

# The Bershad Holocaust Memorial Book

ספרית "עירות"

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ברשאָד



Figure 1: The Great Synagogue at Bershad

## In The Shadow of the Shtetl

by

Nachman Huberman

With an Introduction by Dov Sadan

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# English Translation by Jacob Solomon Berger

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## The Translator's Preface

This is my 22<sup>nd</sup> endeavor to extend the number of English translations of Holocaust Memorial Books (Also called *Yizkor Books*) as part of my initiative to bring as many of these volumes across a language barrier, from Yiddish and Hebrew into English. It is motivated by the senescence of Yiddish, and the limited number of Hebrew speakers in the world, principally in Israel, and to make the history captured in these volumes accessible to a larger audience of potentially interested readers, in particular those with roots in Eastern Europe. It will also be my first attempt to place the finished manuscript online, and thereby eliminate both the cost and expense of printing hard copy books. I also believe that the world is moving away from paper-based publication in favor of online electronic distribution which is more efficient and is distinctly more accessible.

The Bershad history, created by Nachman Huberman, is almost unique in the detail it provides about the interaction of the Jewish and Gentile communities. The detail given here is both stark and discomfiting. One sees – in great detail – the sordid nature of this interaction, which is based on an atavistic antipathy shown by Eastern European gentile communities towards the Jewish minorities within their ambit. The roots of this antipathy goes back millennia, and is grounded in the human proclivity to treat anything that is different with suspicion. In ancient times, when factual evidence had not yet made its dominance over ideas and suspicions that have no basis in reality. In part, this is also the legacy of what will become known as '*Survival of the Fittest*'.

The history of the Bershad Jews paralleled that of all the Jews in the Eastern European settlements, whether they were in stand-alone settlements, or parts of a municipal polity. In this part of the world, if you were a Jew, it did not matter if you resided in Poland, The Ukraine, or the vastness of Czarist Russia, where most Jews were concentrated in what became known as the Pale of Settlement. The poison of anti-Semitism was rooted very deeply in this part of the world, and Jews suffered under the yoke of oppression, discrimination and outright violence.

The peak of this depredation was reached in the mid-19th century in Czarist Russia under the hegemony of Czar Nicholas I, nicknamed '*Fonyeh Goniff*'<sup>1</sup> by the Jews under his hegemony, which would be spread far and wide around the world. This ignominy came in the form of a forced servitude in the Russian army, beginning when a child was perhaps 6-10 years old and lasting for 25 years. These 'soldiers' were called '*Cantonists*.' The malign objective in imposing this yoke on the Jews of Russia, was to create an ambience that was thought to lead to conversion from Judaism to some form of the Christian faith. This was a strategy that Czarist Russia felt would eliminate an 'undesirable' minority from their body politic. The Jewish community did not passively accept this burden. It was a common practice for the young Jewish boys to have the big toe on their right foot amputated, in the expectation that this 'handicap' would disqualify them from military service. This practice was not eliminated until the time of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Even without this, the implementation of this Russian strategy did not achieve its desired objective. With the death of Czar Alexander II in 1880, barriers against the emigration of Russian Jews began to be relaxed. From the period of 1880-1920 over three million Jews emigrated out of Russia, and sought a better life, principally in the United States of America, but also in many other western nations that manifested some measure of tolerance to a minority religion.

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<sup>1</sup>

A corruption in Yiddish of the sobriquet '*Ivan the Thief*'.

I am the progeny of a family that was fortunate enough to find this exit channel available to them after The First World War, and made their way to '*The Goldeneh Medina*.'

But this was only a stopgap. While Jews found their way into American, and other western democracies, the hydra of anti-Semitism continued to sustain itself in the past century or so, and reared its ugly head – yet again – in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This lends some credibility to an old Yiddish saw: '*Ess iz shver zu zyn a Yid*.'

But never say 'die.' As a people, we have survived the most awesome miscarriage of justice to us, by remaining alive and prospering after a ghastly Holocaust, and the emergence of that old 'Jew Hatred' once again. If history is any judge of events to come, we shall overcome this as well.

