at all times to wake the prisoner Moritz Scharf, who could not flee because his feet were in chains. A neck-chain forced him to remain seated on his wooden bench. His face was pale and thin, a whiplash streak was evident across his cheek.

The following conversation took place:

Pandur: "Wake up Jew"!

Moritz Scharf: "Please don't beat me."

Pandur: "I won't beat you, if you don't fall asleep."

Moritz Scharf: "I don't sleep. I'm thirsty! I'm thirsty!"

Pandur: "I can't help it. There are orders. Are you hungry?"

Moritz Scharf: "I'm not hungry anymore."

Pandur: "You did not eat for three days."

Then came the examining magistrate Bari with his clerk.

Bari: "Were all my orders obeyed?"

Pandur: "He neither drank nor slept."

Moritz Scharf looks at Bari and asks him, "What have I done?"

Bari: "You lied yesterday. If you confess, you will get everything you heart desires."

Moritz Scharf: "What do you want from me? I am not guilty."

Bari: "Talk now, what did your father and the other Jews do with Esther Solymosi?"

Moritz Scharf swore by all that is holy that he did not know. Bari told Pandur, "We will get much more out of him in another way. Bring the boy into a better cell. Take the chains off. Give him water, then wine and feed him pork. Let him sleep as much as he wants to. Do all this for a whole week."

A week later Moritz Scharf was again in the interrogation room. Bari told Moritz, "Listen well now: From now on you will have it nice like last week, every day, my son. I feel sorry for you. I have

your future at heart. You will have good clothes, and everything you desire. You will go to a good school, where you can study what you want".

Moritz: "Could I also become an officer?"

Bari: "Yes, study what you want, you can become a lieutenant or even reach a higher rank. The only condition is that you tell me everything, what happened and how it happened in the Synagogue. However, if you should lie, you will go into a windowless cellar where rats live; You will only receive bread and water and lots of beatings. I expect your answer tomorrow".

Bari to the Clerk; "I think that now we've got him". On the next day in Bari's examination room, Moritz confessed everything Bari dictated to the clerk.

The famous Rabbi Feivel Flaut from Nagy-Suran, who also published the biography of the "Chatam-Sofer", mentions in his work, "Chover Ben Chaim", the following description of the Tisza-Eszlar case under the title "Megilas Eszlar".

On a Saturday night a Din Torah was held in Tisza Eszlar in the Synagogue's polish (lobby). Two hours later everyone involved went back to their homes without any misgivings.

The previous week, a housewife had sent her maid to the nearby city of Ofalu, to the store of "K" to buy paint, in order to paint her little house for Easter. According to the statement of the merchant, the maid was there and picked up the order, but she did not return to her employer. When it got dark and the girl still had not returned, her employer went to the girl's mother to inform her. The two women who tried to find her, accidentally met Schamasch Scharf. He comforted them with a story his parents once told him, that long ago in the village of Nanas a girl got lost. People spread the rumor that the Jews killed her, because they needed blood for their Easter bread, but after a short time the girl was found again. When the mother of the girl heard that, she went quickly to the village screaming loudly and told the story which she had just heard to a circle of anti-semitic people and other rabble which were standing around. They agreed strongly that it had happened that way, because on the previous Sabbath three strange Jewish slaughterers were in

the village and on Saturday night they had a meeting in the lobby of the Temple. The non-Jews in the neighborhood had heard at night a sound made as by a hammer. The missing girl's mother then brought as a witness the five-year old son of the sexton, whom she had bribed with candy, to make the statement that he saw, with his own eyes, the murder of the Solymosi girl by the Jews. After that the mother went to the examining magistrate, who immediately arrested the Schamasch, his wife and the three strange slaughterers.

After a while an anti-semitic delegate brought before Parliament a petition for investigation of this case, but this was refused by the ministers. The public safety council ordered protection for the threatened Jews of Tisza Eszlar.

Meanwhile the little boy was taught to say that his fourteen year old brother also knew everything, exactly what had taken place that night in the synagogue. However, when they brought him before the judge, he did not understand what it was all about. He was then given to the security commissioner and held in custody. About midnight he was taken before the examining magistrate, but the state's attorney had in the meantime influenced and threatened him so much that he made the following statement:

On the Saturday night he had heard a noise from the Temple. Although, the temple was closed, he looked through the keyhole and saw how a slaughterer butchered Esther and caught her blood in a bowl and then poured it into a bottle. Later the boy went to the temple to look around, but found nothing, no blood and no other suspicious signs. The state's attorney wrote this statement down on paper. The examining magistrate witnessed it and the fourteen year old boy had to sign everything even though he did not understand it.

Soon after Shavuot lumber shipments on rafts from Sziget floated down the river "Tisza", and as they passed near Eszlar, the sailors noticed a human body floating in the water. When the body came near the bank of the river, it was fished out and identified as the corpse of a woman.

The body was buried right there. A message was sent to the local judge, who ordered that the corpse be exhumed. Upon close

examination, it was confirmed that it was the body of a young girl and that the clothes were those of the missing girl, Solymosi, Tied to her back, they found the little bag with the paint. After that the judge ordered the corpse re-buried.

Shortly thereafter, a district commission consisting of several doctors, issued an opinion that it definitely was Esther Solymosi and they could not find anything contrary. The corpse was also identified by one of her girlfriends who agreed and identified the the corpse by a mark caused by a foot injury, from being kicked by a cow.

Later the corpse was brought to Eszlar, but there nobody was allowed to come close, except the mother who denied this was her child. The people from the raft, who had fished out the corpse, were taken into custody and tortured terribly. Water was poured down their stomachs and they suffered unspeakably. They finally made a statement in order to save themselves from further tortures, that a Jew had given them those clothes to dress the corpse therein. Immediately, after they were released, the sailors went to Sziget and there at the court they retracted their statement, which they had made to avoid further torture.

The highest court in Budapest ordered another investigation. The corpse was dug up from the grave once more, and examined by three well-known professors, who stated that it was the body of E.S. A woman said that E.S. was pregnant and drowned herself out of shame.

At the conclusion of the trial M. Sch. revoked his statement made in the Hungarian language. The father had a good idea: He demanded that his son should be ordered to repeat in 'Yiddish', but M. Sch. could not do that because his statement was coached to him in the Hungarian language, whose real meaning he did not understand.

After a witty speech by counsel for the defense, the president announced the acquittal of all the accused.

M. Sch. was taken to Amsterdam and from there to Paris were he died years later.

The Jury was convinced, that one could see absolutely nothing through the keyhole. They let M. Sch. look through it and he

confessed that he could see nothing. This time the big liar spoke the "truth".

The philanthropic prince of the church the archbishop Samassa of Erlau (Eger) Hungary, gave the following report about the T.E. affair. "The presumption of a ritual murder is considered absurd even in a case in which the accused had really committed the murder. Judaism can have nothing in common with those murders. If fanatic people get together and misuse religion, one can not make the whole religion responsible. In each religion, there are picturesque expressions, which can be misinterpreted. Even the catholic religion is not free from such expressions, and misinterpretation in many cases. (Pester Lloyd)

A SEDER WITH MARRANOS

The ship with which young Moses Lewy undertook a world journey, in order to collect contributions for Yeshivas in Israel, was struck by a terrible storm and was forced to land in Spain. It was a double misfortune for him because it was the eve of Passover. He was also aware that for a Jew it would mean death if he would be recognized as such. In his despair, Moses went to the market to buy some vegetables to eat. There he saw a fine gentleman drive up, who also brought different kinds of vegetables. He approached him quietly and said to him, "Take me with you to your house, as I have to tell you something very interesting." The gentleman agreed and they were driven to the rich man's home. Upon arriving at the house the man closed the door, very carefully, and Moses told him, "I want you to know the I am a Jew, but I am not afraid of you because I feel that you too are a disguised Jew, and I would like to celebrate Passover with you." The master of the house was afraid that Moses might be a spy of the inquisition, but Moses convinced him that he was a religious Jew. In the evening, the whole family went to church. Later, they came back with many distinguished people. When the gates and

doors were locked, they went to a seder table which was prepared with great luxury in the cellar. The master of the house then showed the guests a secret door which could be used if an escape became necessary.