*Jacob Solomon Berger*

Winter 2025





נַחֲמָן הָוֶבֶרְמָן

(1955 — 1886)

## Nachman Huberman

Nachman Huberman was born in Bershad, Podolia. Beginning in his youth, he was a community activist and did a great deal of work in the Zionist Movement. During the years of the revolution (1918 - 1920) he was a member of the Council of the Galilee (The 'Ziemstvo') and was selected as the head of the Bershad community. In the year 1923, he went to America and Europe as a community emissary to obtain Assistance for the refugees of The Ukraine that came in throngs after The [First] World War. During these years he also worked for the Country Committees of the *Keren HaYesod* in Serbia and Bukovina

Nachman Huberman was eager to do work and was blessed with drive all of his life. While still young, he was an active member of 'Poalei Zion' and was nominated along with the founders of the movement in Serbia, and he worked in the central institutions of Kishinev and Czernowiec, he edited the newspaper of the division, 'Arbeiter Zeitung,' and participated in the daily newspaper 'Unzer Zeit' that was published in Kishinev. He also achieved visibility in 'Davar' with his articles.

He made *aliyah* to *The Land* in the year 1936 and worked as the Director of 'Kupat Melaveh-ve Khaskon' in Rishon LeZion, and in Jaffa and afterwards in a branch of 'Bank HaPoalim,' in the north of Tel-Aviv.

His commitment to the movement in the form of work knew no bounds. He capture the hearts of friends, acquaintances, and was at once at ease with everyone, accepted and loved by all.

He passed away in his position in the middle of his work to write a book about Bershad, his birthplace, and he was 69 years old at the time of his death.

Y. M.

To Paulya of the Rigorodesky Family of Bershad  
My companion and wife during my life.  
**The Writer**



It was a small town...it was... and no longer is  
A wind will pass over it quietly in the winter  
A dried out grass that is cast away  
Behind his back as if following a hand --  
There was a *shtetl*, and now is no more.

## The Shadow and All Who Cherish It

### A.

In the genuine and honest eulogy of the writer Nachman Huberman, there is the aura of sadness, and even of complaint – he is an outstanding community activist, having spent most of his days there in the Diaspora, at the heart of the center of all the activity, and even here, in our *Land*, he stood at its periphery. This mood and perhaps the law along with it – was with him as it was with others, activists and the projects they did, and it never entered the thinking that dwelled among them, that they would be able to realize to their satisfaction, that they would be privileged to document the story of their lives in one entity, seeing that they dedicated the bulk of their energy to the dream of the *Land of Dreams* in the Diaspora, and it was in this fashion that, and for this reason, they would give the bulk of their energy to the discovery of our *Land* at home. And those who were part of this from up close, knew, that like the integrity of its length, so would be the integrity of its content, since they knew, that this was not for the use of others, but he did not have support and help excepting his own efforts. But it was precisely these who understood this, when they saw in his waning days committed to the book before us, that this was a *Memorial Book* to the city of his birth, in the community of Bershad, and it was not possible for them to reflect the meritorious act done to this precious *shtetl*, that was constructed by this dedicated man, who did not bring it to completion and was compelled to vigorously place it into the shadow of yesteryear, and strenuously strove with faithful loyalty rooted in a love of that loyalty, to weave the thread of connection between the shadow and the present, that but without it there is a true testimonial, not in its origin and not in its present life, but rather the description of the present, but rather from expression of the shadow and its origin, and the present was not etched anywhere else but on the boulder of the past, even if “the end” was not so bad.

And what was “the end” – this is a special testimony – that all those who have come out of the Diaspora, and who were privileged to control their own redemption, are earned an accounting of its fulfilment: It is a great *Mitzvah*<sup>2</sup> that its fulfilment manifested itself in the tireless work of institutions and the energy of individuals, to save the way of life for the thousands of faces of the scattered peoples, the life of a community, and the community of Israel. This description is so elevated, and the *Mitzvah* is so great, it caused us to pause and consider whether the meager time given to the generations of those redeemed from the Diaspora, who mostly are standing on the threshold of old age, which could deter them from the completion of the obligation of their hearts in its entirety, and especially since its essence is sacred to our new life system and structures. Therefore let those who were responsible for doing this work, be blessed on behalf of those on whom exile was decreed: [It is for them] that this *Book of Remembrance* was written. And this is a decree that did not permit such a Polish chapter for compliance with the style of historians, and did not permit a general chapter of the *Altruists*, and I am not in their midst; He enforces this testimony on them and the force of the old-style way, which is wondrous and simple as one: In a place where there is no man, strive to be a man.