Moses recited the Kiddush, for all, in Hebrew and also read the Hagadah which the master of the house transalated into Spanish to the other assembled guests celebrating the seder. Suddenly a troop of soldiers broke into the house and arrested everybody they found celebrating the seder except for Moses and the daughter of the house. After hiding out, these two succeeded in escaping from Spain, and made their way to Israel, where they got married.

THE HURVA SHUL

In the Hurva Shul in Old Jerusalem, the synagogue made famous by Rabbi Judah the Pious, Kiddush is recited even if the Seder night falls on a Friday. After services the sexton takes home with him whatever is left of the wine, and brings it back to the synagogue the next morning.

This odd custom commemorates an incident that transpired at the Hurva synagogue one Passover several centuries ago. It seems that, during the first night of Passover, the sexton had had a dream that the Ark of the synagogue was on fire. He awoke, leaped out of bed and hurried to the synagogue. There was no fire, but when he opened the Ark he found that the wine in the decanter standing inside had been replaced by blood. Obviously, this had been done by the Turks to obtain "evidence" that the Jews used Gentile blood for their religious rituals. Acting quickly, the sexton disposed of the blood and rushed out to get a bottle of wine which he put into the Ark in place of the other decanter. In the middle of services the next morning, a troop of Turkish soldiers, led by an officer and followed by a curious mob, broke into the synagogue. The officer ordered the Ark opened and demanded to see the bottle inside. The bottle of course, contained nothing but wine. Embar-

rassed, the officer led his men away and the congregation was saved. In order to prevent a recurrence of this incident, the congregation made it a custom not to leave any wine in the synagogue overnight. Legend has it that a similar incident occurred at Adrianople, in Turkey.

THE FIVE TOWERS

Opposite Prague's famous Pinkus-Schul, there stood a church with a tower, called the "Five Towers" because of its five walls, which faced five small streets. These walls had five fine marble pillars, which stood next to five windows. The roof was decorated with five human figures. Since the church was no longer being used, a group of beggars made it their home. Beneath the tower ran a deep cavern. People were fearful to enter the cave, and avoided it as much as possible, because it was said that ghosts lived there and carried on all sorts of mischief.

Once on a Passover eve, the Maharal, in the company of his sexton, performed "Chometz-Batlen" with a candle as was usual. Suddenly, the candle was extinguished. The Maharal motioned the sexton to relight the candle. The sexton attempted it several times, but each time the candle went out. The Maharal saw in that an evil omen, and moved with the sexton to another lamp, which always burned near the wall, and ordered the sexton to read the prayers aloud. However, the sexton made a mistake. Instead of the word, "Birchisi", he said, "Bihimschi". Even though the Maharal informed him of his error, he repeated it. The sexton was shocked and connected this occurrence with his bad dream of a week ago. On Shabbat Hagadol he saw, in his dream, the "Five Towers" in flames and one flame twisted itself into a window of the Schul. In great shock he awoke from that dream.

From a closer inquiry about the tower, the Maharal learned that a secret passage-way from the cave led to the "Green Cloisters" where Thedeus lived. His suspicion was correct indeed, as Thedeus

was thinking about an attempt in the cave, on the Jews on the occasion of Passover. It was hither that he lured a boy who lived in the neighborhood of the Cloisters, where children often played.

He stabbed the child, caught the blood in a dish and filled it into little bottles, and put the names of distinguished Jews on them. Among them were also the names of the son and son-in-law of the Maharal. He then carried the bottles and the corpse of the boy into the cellar of the "Five Towers" and stowed everything away in a dusty chest. When the parents realized that their child was missing, Thedeus assured them that he would help to find him. He then made a remark that he supposed that the Jews needed the child for their "Matzot" and advised the parents to notify the police at once, so that they might search the houses of the Jews. He instructed the mother to say that she saw a Jew with something moving in a sack walk in the field. She obeyed that deceitful advice.

The Maharal, who knew of the sexton's bad dream, became extremely restless and went at midnight, in the company of his sexton and the fearless Golem, to the cave of the Five Towers. Equipped with torches, lamps and a stick, they were very careful not be seen arriving in the cellar. They lit the torches at once, but when there arose a strong dusty cloud and a draught, it appeared that the torches would be extinguished. At the same time one could hear wild dogs barking. This shocked the sexton, but the Maharal said to him, "Have no fear, just stand still". They said a prayer, after which the barking stopped and the dust settled. Quietly, they moved ahead. However, after a few steps, stones and bricks fell down upon them. The Maharal ordered the Golem to go ahead by himself, because the ghosts could not harm him, and if he saw something suspicious, he was to bring it to the Maharal. Soon the Golem found the chest with its gruesome contents and brought it to the Maharal. The Maharal then ordered him to bring the chest with the corpse of the child to the cellar of Thedeus, and to hide it there between the barrels. He also ordered the Golem to dig a hole and bury the bottles of the blood. After this the Maharal and his companions went home.

On the morning of the first day of Passover, there came a police order to the Jewish quarter to search all of the Jewish houses, the Shul, and the home of the Maharal. However, the search was fruitless. As they passed by the Five Towers, Thedeus, who accompanied the commission, remarked to the captain that one should investigate the cave because Jews liked to busy themselves in such abondoned places. This search was also without results.

When the Christian Easter approached, Thedeus sent his servant, the father of the murdered child, into the cellar to check on the stored wine. The servant, who went down into the cellar, was followed by a little dog which began to pace the length and width of the cellar, to sniff and bark very loudly. The servant, who noticed the behaviour of the dog, investigated and found the corpse of his child. He quickly ran to the Captain of the police and told him of his discovery. Immediately, the Captain came with the guards and convinced himself of the accuracy of the servant's find, who shouted and lamented that his master had murdered his child, and had put the guilt upon the Jews. Thedeus tried, at first to deny the crime, but later broke down and confessed to it.

CHARLES BRIDGE IN PRAGUE

On this old bridge there are thirty groups of statues approximately five to six meters high, equally distributed on each side of the bridge. In their midst is a "Calvarian Group", with a cross and diverse figures. Suspended in the upper half is a semi-circle, of



The Writing that was on the Charles Bridge Monument

yellow metal on which there is the inscription, in Hebrew letters, in the size of one and one half meters: "Kodosh-K. . ., K....., A.D....., Zew.....".

On the pedestal is an explanation of the inscription in Czechoslovokian, Latin, and German, which reads as follows: "Erected from the fines of a Jew, because of his defamation of the founder of the Christian religion. By the Royal Tribunal Court of Law. In the year 1696 the 14th day of the autumn month."

THE POLNA CASE

Summary of Ernst Richofsky's Brochure: "From the Battle against the Ritual Murder Superstition."

At the end of the century, an anti-semitic wave, went through the historic countries of the old eastern monarchy sparked by ritual murder superstition. It was tied to the murder of a Christian girl named Anna Hrusa, who was murdered in March of 1899 at Polna, Bohemia.

The rumor soon spread, amongst the country people, that Anna Hrusa was a sacrificial victim of the Jews who allegedly needed christian blood for their Passover purposes. The aroused population soon found a suitable scapegoat-a work-shirking individual who might have committed the murder, Leopold Hilsner, a Jewish lad. He was duly arrested and accused of the crime. A trial was ordered for him and he was found guilty, despite the defense which rested on the argument that all evidence was only circumstantial.

An outcry of protest went through the world. When the university professor, J.T. Masaryk, intervened and related that he met a friend, a university professor and a baptized Jew, who told him, "You should not have intervened. You know, I was also a Jew and I was convinced that ritual murder-superstition is only superstition but this case shows that there could be a secret Jewish sect which perhaps has ritual murder in its statutes".

Masaryk said, "I confess I was surprised to hear such an educated person tell me that. I told him that his superstition was impossible to believe. No, the case is very suspicious". Masaryk further stated, "I will hold no lecture about Jews and anti-semitism, because I am convinced that one who believes in the founder of the Christian religion, cannot be an anti-semite. One can be either a Christian or an Anti-semite, but not both.

However, the trial which was conducted to the end, found Hilsner guilty, because of complicity in the murder of Anna Hrusa, and sentenced him to death by hanging. He was also fined for court costs and the cost of Anna Hrusa's funeral, a total of ninety-seven Gulden.

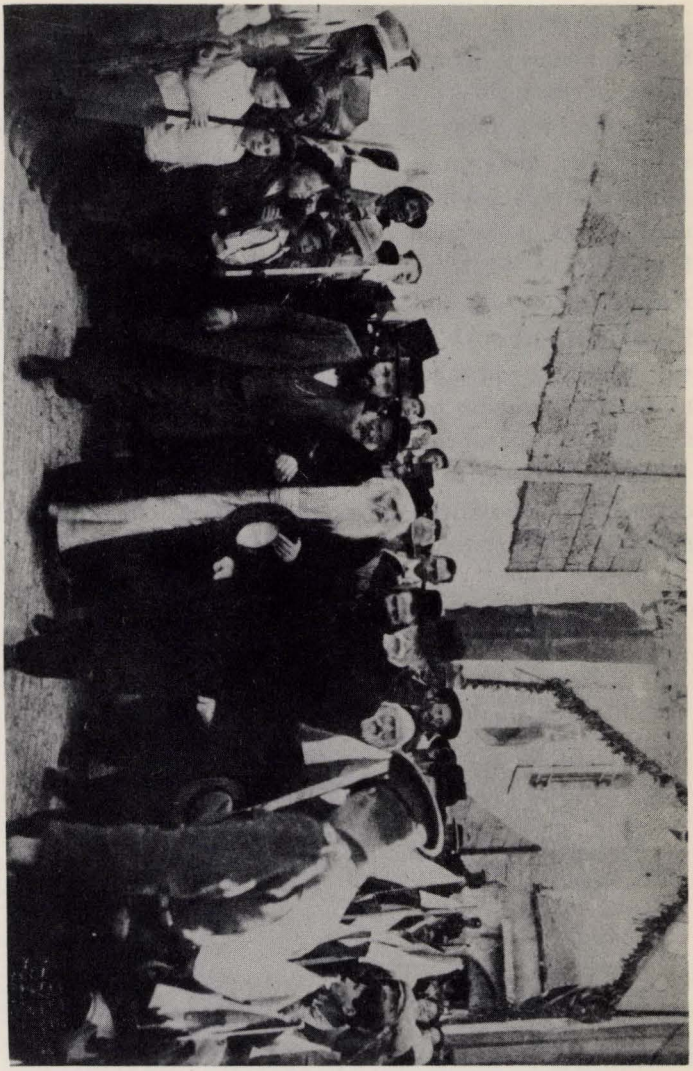
The genious of civil courage spoke. During the retrial which Masaryk had requested, the highest court in Vienna decided that the trial be reopened at the district court in Pisek and it was ordered to obtain the opinion of the medical faculty of the Bohemian University of Prague.

At this new trial in Pisek, ritual murder was not mentioned any longer. However, because of complicity in the murder of Anna Hrusa, Hilsner was imprisoned for life. However, after seventeen years he was pardoned.

The trial of Leopold Hilsner was accompanied by acts of anti-Jewish violence in many Bohemian towns. The non Jewish attorney, who had defended Hilsner, had to give up his law practice in the town, because the anti-Jewish rage turned also against him. In October 1918, in the last days of the Austrian Monarchy, Hilsner was finally released from prison.

A report in the October 1961 issue of "Die Gemeinde", a periodical published by the Jewish Community in Vienna, furnishes the last chapter to the tragic case. It reads:

"In 1961, the 93 year old brother of Agnes Hruza died and confessed on his deathbed the murder, the motif having been his unwillingness to pay to his sister the dowry she was entitled to. Thus the innocent Hilsner was in prison for 17 years on the strength of circumstantial evidence, tied up with the blood accusation.



Chief Rabbi Josef Chaim Sonnenfeld with President Masaryk

After 60 years the murderer confessed but the news of his confession went almost unnoticed by the press."

AMBROSOLI. An ecclesiastic dignitary in Rome widely known for his eloquent sermons on tolerance toward the Jews. His sermons in Santa Maria di Trastevere during the agitation for the abolition of the Roman ghetto proved so effective that his audiences were ready to go out at once and tear down the ghetto walls. Ambrosoli had a difficult time restraining his zealous congregants until official permission could be received from the Pope. When Pope Pius IX signed the edict (April 17, 1848) commanding the removal of the walls and gates of the ghetto, crowds of enthusiastic Italians went to work at once to carry out the Papal order. Ambrosoli moved among them, a crucifix concealed under his coat, ready to be raised in the name of the Christian faith if anyone were to interfere with the work.

It is interesting to note that the razing of the ghetto was begun on the first night of Passover, while the Jews within, were celebrating the seder in their homes unaware of the Papal edict.

חסל סידור פסח כהלכתו

* * * *



THE CHAD GADYAH (the lamb mentioned in the famous poem which is recited on Passover at the conclusion of the Seder).



10

SHAVUOT

When the sad period of the Sefirah had drawn to a close, and Shavuot was approaching, we children felt really relieved. Not that the time of Sefirah is sad in essence; but in our minds it has come to be associated with disaster. First of all in the second century, there was an epidemic during Sefirah time which claimed the lives of most of Rabbi Akiba's students. A millenium later, the same period witnessed the terrible persecutions that were associated with the crusades, persecutions that ended the lives of many Jews, and which caused the annihilation of entire flourishing communities.

To our young minds every holiday had its own character, its own attraction, and its own flavor. Our imagination even endowed each such Yom Tov with a color of its own. It is easy to understand how we associated green with Shavuot. In the Holy Land it marks the season when fields and meadows are prime green and sprouting, while the trees are blossoming forth. Shavuot is a very special day for the trees, it is their day of judgement. Our homes and synagogues are decorated with flowers and greenery, as once the festive crowds on pilgrimages to Jerusalem, decorated their wagons with green foliage, as they brought their baskets of first fruit offerings (bikkurim) to the Temple. Singing Psalms and voicing expressions

of gratitude to G-d, they marched into the sacred yards.

On Shavuot, we observed quite meaningfully the custom of giving for the first time Torah instruction to children. This began by having the rabbi bless the children, as they sat down to a little banquet. The menu included some sweets, and a hard-boiled egg for each child, who was then pulled gently by his right ear.

The Shul is decorated with green foliage on Shavuot because the Midrash states, that when the Torah was given, all herbs, flowers, grasses and trees crowded each other for a seat on Mount Sinai to witness the unique event. In our small shul, too, we received the impression that all the plants and flowers were competing for space. The Almemor, centrally located like the altar in the Holy Temple, was embellished with bouquets and surrounded with fragrant greens. It was a reminder of the day when the whole people of Israel similarly surrounded the Mountain of G-d. The rabbi's seat was decorated with flowery festoons. Beautiful bouquets, arranged with much good taste, hung over the Ark. Shavuot, being the birthday of the Torah, the decor took on a party air. Even the Torah scrolls themselves had been decorated with flowers. Certain kind of decorations, however, were frowned upon by some authorities. For example, Rabbi Elijah Wilner forbade the placing of trees in synagogues for Shavuot, because this reminded of non-Jewish Pentecost customs.