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<sup>2</sup>

This is the Hebrew word for a good deed.

## B.

... And the writer of the book in front of us tried with this testimony to accomplish this. Because he left no trace of what was done, that he left no path that could lead us to his hometown, the community of Bershad— he returned to the sources of our beginnings, genealogy, research, and established a foundation, on which he left a path that could lead us to his hometown, to experiences and stories, from memory and legends, in a manner that was like us strolling though the streets and byways that we walked, revealing before us the life and the three dimension: the length of the result, the depth of faith, the street of life, with all of its variations that we had already seen at the beginning of our walk, without identification, at the end of the Middle Ages. The town – First under the nickname *Florina*, and then under the nickname Bershad historical and legendary sources as two sets of writing that describe this, and that which is lacking in a clear testimony, he came to the conclusion, and we can say, that the in the writing, he has beautifully sharpened his ear for gathering [text] and hearsay, recognizing that most of the oral traditions are scattered across the pages of literature and in the words of legend, which are joined not only for the communities close to one another, but also to distant communities, and it is done in a manner that they place in our hands the ability to specify an asset which was in the collective ownership of a large community complex: Of these there are those that destined for this community and are recognized as the roots of their growth. Here, the name of R' Isaac [son of] R' Yekk'l's is given prominence for its richness in the Poland of the past, and the recollection of him is doubled — also in matters of tradition in the extensions he had in the neighborhood of Bershad all the way to Uman, both in the parables of the common people and also in the folk proverb about the slander of the pope and the condemnation of his arrogance: Who is R' Isaac [son of] R' Yekk'l's? His (?) is somewhat clear to us, how is life proceeded in those valleys, and again R' Simcha Bunim was not spared from being exposed (?), and also R' Nachman Krochmal who made the collection of tales a subject of their lore. Or additionally, here, for example the matter of the accursed River that claims the lives of at least one man a year, but there is a simple belief in every village that has however, most of the time the reasoning is based on a general legend, while private – an act which is linked to the *BESH "T*<sup>3</sup> and he is a master of law in the matter of small cemeteries, where a groom and bride are buried, which was general across the area of the communities, which were Marmas Hamil and his army - - but here also comes a detail that is unique, the engraved box which says: a bloody bridegroom for the mullahs(?).

And as is the traditional legend of the distant past, and of the times that came after them — with the days of fermentation of the Sabbatai Zvi movement, regarding the history of the community, but they did not forget the warning from the contents of the history of origin of the community, (that is not to say: in their libraries that is in the count of Sabbatai Zvi) in the form of the notorious sayings that had been spread to other communities, and given to them; or a special designation (Shabtai Tzavuanik) or a singular explanation (*der toib mal'akh* = the deaf angel and the insinuation of the life of an angel). Also see the more accurate explanation, the section about the Cantonists or the *Soldaten*, but even here it appears that this was a general minted printing. And it even contains details that you will find in the collected general folklore of the European nations which you may find in the general folklore of nations of Europe (tales of war), but there are special details attached to them, events that took place, they complement very nicely the items that were taken up from this research, and what was saved for

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<sup>3</sup>

The acronym in Hebrew of the **Baal Shem Tov**

us as a song of the people from this. Especially these thoughts, as documented by the writer, contain [information about] the Cantonists or *Soldaten* that returned to the area where they grew up, but did not go into the center – in a few lines he sketches out the affection and the great grief, and the sadness of the waning corpus of the people. And this affection raises itself [again] in the little chapter in which the Soldat of the past, that was assimilated by the masses, cannot move himself from the entrance to the Prayer House at the time of *Kol Nidre*, also a large chapter that is worthy of a substantial document [written by] the story teller and poet, where the convert enters the people of his village and saves the community from its troubles.