There are many different ways in which Shavuot celebrations are conducted in the different countries. The Falashas, in Abyssinia gather on a hillside in the open and conduct the services there, mindful of the Revelation on Mount Sinai. The Jews of the Mzab Oasis in the Sahara Desert hold a special celebration the day after Shavuot, sprinkling each other with water to recall Moshe's striking the stone for water.

This particular Shavuot promised to be especially interesting. Our community was looking forward to a great event, for on the first day of Shavuot, a new Sefer Torah, which had been penned by Reb Shimon, a respected member of the community, was to be ceremoniously presented to the congregation. As Reb Shimon had no children, this Sefer Torah, as he used to say, was to be his



A Synagogue Decorated with Flowers in Commemoration of the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, of which Shavuot is Its Birthday.

"Kaddish". Shavuot was quite a fitting occasion for this dignified celebration, and a rich impressive program had been carefully planned. The Holy Scroll was to be conducted to Shul under a canopy in a solemn procession, to reach the Shul just before the reading of the Torah. The Sefer, preceded by the rabbi, was carried by its donor from his house to Shul, winding through the whole town. Like a bride, the Sefer had been covered with a white veil and was adorned with myrtle twigs. It was to be met by another solemn procession, led by the chazon, which would include a number of rabbis from other towns who had been invited for the occasion. This procession was to leave Shul with the other Sefer Torah to welcome the new one. The children too, had been dressed up. They were to form the tail end of the procession, carrying lighted havdalah candles.

Everything went according to plan. The new Sefer Torah was inaugurated, in its being used for the Torah reading that day. Reb Shimon, who was not in the habit of spending money for clothes wore a fine new suit that day. Aside from this demonstration of how he had cherished the celebration, it also gave him the opportunity for reciting the "shehecheyonu" blessing. Whether or not it should be recited over a new Sefer Torah is not quite clear. Thus, all doubts were resolved.

SHAVUOT GERIM

The apartment of Reb Simeon was artistically furnished and the famous Oppenheimer pictures adorned the walls. There were two tragic-historic pictures. One showed Ger-Zedek Count Valentine Pototzky. As is well known P. was openly burned on the second day of Shavuot in the year 1749, because the emperor's pardon came too late.

His history is described in the Jewish Encyclopedia.

A second similar case happened with the youngest son of Lord Gordon who was born the 26th of December, 1751, in London,



Lord Gordon

He was involved in the "No Popery" riots which, broke out in London in 1780. The Jews were partly aware of the dangers of the riots, some Jews were later executed, because of their part in them. Gordon himself was accused of high treason, but was freed.

Around that time "G." became interested in Judaism. However, as he was rejected by the rabbinical authorities in London, he was forced to go to Birmingham where he changed to Judaism, and adopted the name Israel ben Abraham.

As Gordon was a very conscientious, observant Jew he blamed everybody who was not so rigorous in his faith. In 1787, he was arrested because of his libel against the British Government and the Queen Maria Antoinette, and brought to New Gate Prison in London. He continued to observe the religious rules very strictly. Even in prison every Sabbath a Minyan was arranged for him. Gordon finally died there in the year 1793.

One of the guests present offered to tell the story about the "Gerim of Bizadujfalu" where a whole community of two hundred persons converted to Judaism in the year of 1868, just one hundred years ago.

The story is from the weekly "Israelite" which was published in Frankfurt A/M, and is reproduced in the Sefer Ksov-Zos-Zikoron.

GERIM

In the year 1868, just one hundred years ago, around the Sefira-time, there converted to the Jewish belief, two hundred souls, of "Bizadujfalu's" Sabbatrier community. In their homes, they had observed the Jewish Dietery Laws, the Sabbath and Holy-Days, but they were not circumcised.

They were originally from the Siebenbürger race of the Szekler-Sabatrier, which acknowledged the Jewish Religion and were in close harmony with Judaism.

As leaders, they always had prominent men, scientists and scholars

who taught the Torah, especially with regard to the observation of the Sabbath. At the time of this occurrence, hundreds of families lived in the "Transylvanian-Sector." This happened when Simon Pecsi was promoted from being their secretary to private secretary of Prince Zsigman Bathory" and to secretary of state and finally to chief of the Province.

In the weekly "Frankfurter-Israelite", the following explantion was found:

"Prince Pecsi went for a walk around the cemetery where he met a Jewish girl of beautiful face and figure. She found favour in his eyes and he took her for a wife. Her name was Esther".

From then on he greatly promoted, the interests of that people of his own sector. He held fiery speeches about Jewish history according to the "Tanach" and about the Holiness of the Sabbath. However, the country prince persecuted him for this, and he was forced to flee to Turkey.

On Yom-Kippur the Gerim assembled secretly in the woods or in a cellar, and used the prayer books which Pecsi supplied them. They fasted according to regulations, married only amongst themselves or took Jewesses for wives. At the time of the Hungarian queen "Maria Terezia" who was an enemy of Jews, their persecution was itensified. In the year 1868 under arrangement of the head Rabbinate of Alt-Ofen, a commission of the Sabatrier went to the Religion Minister of that time, Baron Eotwos, and asked for permission to convert to Judaism, but the Clerus forbade it. At a later date the government was more lenient and gave the permission to convert to Judaism. Two hundred young and old converted to Judaism, and the men were circumcised, to become Gerim-Zadikim. Rabbi Moses Sofer, the son of the Ketav Sofer was their "Mohel". With great enthusiasm and happiness the Gerim joined the "Brith-Abraham", unafraid of the dangers which could accrue. Their typical "Szekler-Face" differed much from their beards and sideburn curls. Fervently crying, they emptied their hearts in prayer before G-d, thankful that they now could openly be Jews. They lived a simple life, their dress like that of ther farmers. With the help of the philanthropist Baron Hirsch, a synagogue and a school were

built. They were led by Rabbi Hirsch.

It is told that after their conversion all the Gerim were summoned to "Maros Wasarhely" to the Governor's office. They dressed becomingly, for that day in court which was expected fearlessly, and with smiles on their faces, they set foot into the courtroom. The chairman asked the oldest the question, "How did it occur to you to convert to Judaism?" The old man told the judge that even his great-great-great-grandfather was a "Sabatrier" and observed the ritual dietary laws. Now the Gerim decided not to remain halfway, and to officially change their religion. The judge was not satisfied with that short answer, and wanted to know if somebody had not misled them to that step. The judge advised that he would visit them on the next day, in his official capacity and pass judgment then and there.

The following day, the judge and his assistant appeared in "Bizad" with an extensive pile of documents. The judge took the documents out of his briefcase and read his judgment to the Gerim. "Everybody may keep the Jewish belief, but his assets will be confiscated by the state." Each Ger, felt a stone lifting from their heart, because they expected punishments which their great grandfathers received, tortures, burnings and so on. They drove all the animals in front of the judge according to directions. The judge looked up benevolently and now said in a kindly manner: "In the name of the king, Franz Josef I, you may remain unpunished in your new beliefs. Take back you belongings, as I just wanted proof that you joined these beliefs sincerely. G-d bless and protect you."

Those Gerim in "Bizad" lived there until Hitler came to power and persecuted them for their beliefs. Hitler promised them freedom from deportation if they returned to their old religion. But the righteous holy ones, opposed such a demand with all determination. They accepted the destiny of all Jews and were sent with them to Auschwitz where they remained true to the Torah and the Jewish belief in G-d. It is not known if even one Ger returned from the death camps. May the Almighty remember all those pious souls and all other righteous ones and may their souls be kept in the Garden

of Eden.

Now back to Shavuot at home. The Rabbi gave a fiery speech, expounding a halachic dissertation, which was clear and within the comprehension of most of the congregation, but I could not follow it at that time. I only remember that he mentioned that King David was a descendent of Ruth, while Goliath was descended from Orpah, Ruth's sister-in-law. He also mentioned, I recall, that if a brother and a sister become proselytes, they become individually new persons and are theoretically allowed to marry each other. The Rabbis did not permit this in practice, so that it would not be said that Jews may do that which is forbidden to Gentiles; However, proselytes, may marry a former relative on the paternal side. The rabbi also explained, I remember, that the special celebration of the day was legitimate, although it might be seen as competing with the Shavuot festival. He was concerned with the rule: "One may not mingle one celebration with another", but the rabbi demonstrated that this principle applies to physical enjoyment only, wherein two pleasures cannot be fully appreciated simultaneously. for spiritual enjoyment, however, no such rule applies.

The celebration was concluded with special psalms recited by the cantor, supported by the improvised choir. Everything came off with dignity.

Before the Torah reading, the reader recited Akdamot, a devotional poem by Rabbi Meir ben Yitzchak Nehorai who was a cantor in Worms during the persecution of 1096. The poem has an acrostic running ninety lines, which both follows alphabetical order and alludes to the name of its author.

Not only was the new Sefer Torah read from that day, but it was used for reading throughout the whole year. This was done not only to honor it, but also to detect early any mistakes that may have been made in the writing.

After the reading, the customary prayer for the Emperor and his household was offered. Such a prayer is alluded to by the prophet Jeremiah, who urged that we pray for the welfare of the community in which we live, even if we are only tolerated strangers, and certainly if we have the privileges of full citizenship.

After services the rabbis who had been in shul got into a heated debate about the Priestly Blessing. The controversy revolved about the fact that Mendel, the master-dyer, had given the blessing with hands that had been visibly stained blue. Although I could understand only part of the argument, I was strongly impressed, besides I was happy to have learned some explanation on points that had occurred to me before, for every child probably gives some thought to the fact that one is restrained from looking at the Priests while they pronounce the Blessing. People even say that if one looks one will become blind.

By chance I heard one of the rabbis expounding just this point very concisely: When the Priests in the Temple pronounced the Blessing, which included the Name of G-d, it was improper to look at them because, as our Sages have told us, the Glory of G-d rests on the hands of the Priests. Hence, a person that dares presume to look at the Glory of G-d is a skeptic of sort. Thus, the Sages meant in their warning about blindness, that such a person has lost his clear perception, and has blurred pictures of reality. However, since the death of Simon the Just, the Priests no longer pronounce the Tetragramaton in their benediction. For even originally, only the most reliable Priests were taught the Holy Name. For this reason some Priests sang a tune during the benediction; the uninstructed Priests could not learn the name because of the song. This may well be the origin of the song intoned today between the verses of the blessings. But there are still other reasons in the performance of their function. The Rambam favors the continuation of the "no-look" practice although the Temple is destroyed.

At any rate, the Talmud teaches: "A Priest whose hands are stained should not Bless, because he would attract the attention of the people to himself and would thereby feel selfconscious. Similarly, a Priest with any physical defect should not bless, as he might feel uncomfortable at the centre of attention.

When the debate began, I could not understand how there could be any question of looking at the Priests during the blessings, since the Priests pull their Tallesim over their heads and hands at

that time. But one of the rabbis then mentioned that neither the Priests nor the people were supposed to hide their faces, for they should confront each other without barriers, in respect and devotion. Still, they should not look at each other, so that the Priests would not become confused. But even though it has become customary to have head and hands covered with the Tallit, any Priest with stained hands or with bodily defect should not bless. The Priests should not look downward, nor at their hands. Rather faces should be turned toward the people. Covering the head with a Tallit was introduced to make sure that the people could not look at the Priest and distract him. The people are expected to parallel the concentrated devotion of their Priests. Others, however, now permit looking toward the covered Priests.

In the Temple the Priests held their hands high above their heads; today they raise them shoulder high, and it is required that the right hand be higher than the left one.

In some places the fingers of the Priests are tied into position with old tzitzit, in groups of two. Oriental Priests hold all five fingers stretched out straight, not grouped in two's. This is connected with some symbolic interpretation of the number five.

Some local customs have the Levites add perfume to the water with which they wash the hands of the Priests. the "Kitzur Shnei Luchos Habris" in the name of the "Turai Zahav", finds this practice not permissible, as it involves a violation of Yomtov. Furthermore, since other religions add fragnance to their "holy water" such practice could be considered forbidden as an imitation of a foreign cultic practice.

The Priests pronounce the words one at a time, following the cantor, who pronounces every word first. This assures a recitation in unison, this practice, in the Talmud is based on Numbers 6, verse 23 "say to them".

In ancient times the Priests wore sandals for the Blessing. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai stopped this, and ordered that they should bless without shoes, since if a sandal strap tears and the Priests leaves to adjust it, a rumour might result to the effect that this Priest has been rejected.

This question of footgear during the Priests Blessing is controversial, with some requiring the Priests to be barefoot, as this was required in the Temple out of respect for the holy ground. Others allow socks or shoes without straps or laces. Most agree on forbidding leather shoes of any kind.

I heard the following statements, in this connection: outside the Holy Land the Blessing is held only on Yom Tov because one must be happy when giving the Blessing, as on Yom Tov. For this reason. some oppose permitting an unmarried person to Bless, since we are told in the Talmud: "He who dwells without a wife, dwells without joy."

Although outside the Holy Land the Priestly Blessing is omitted in the daily prayers, the Blessing is still recited by the cantor during his repitition of the Silent Prayer. However, he mentions it only in the morning. Only then can we be certain that the cantor had not inbibed any alcohol, and even the Priests do not Bless if they had anything alcoholic that day. On a Fast day, therefore, the cantor includes the Blessing even during the afternoon.

The prayer "Ribono Shel Olam" which many people read to themselves during the Blessing concerns the warding off of threatening dreams. About such dreams, I remembered having heard various ideas. Some of the ideas are listed below:

1) A favorable dream does not need further interpretation.

2) An interpreter should admonish the dreamer to mend his ways. Then, using intuition, he should interpret the dream favorably.

3) Experiences and thoughts of a person's daytime hours are the stuff dreams are made of. Dreams are also effected by the foods a person has eaten.

4) A dream often calls for a thorough re-evaluation of one's past. It stands to reason, then, that people will seek an interpretation that casts them in a good light.

5) A certain learned man advised that before retiring at night the following declaration be made:"I shall not fast tomorrow, regardless of what I may dream tonight." This should constitute protection against negative dreams.

6) People used to think that nightmares were caused by demons, hobgoblins and the like. In reality, nightmares may be caused even by an impediment to proper breathing.

7) Rabbi Chusda noted that a non-interpreted dream is as tantalizing as a sealed letter.

So much for dreams.

After a magnificent celebration in the synagogue, there was a formal reception at Reb Shimon's home. As the whole congregation was invited to Kiddush and breakfast, people left shul quickly, as is customary on Yom Tov because of the requirement that Yom Tov be enjoyed personally, an enjoyment which entails eating the required meals of Yom Tov. As customary on Shavuot, the fare consisted of dairy dishes exclusively, as the Torah is compared to milk, and on Shavuot we celebrate the introduction of the Torah. An item on the menu was Sinai-cake, this was a tall conical cake that resembles a hill. In Mayence, Sinai-cakes were baked with milk and honey to symbolize the sweet, life-sustaining character of the Torah. Many shape a cake into seven points to allude to the seven weeks counted from Pesach until Shavuot. Others bake a flat cake in seven layers to symbolize the "seven heavens".

As mentioned before, there is a custom of introducing small children to Torah study on Shavuot. A cake with seven peaks is part of the celebration. Rabbi Moshe Isserles, who noted that the Sinai-cake contains milk, directed that it have a different shape, so that it would not be confused with other cakes, which generally were eaten with meat meals as well. (Similarly, any bread baked with milk must be distinguished by its shape and should never look like ordinary bread.)