## C.

And this is the law in the folklore chapter – the reader is unable to force himself to leave his dismay, when he hears the words of an acute tale and poem, and they are practically in the style of what is heard in many communities, near and far, but this almost establishes its uniqueness. And for example, there is the case of a rich man that was confined to his space and he died lying in bed, and this is a very old story, and in the last generation was hanged in Rothschild, but here before us is the style of the interpreter in the name of R' Meir Anshil, and because of this he is compelled to change the taste — Not being a miser but rather an arrogant man: And in the last case— there was not death but rather fainting. Or, for example, the story of Baron Hirsch, who also was a simple person in most of the valley, but his style was a jewel of having attained a simple state ( like is found in the speech of the Elders of those living in Argentina, and on their mouths Melech Ravitch wove a wonderful ballad), or for example, poems that have roots, and in most of the poems of Velvel Zbarazher, that are heard here as the poetry of the people and more for the use of the masses to make them seem personal.

We explicitly stood on these sides, whose central goal was oral explanation, but they had a single aspect of their book, a collection of an orderly explanation of the history of the community for each of their periods, and provides, for one period after another, a writing that encompasses in the remaining communities, and the detailed documentation of this community, mostly for the ending generations, as it includes specific chapters that are devoted to different sides of life, how they earned a living, it standing, an its divisions and the clashing of the various streams of life in them. Occasionally a detail surfaces that has unique importance, – as, for example, the custom of reading newspapers on Saturday nights in the house of the lessor, to say, as a sort of club of *Maskilim* or near-*Maskilim*, and this was in the house of the classmate that penetrated into the center of the town and improved the agriculture. And if what the writer tells us about this group, and what he actually relates, for example, Manasseh Halpern in his book '*Varmeten*' a wise and forceful image is revealed to us, that briefly conveys the point of honor of the spread of the *Haskalah*<sup>4</sup> on the 'cures' of the *Bet HaMedrash* that they had missed, to a unit of people planted in the 'real world' and from this [one derives] and interesting mixture of the fundamentals of life in the real world, or, for example, a description of the disappointment of the young men of Bershad deviating from their path of inheritors of the dynasty — the importance of detail, because a disappointment had fallen upon the yard of the *Rebbe* of Skver in the standing of Elimelech and Kessler, it stood out as the uniting thought, because he who, in the

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<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew word for 'acquired understanding' used to designate individuals who had acquired an understanding of modern attributes of religion that superceded older attributes that were adopted only on faith, without any 'understanding' of what the attribute meant.

future, Elimelech was to gain a special man in the grandson of R' Gershon Kotivir.

## D.

And if the crux of the book in its essence — the history of the community in the course of generations, each generations and its quandaries, it is incumbent to display the chapters of those issues of the people of the city, among those that left a mark with a seal. However, The author does not explicitly say, but it is possible to recognize from the tone of his writing that he sees the inner form of the community and the wondrous forms within it, the image of R' Raphael of Bershad, like two, they are one. If this is his style in visualization, then in speaking of the unique form of virtue and character, to state that this is the legacy of R' Raphael of Bershad. Certainly, the reader owes the writer a favor for assembling what was said, to the spread out to the populace about this high level. But mostly he is doing the author a favor for assembling what was communicated to the masses about this elevated level, and especially its atmosphere because in his description of the image of R' Raphael, great and good men have done this already, scholars, and story tellers, and their skill and effort, but to convey the atmosphere of the way of life authentically, it was not within the ambit of a son of Bershad [to do].

From the body of the people whose locale tendency even if they step out of the boundary, these are the grandmother and her doings (*der Bobbeh's Kloyz*<sup>5</sup>, *der Bobbeh's Bod*), and like a crown jewel we see the chapters about Micha Joseph Berdiczewski and Joseph Aharonowicz. Were this book only describe to use the image of the leaving of the first one, in whom the depth of his effort was like that of a king jailed by furniture, and his description of the latter as a young *Melamed*<sup>6</sup> who sweetly recites the Maftir, and even more so, the description of him in his last days, in which he presents his memories of the tunes of his childhood, that would have been enough. But we are given a gallery of modest men that are well-thought of, like Nahum Greenberg, a forgotten scholar, and his like; and last, a group making *aliyah*<sup>7</sup> to Our Land, of them that are known to the many (especially the actors Abraham Bertz, and separated for long life, Ben-Chaim and Chaya Sharon). From them, the builders of our lives, their foundations and essence, they are the builders of the village across the breadth of our land.