Spanish Jews bake a milk cake topped with a ladder, to symbolize the ascension of Moses to receive the Torah.

In Southern Russia "Sures-Latkes" were eaten in honor of Shavuot. Some associate this name with our matriarch Sarah, who prepared cakes with milk for the angels, while Abraham offered them a meat meal. This event, of course, had occurred before the Torah, when meat and milk could still be eaten together. More likely, however, this term presents a corruption of the Slavo-Yiddish

word "tsorech" for cottage cheese, hence "tsorech-latkes".

Cheese-cake and "tsorech-dalkel" (cottage cheese) were portioned out to all those who had not missed a single day in the counting of Sefirah. So that we would remember to count daily, signs were hung in front of our beds, which read in Hebrew said: "Don't forget to recite the Sefirah tonight".

I remember when it once happened that I forgot to count the Sefirah at night. I approached the rabbi on the next day to ask what I was to do. He told me to count right away, but not to recite the accompanying Blessing, and he added that I should be more careful in the future. On this occasion I asked him why we do not recite the "Shehecheyonu" when we count Sefirah for the first time. His answer was that since there still existed the possibility of missing the count on any subsequent day, and since all forty-nine days count is considered but one mitzvah, such a blessing could not be recited until the last day, but by then the mitzvah was no longer new.

Some people eat a dairy meal on Shavuot, recite the grace after meal, and then wash their hands once more and eat a meat meal. Another reason for eating milk dishes on Shavuot was explained by my boyhood teacher: The revelation on Mount Sinai introduced laws which rendered unfit the meat that had previously been prepared. Besides, since the women, too, were at the foot of the mountain from early morning, they had not been able to prepare a kosher meat meal; as the preparations for meat were quite lengthy. Upon returning from the revelation, the men were not willing to wait until the meat was salted, etc., and therefore the women quickly prepared dairy. Furthermore, when we arrange the order of the three-hundred and sixty-five prohibitions to correspond with the three-hundred and sixty-five days of the solar year, the prohibition that corresponds to the day of Shavuot is that which deals with meat and milk.

However, from a historical viewpoint there could not have been any question of cooking anything on that historic Shavuot, because it occurred on a Shabbat.

The critic may say: It is generally accepted that the exodus of the Jews from Egypt took place on Thursday. The Torah would

then have been given on a Friday and not on a Shabbat, if one checks the dates in the Torah. Tradition tells us, however, that the month of Iyar, in that year, had the additional day, thus putting the revelation on Shabbat.

Returning to the topic of dairy food on Shavuot, some say milk is chosen because it is a symbol for the Torah; for just as milk keeps in earthenware better than in metal vessels, Torah also is best preserved by the humble scholars. The reason why people eat milk dishes prior to a regular meal with meat on Shavuot is also examined in the Sefer "Mate Moshe". The reason given there compares the Shavuot meal to the Seder. Just as there we have two dishes to remind us of the two sacrifices the holiday requires, here, too, on Shavuot we eat milk food to recall the Bikkurim offering, and a meat meal in commemoration of the Yom Tov sacrifice.

A student once had been invited to our Yom Tov breakfast. He was asked by the host to say a few words of Torah. He quoted from the Book of Ruth, which is read that day in the synagogue. The upshot of his exegesis was that a poor man who accepts assistance, is benefitting his benefactor. The host immediately seized upon this and asked him: "May I be your guest next week?"

When the discussion at our breakfast table turned to the inauguration of a Sefer Torah, someone told the following anecdote. The owner of a sausage factory, by the name of Schkrek, once donated a Sefer Torah to the synagogue. This was appreciated by all, but the quality of his sausage had drawn popular complaint, people complained that he added much flour to his sausages, which then absorbed a great quantity of water. At the banquet which followed the installation of the Sefer Torah, a joker commented: "We say, 'If there is no flour, there is no Torah', if Mr. Schkrek had not used so much flour in his products, he could not have donated to us this beautiful Sefer Torah!"

(In a more favorable sense this saying has also been applied to the famous lexicographer and commentator Rabbi David Kimchi, as follows: "If it were not for Kimchi, (kimchi is Hebrew for flour) we would not understand the Torah properly".)

That night the customary vigilance was observed at the Talmud

Torah. (The only source for this custom is found in the Zohar Parshat Emor). Originally, only Chassidim stayed up to study that night, but in the last two hundred years the custom has spread to the general public. We learned from the "Tikkun Leyl Shavuot", which is divided into thirteen chapters. Between every two divisions a Kaddish is recited.

The custom of staying awake until dawn on the first night of Shavuot can be traced back to the great kabbalist and liturgical poet Alkabez. As a youth, he was known to have acquired a thorough knowledge of the kabbala, so that even Rabbi Joseph Karo once approached him with a request for an explanation of a particularly difficult Zohar passage. Alkabez responded to this request with a small treatise.

In Adrianople, Alkabez belonged to Rabbi Karo's intimate circle of friends and participated in the learned gatherings as well as the religious practices of that house. At one of the gatherings in the house of Rabbi Joseph Karo, taking place during the holiday of Shavuot, Alkabez had, so the story goes, a vision which led him to introduce the custom of the joint vigil and learning during the night of Shavuot, for which he composed a special ritual.

When this event in the house of Rabbi Karo, was recorded by Rabbi Yeshayahu Horowitz in his "Shnei-Luchot-Habrit", it provided the necessary impetus for this custom of "Tikun Shavuot" to be adopted in all the communities of the orient and occident.

During the all-night wake, black coffee was served at our shul. After tasting it, the usual remark was that it was more black than coffee. A witty fellow once remarked that the brew was probably meant to symbolize the book of Ruth (Megillas Rus; German 'Russ' means 'soot'). On Hoshanah Rabbah, this same gentleman suggested that the Talmud Torah's coffee was found in the liturgy as "Kol mevasser", which sounds like "Kohlenwasser", or coal-water.

At midnight many went into the street. According to a popular belief the sky would split open at midnight and any wish then uttered would be fulfilled.

On the first day of Shavuot, before the Torah is read, there is the

recitation of the wonderful literary work "Akdomot", whose author is the mysterious Meyer ben Isaac Nehorri, who lived in Worms during the eleventh century. The poem is an acrostic running ninety lines, which both follows alphabetical order and alludes to the name of it's author. (It was probably used even then to introduce the holiday in Targum; and it remaind in the Aramaic language.)

A PAINFUL INCIDENT

After Shavuot, a town-wide gathering was convened for a special event. The rabbi of Duna, an excellent speaker, had just returned from a trip to Palestine and was to give a report, which was received with unanimous applause. When he had concluded, his listeners hurried to shake his hand to show their appreciation. Then an informal tea, where cake, tea, and fruits were served, was quickly improvised. As the rabbis were now sitting together and conversing, the rabbi of Duna showed them a rare coin. He considered it so precious that he carried it in a little bag on a string in an inner pocket. The coin itself was wrapped in many covers, which he carefully removed. Then he explained to the curious, that it was an ancient Jewish coin from the time of the destruction of the Temple, and that it had high value as a collectors item, but to him it had even more sentimental value. It was both a souvenir and an irreplaceable treasure. The coin was admired with great interest and respect. On it was imprinted a candelabra, like on the coins of the Hasmoneans. Many Jewish communities, including that of Rome, used the picture of such a Menorah on their seals.