**D o v S a d a n**

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<sup>5</sup> A Yiddish word for designating a less important, and smaller, place of worship.

<sup>6</sup> The Hebrew word for a teacher

<sup>7</sup> Literally ‘going up.’ This refers to the act of leaving the Diaspora and ‘going up’ to Israel.

## 1. In the Beginning

When was this village of Bershad founded? It is difficult to specify this, because of the few items known that are recorded in the older histories, about the towns in Podolia within whose ambit this town is also included. This has to do with the issue of the time initial Jewish settlement took place. That which is known does not lay beyond the ambit of one's mind. Various historical tales are told about the Jewish settlements in the territory of Greater Podolia, which lies between the Dneister and Bug Rivers, in the fifteenth century, and which wandered from one territory to another in the wake of the unending wars and assaults — by the Tatars, the Lithuanians and Poles who brought wreckage and destruction as a well-recognized set of attributes from the residents whether by sword or capture. Those who remained alive were uprooted from their places and fled to other places. They established settlements that were small and poor, configured in the shape of half a wagon wheel, which was amenable to being guarded and watched, and they too were destroyed, in the storms that accompanied assaults and plunder. Like a strong, frenzied wind, this shook up groups of Jews causing movement from place to place in wild rampages that uprooted and dispersed them in anger and the raging of a storm, that uprooted and dispersed them in a rage, and the surges of a storm.

There are two ancient historical records that deal with the territory of Podolia that recall the town of Bershad in the years 1459-1478. One of these is Polish and the second is Russian, and neither enables one to establish an historical date for the establishment of the foundation of the town, and the time that Jews came there to take up residence. Jews are not recognized in these places as a defined, permanent assembly, but incidental and random, as if they had been swallowed up by the general populace — the Russian Orthodox or [Polish] Catholic populace. The impression this gives is that there was a conflict between the Russians and the Poles in connection to the ancient ties of these two groups — the Russian Orthodox and [Polish] Catholic in the territory of Podolia, that was in the territory of ancient Poland. The Russians tried to prove the seniority of the Russian Orthodox Church in the regions of ancient Poland, and the Poles — did the opposite.

From this standpoint, one has a basis to say that the root of the town was the village of 'Florina' which is found on the boundary of the town today and the ancient Russian Orthodox monastery, which is the ancient, that overlaid, the previous people's association. However there is an alternative thought, that this is a Catholic monastery which is old, and has been restored by the Russian Orthodox residents. Also, the name 'Florina' is not Slavic, but rather Latin, that was adopted into the Polish language as a name for the floral growth in the surroundings, and similarly, the name 'Bershit' or 'Bershad' afterwards, is nothing more than a Polish and Ukrainian name which is translated as 'the first', from the first points of the settlements, and it was from here that the name 'Bershid' or 'Bershad' came afterwards.

In general, one can assume that the Jewish settlements in this location began in the second half of the fifteenth century, during the period of the following Polish kings: Sigmund August (1548-1572), Stefan Batory (1576-1586) after the Lublin unification (1569), at the time that an expanse of Podolia was added to the Polish monarchy, in that period of aggressive residential development in the Ukraine and Podolia, that was facilitated by the Magnates<sup>8</sup> who possessed the land. Polish and Jewish farmers came

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<sup>8</sup>

Wealthy people who were usually landowners as well.

over to this new area under the force of a lack of work in Greater Poland in the areas of commerce and labor, and wealthy Jews (as well) seeking a place to settle down and deal in merchandise. The Jewish residents in Podolia flourished: — Be'er (1540), Bratzlav (1551), Tolczyn (1548), and many wealthy Jews took up residence in the city of Venezia (1532) one of the parcels possessed by the rich nobleman Ostrozinsky, which extended itself up to the Dneister, the Turkish border. It was in this period that Bershad was established. It represented an important strategic point beside the two rivers that guarded it. In time, (sic: Bershad) was elevated to be a district city in the territory of Bratslav. Most of the occupation of the Jews was in leasing and merchandising. According to the testimony of the itinerant cardinal, Kumandy, who traversed the areas of Podolia and Bratslav at the end of the sixteenth century, the Jews found sustenance in a large number of areas through merchandise, leasing, brokerage and a variety of services in the yards of the nobility.

According to other documents, the lessors seized an important place in the life of the Jews in these new settlements, who worked independently, or at the behest of the owners of the land. The Magnates would designate Jews to be officials in various branches of their property: — in kilns, forests, in supervising workers, in cutting down trees, extracted tar, in olive houses and the manufacture of spirits and also in tax collection and property taxes. In any event whether the Bershad Jew was a direct renter or a sub-letter, many other things were allocated to the Jews, and their condition was not bad. They were the ones who controlled the place. In specific cases the Magnates would give over to the Jew together with the lessor the rental funds as required, they also did different administrative tasks, such as: Overseeing the agricultural work, administration and control of the subordinated farmers, in place of the owner of the property.

The control of the Jewish lessors and their emissaries is recollected by R' Natan Neta Hanover<sup>9</sup>, the chronicler of the decrees of *Ta"Kh & TA"T*<sup>10</sup>. This was the unique tragedy of the Jewish settlements in the new Polish cities, and they moved around in the 17<sup>th</sup> century from the cities of Monarchical Poland, because of the Decrees and the blood libels of the *Szliachta* and they fell into the waste bin of the owners of the parcels, as a facilitator of the oppression of the farmers, who subsequently took revenge on them.

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During the period of the Decrees of *Ta"Kh & TA"T*, the Jewish population of Bershad reached between 40 and 50 families, a substantive number under the conditions of those times, under an overly severe conditions. One of the cruel misdeeds of Khmielnicki's troops, Maksym Kryvonis<sup>11</sup>, attacked

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<sup>9</sup> The author of the work called 'Yevayn Metzulah,' in Hebrew, which documents this unfortunate and violent period towards the Jews in this time period.

<sup>10</sup> A Hebrew acronym for the two years of 1648-1649 during which the violence of the Bohdan Khmelnytsky pogroms ravaged the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe.

<sup>11</sup> Maxym Kryvonis stands among the most enigmatic and brilliant figures in Ukrainian history during the Khmelnytsky Uprising. A legendary military leader and one of Bohdan Khmelnytsky's most trusted commanders, Kryvonis became a heroic symbol of the Ukrainian people's liberation struggle between 1648 and 1654. Despite the scarcity of reliable biographical data before the uprising, his legacy endures as a beacon of bravery, strategic genius, and unwavering devotion to Ukraine's freedom.

the city, Jews were murdered and the city wrecked<sup>12</sup>. Even the Russian historian Kostomarov recalls Bershad as one of the populated point, that suffered because of their malign assaults of the Khmelnytsky units.

There is an ancient headstone in the old cemetery that testifies to the killing and murder of that period, in an old folio of the ‘*Hevra Kadisha*<sup>13</sup> of the Sacred Community of Bershit ﴿בְּרִית﴾ that was inherited by the ‘*Hevra L’Historia V’Antographia*’ in [St.] Petersburg. A silent witness of that period, in hints and short words and using esoteric acronyms: —

M. K. (*Makom Kvurot*) of those who died in Sanctification of the Name by the evil ones and .M. Sh. Y.B.N.V (were taken in by the Heavenly Yeshiva) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the month of Sivan.’ The year of the event is not recorded, The numerical value of the letters ט “ק which are an indicator for the year – *Ta”Kh*

In his volume ‘*The Book of Tears*’ Dr. Sh. Bronfeld describes the malicious parade of the Khmelnytsky troops. In the vicinity of Bratslav and the destruction of the Jewish communities according to this list:

...and from there they went to Virkhov where there were 20 families and they murdered all of them, and from there they went to Trakhnitz and there were 25 families there, and all of them were murdered, and from there they went to Tzelnik and liquidated it. From there they went to Berkhasht where there were 40 families and all of them were murdered.