After the recitation of grace, everybody prepared to leave. The rabbi of Duna, as a matter of habit, reached into the pocket for his coin. But what a shock he received when he discovered that his treasure was no longer in the little bag! The rabbi's face paled. In his dismay he asked every one whether he had not seen the coin; however, nobody could help him, and the consternation was now widespread. The men whispered to one another, for no one

dared to speak out. A thief among the rabbis? Perish the thought! They examined every corner as if they were searching for leavened bread before Passover. Every piece of furniture was moved and turned, but all efforts were in vain. Someone suggested that they should go through each other's pockets in groups of two, as someone might have become confused and by mistake, put the coin in his pocket. If the coin would thus be found, the owner would be notified in a discrete way, and the coin would be sent to him later.

Everybdoy agreed to this suggestion, that is everybody but Rabbi Sholom, who declined most definitely to be examined. With an impressive voice he declared that such a procedure would be a degradation of Torah. Because, he knew how to maintain his dignity, he was going to protect it. The respectful rabbis timidly receded. There was still some argument going back and forth, but Rabbi Sholom insisted categorically on his refusal. Of course, such a straight-forward refusal gave rise to some thoughts, and caused no small amazement. The other rabbis knew well that the law of Torah expected that each man clear himself of suspicion, and it was mentioned that even Rabbi Sholom's old father, the venerable Rabbi Gasser, was willing to undergo such an examination. However, nothing availed them in regards to Rabbi Sholom.

Naturally, respect prevented any thought of aggressiveness. The search, which was carried out for every one else, showed no results. The exasperated rabbis sat down once more to take counsel as to the next step. A period of silence followed. Then a soft knock at the door became audible. A good looking, young, yeshiva-bochur entered the hall and remained standing respectfully at the door. When he was invited to come closer, he did so with hushed steps. Asked to state his business, he placed the coin on the table, and offered the explanation that the coin had been found by the kitchen personnel while washing the dishes. Everybody sighed with relief. The rabbi of Duna received the coin with evident joy, looked at it with affection, and put it in his pocket with the greatest care. Although, the small group was ready to take leave, Rabbi Sholom asked the assembled to remain, for he owed them an

explanation. An expectant silence followed.

Rabbi Sholom spoke: "My friends, I know that some of you must have misinterpreted my refusal to be searched, but you had unjustified suspicions. First, let me say that I forgive every one of you, from the bottom of my heart, as my strange conduct must necessarily have created suspicion. Now I have to tell you the reason for my behavior. The Rabbi then drew a coin out of his pocket. "Gentlemen, look carefully at this coin, which I was carrying in my pocket. You will notice that it is the same as that carried by the rabbi of Duna. In the course of his report he assumed there was no other coin like his in the whole world. Since I did not wish to spoil his joy in his possession, I did not show mine. Now you will understand why I could not possibly have allowed myself to be examined. I received this coin from my one-time father-in-law, Reb Elye, who brought it as a souvenir from Palestine."

After Shavuot the people in our congregation-especially the women-were seized by a need to travel and vacation. Some surged for the big city, usually intending to consult the great medical specialists there, who would be asked to prescribe a spa. Marienbad and Carlsbad, the popular spas became in effect the Summer seats of the various congregations. Often their own rabbis was present to provide the final touch. The streets and avenues, but especially the promenade were the scenes of colorful Jewish life. Anyone acquainted with the wearisomness of Jewish daily existence in the little towns, would have conceded that such a vacation was well-deserved. The Jews, whose success in life was attributable only to their relentless toil and to their many talents, were in dire need of having some time off. They found relaxation and regained health from the mineral springs in Bohemia. The following story is said to have occurred one summer in Marienbad.

* * * *

11

IN THE SPAS OF BOHEMIA

The new discovery that every man was justified in allowing himself a few weeks of rest in a health resort finally penetrated even to a little town in Upper Hungary, near the Polish border. In this town there lived two men, Laufer and Rosenberg, brothers-in-law and owners of a prospering saw-mill which carried their names. Day in, day out they worked the mill together peacefully and cordially. There was a true fraternal relationship between all the members of their families.

Yet one day there was a change. It began when the two associates were sitting in their simple office, balancing their books, and Laufer said, "You know, Michael, what I am planning? I figure this year we did nice business, and I feel that after such a long time we can afford some vacations for a change."

Michael Rosenberg looked in amazement at his enterprising brother-in-law. To him it seemed a great waste of money. Both were honest, chassidic Jews, inexperienced in the ways of the great world, and a little naive. Neither had spent much time outside their little town, except for visits to small villages in the district.

They experienced their greatest happiness when they were able

to spend a beautiful Yomtov with their Rebbe. They would partake of the communal meal at the table of the Rebbe, and they would take delight in the holy atmosphere emanating from him. Thus, Michael could not understand how his brother-in-law came to be seized by such a frivolous plan. Not only did he think this, but he told Laufer so in all frankness. For a moment, Laufer was embarrassed. In reality he did not plan this vacation trip only for pleasure. He hoped to find a fitting husband for his daughter Miriam, who was just approaching marriageable age, in the resorts of Bohemia. It was common knowledge that the spas were the places for opportunities of this kind. Reb Eliezer, the president of the community, had "imported" his son-in-law, after visiting a spa. Laufer informed his associate that the main motive for the trip to Carlsbad involved his daughter's readiness for marriage. Rosenberg acquiesed; they would both take a vacation.

Preparations for the trip included a great deal of cooking, frying, boiling, and baking. The baking produced honey-cakes, egg-cakes, and raisin-filled cakes. Stuffed goose-necks were procured, along with several smoked tongues. A bottle of 96-proof liquor rounded out the provisions.

The travelers were afraid that these delicacies would not be available in Kosher varieties in the provinces. When the two men arrived in Carlsbad, the porter of the kosher hotel that they had selected was there to meet them and their many packages.

After spending a few days in Carlsbad they heard that the Chief Rabbi of Vienna had arrived in nearby Marienbad. The title of "Chief Rabbi" was something quite novel to them. The only position higher than that of a regular rabbi, in their minds, were held by a rebbe, who could work miracles.

"You know, Mendel," Rosenberg said to his brother-in-law, "I think 'Chief Rabbi' must mean 'Rebbe'. Around here they would devise a fancy word for it. I can imagine how that benevolent old Emperor Franz Joseph would name the greatest Chassidic Rebbe as the official spiritual leader of his Jewish subjects".

The brothers-in-law were now dominated by a desire to make the acquaintance of this great rabbi. Thus they decided to spend

the coming Shabbat, a Shabbat on which the new month would be announced, in Marienbad. They were longing to spend a Shabbat in the glory and light that would emanate from the Rabbi of Vienna. Imagining how they themselves would radiate spiritually in the warm atmosphere, they prepared themselves for that trip. They groomed themselves with great care, packed their "Shtraimels" (fur-tail and velvet hats), and boarded the train for Marienbad in the pleasant expectation of great things to come.

Marienbad offered a great choice of kosher hotels. Each had its place on the scale of ritual reliability. A concise survey of the major hotels was summarized as follows: "If you are not particular about the Shulchan Aruch, you'll be happy at the 'Baruch'. But for a strictly kosher treat, Leitner's "Golden Key's" the place to eat. If "in-between" is you cue, 'Valhalla-Loewenthal' will do".

By a coincidence, a famous rebbe had taken up quarters in the very same hotel which the two men chose. However, their first question at the hotel was whether the Chief Rabbi of Vienna had registered there. Not only was the answer negative, they were not even able to tell them where they could find the famous man. Laufer chided his brother-in-law: "Come on, why do you ask them here? It is quite clear that they envy their competitors. Let us go into the street, and every child will be able to tell us."

In spite of this optimism, it took the two some time to obtain the desired information. Meanwhile, it had become so late, that they realized with horror that the time for welcoming the Shabbat had long passed.

Upset, they rushed back to their own hotel, only taking time to make sure that they would know the way back the next morning. Arriving at their hotel late, they had the feeling that people were staring at them. They preferred not to go to the same Dining Room where the rebbe had established himself. Thus they didn't pay their respects, as they otherwise would have done. Silently, they took seats at a table in the rear, quickly recited their prayers, sang Shabbat songs, ate quickly, and then withdrew in ill humor to their room.

The next morning they rose early, went to the mikvah of the hotel, and hurried through all other preparations, so as to be at the Chief Rabbi's hotel punctually at nine A.M. They intended to say their prayers at his services. They wore their talleysim under their long coats and tied their handkerchiefs around their necks. They had been afraid to wear their Shtraimels thinking they might become too conspicuous in the streets. Therefore, they wore their velvet skullcaps under their regular velvet hats. They girded their loins with the wide, black silk belt called "gartel" and arrived at the hotel where the Chief Rabbi was staying.

On entering, they got stuck in the revolving door; from which the porter had to liberate them. After a friendly greeting he asked them whom they wanted to see. Surprised they answered that they had come to join in the services of the Chief Rabbi. "I am sorry, gentlemen," the porter answered, "the Chief Rabbi is out, he left a long while ago."

Rosenberg now wanted to know whether the Rabbi had perchance gone to the mikvah. First, he had to explain to the porter what he was referring to. The Rabbi had indeed gone to the mud-bath, the porter said. When he asked whether the Chief Rabbi had already taken part in the services, the porter replied that the early services had long been concluded. Laufer and Rosenberg, thanked him politely for his information and left again quietly. They had failed once more and were beset by doubts and misgivings.

Once outside, Laufer broke the silence and carefully examined the subject from start. "The whole business looks a little queer to me", he ventured to say. The only way he could explain it all was to assume that the Chief Rabbi was a very sick man who was probably submitting to a medical regime and was devoting all of his time at Marienbad to restoring his failing health.

However, his brother-in-law, Rosenberg, thought it all a little suspicious.

Back in their hotel they found the services of the "wonder-working rebbe" still in full swing, but in their downheartedness they could not muster the initiative to join.

Back in their hotel they found the services of the "wonder-

working rebbe" still in full swing, but in their downheartedness they could not muster the initiative to join.

During lunch they took counsel again and decided not to recite grace here, but to do so at the table of the Chief Rabbi. At half past one in the afternoon they were back at the Chief Rabbi's hotel. The smiling porter explained to them that the Chief Rabbi had already dined at "Valhalla-Lowenthal", and that he was now taking a rest. Rosenberg remarked quietly to Laufer that this nap was probably the only Sabbath rest that the holy man permitted himself. But Laufer signalled him not to talk. The porter, who noticed the bewilderment of the two men, advised them to go to the Cafe Fuerstenhof at about half past four. He knew that a table had been reserved there for the Chief Rabbi for his high tea at that time. Both were happy about the good advice and left the hotel gratefully.

In the street, Laufer said to Rosenberg that their perseverance seems to have paid off. "How do you mean that?" Rosenberg asked. Laufer replied: "Did you not understand the porter? He told us that the Chief Rabbi had a table reserved at the Fuerstenhof. It means this: In this hotel there is probably not enough room for so many chassidim as are likely to join him. 'Reserved' probably means that he will preside at that table, and 'high tea' is a refined translation of "Shalosh S'udot", the third meal of Shabbat. That much "educated" language I am still able to understand!"

Still, they were feeling a bit uneasy as they set out for the Cafe Fuerstenhof later in the afternoon. They arrived there punctually at half past four, as the porter had advised them. The headwaiter did not receive them in a very friendly manner, as he suspected that they would ask for "Shabbat credit". When they asked him for the table of the Chief Rabbi, he became a little more friendly and showed them the place. There the Chief Rabbi was sitting in the company of two ladies and a cavalry officer.

When Rosenberg and Laufer saw that table, they were sure that the headwaiter had misunderstood them. They went back to him and repeated their question. The waiter repeated the information he had given. The two men looked at each other without saying a

word. Then Rosenberg remarked that this could only be an optical illusion or the work of evil spirits, yet he still refused to believe his eyes and remaind optimistic. Finally, Laufer regained his speech, and guessed that the officer and the two ladies were probably representatives of the government. Their royal bearing was evident and Laufer wondered whether the benediction to be said upon seeing royalty was applicable to members of the royal household.

He continued: "The Rabbi has to sit together with them on Shabbat in the interest of maintaining good relations. Although, no head covering is visible, he no doubt wears a wig. You know that our nephew, whos is working for a strictly religious metal firm, had told us that the head of his firm often has to receive ministers; and when he is talking to them appears to bare his head in a polite gesture, but in reality he wears a wig over his short hair. He had it specially made for that purpose".

By the way, the following incident is told of the head of a Jewish firm, a house of world-wide renown, which got large orders from the Russian Government.

During the Russo-Japanese war this firm received a telegraphic order for many tons of metals. It was Shabbat and the telegram remained unanswered. More telegrams followed, offering increasingly higher prices. After Shabbat the firm confirmed the order at the lower first price. When a government official remarked that he would not have seen anything wrong had they accepted the order at the higher price, the owner answered: "The Talmud tells of the following incident in the life of one of our great rabbis:- Rabbi Safro had put up something for sale. A buyer arrived while he was in the middle of prayers, and offered him a price for it. Rabbi Safro did not interrupt his prayers with even the slightest sign of movement. The buyer, however, interpreted his passiveness as a refusal and made a higher bid. When Rav Safro had finished his prayers, he sold the goods at the first price."

Rosenberg and Laufer continued talking to each other until finally the two ladies and the officer left the table of the Chief Rabbi. The latter was now alone at his table and seemed to continue to enjoy the freshly brewed coffee with milk. Rosenberg and

Laufer, wearing their velvet skull caps, were playing nervously with the rims of their hats, they approached the table of the Chief Rabbi and greeted him with a loud "Good Shabbat". The attitude of the Chief Rabbi was somehow reserved. Inculcated with a deep aversion for eastern orthodoxy, the gentleman obviously resented this visit at tea. He smiled reservedly and asked them both nervously and coolly, what they wanted.

Rosenberg told him the whole story and concluded: "We took you for an observant Jew and interpreted your title as referring to a real rabbi." The Chief Rabbi asked, thereupon, what it was that made them think that he was not a good Jew. One of the two retorted: "You still ask that question, sitting here and drinking non-kosher milk?" The Chief Rabbi was at first indignant about this reproach, and the arrogant way in which these people expressed themselves. Later, after some thought he smiled and answered:

"Look here, gentlemen, our law provides that in a place where we know that there are no 'unclean' milking animals, and on Shabbat where we know that none were there before Shabbat, we are allowed to use unsupervised milk. Here in Marienbad there are no 'unclean' animals."

Then he added: "Yesterday two big asses arrived from Carlsbad however I only learned of it just now." The visitors swallowed this reproach. They answered that although this indeed was a rare case, milk could still be really "trafo". With a superior smirk the Chief Rabbi replied: "How can milk be "trafo"? Such ignorance I had not yet witnessed in Jews of your kind. The term 'trafo' can only apply to meat of an organically defective animal. Milk that has not been produced under supervision is called "Tome" defiled. He added that he had no desire to discuss it with them, and that he had no intention of continuing the conversation.

The two 'guests' answered that he was mistaken in his definition, for milk could be 'trefo' too. The Chief Rabbi seeing them sincere, asked more politely and quietly for an explanation. Laufer spoke:

"It is very simple, Rabbi. If a cow had been slaughtered and, because of an organic defect was proclaimed 'trefo', all milk taken from that cow on the last three days may not be consumed, and is

as 'trefo' as the cow from which it was derived."

"And now", they added, "we take leave, Good Shabbat wonder-Rabbi." The Chief Rabbi called after them that he was not a wonder-rabbi. "Oh yes, you are a wonder-rabbi. With your ignorance it is a wonder that you are a Rabbi.

END