As it seems the names of the villages were stated incorrectly by the writer of this message: – In place of Virkhuvka – Virkhuv, in place of Trustyniec – Trakhnitz, In place of Tzetzelnik – Tzelnik, in place of Bershid – Berkhsht. These are towns that can be found at a distance of 15-20 kilometers from one another. There also was a cemetery in the upper section of the city, today known as ‘*Yerushalayim’keh*’— according to the tales of the Elders, whose parents belonged to that period – that was called ‘The Decree of the Cemetery.’ There was a lack of proper grave sites, and there was not a contemporary burial house. With the expansion of the city, the cemetery remained stuck between the houses. Plank cuttings that went deep, green and rotten, stuck out from the ground, that were swallowed up in the course of time, and there were only small piles of dirt here and there. This expanse was bounded by deeply dug holes and lumps of damp soil around it. After many years – it is told – that they once dug in the nearby place beside the expanse and they stumbled upon pieces of skeletons and bones. The Rabbi, under threat of excommunication, forbade any continuation of the digging, and ordered that everything be left as is. In a like manner, it was forbidden to erect buildings on this expanse and to not

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<sup>12</sup> In 1648–1649, the Cossacks under Bohdan Khmelnytsky's leadership massacred tens of thousands of Poles and Jews, with more handed over as *yasir* (slaves) to his Crimean Tatar allies, one of the most traumatic events in Polish and Jewish history. Under his rule of the newly-established Cossack state, the massacres continued until at least 1652. In 1654, Khmelnytsky concluded the Treaty of Pereiaslav with the Russian Tsar and allied the Cossack

10. (Cont’d): Hetmanate with Tsardom of Russia, thus placing Ukraine under Russian protection.

11. Rendered in Aramaic, it is the name of a committee of people responsible for managing the process of bringing a deceased person the burial.

permit the olives and fruits to dampen the grasses that can be found here and there. From that time on, the area was fenced with pits, and the place was made into a *Hekdesh*<sup>14</sup>.

## 2. Between Discovery and a Vision

The extent of the city, at its inception, appears to have been for the length of the river, along its west side which to this day is called – Dolina (A Valley). This location served as a strategic point: the hills, that extend for the length of the river, on one side, and on a second side. This fact validates, through clusters of buildings and houses of worship in this part of the city, most of which belong to this period of time: – the *Great Synagogue*, the *Bet HaMedrash*<sup>15</sup> of R' Raphael (known to this day, as the old *Bet HaMedrash*), an ancient bathhouse, collective places for bathing, along the length of the river, which were destroyed at the end of the previous century, hollowed out ground cavities, entrances and cellars, which apparently served as places to hide.

During this time, others took up residence: Poles, and Ukrainian farmers, who were given Ukrainian land by the nobility in residence there, to establish new residences [for themselves]. All of them were subjects subordinated to their masters. Several were from the 'Stariubrydtzim', from the nearby Russian territories – fervently religious *Pravoslavim*<sup>16</sup>, who hold on to the old ways [of worship], after the cleavage in the Russian Orthodox that took place during the reign of the Czar Alexei Mikhailovitz (1624): These were the ones pursued during the time of the reforms of Peter the First [Peter the Great] (1682-1725) and worked in hard labor in the fertile parts of the swamps. These pursuits persisted even during the reign of the Czarina Yelizaveta Petrovna (1741). According to the telling of [our] predecessors, they fled to the area of Podolia and went as far as Bershad, and settled on the sandy land on the other side of the river. They created a settlement that was rural of the "Filiponovkva" variety, using the name of one of their leaders, *Filip*, and engaged in farming, gardening, and saloons, and they were not in the service of the nobility, but they were limited in their Russian Orthodox church privileges. Their relations with the Jews was a relationship of good neighbors, being partners in the same destiny. In time, after the partition of Poland, they involved themselves in mercantile businesses, making loans and partnership with the few Jews of the area, and separated themselves from the farmers of the vicinity, in their general attitudes, traditional Russian dress, and in their long beards, in their haircuts around the head, in a straight line and in their fluent Russian language. They separated themselves from the Ukrainian farmers in the way they lived, and their station in life. During the last partition of Poland, the time when Podolia went over into Russian hands, these people remained tied to their privileges in the local churches, just as in Poland. It was only in 1905 with the Manifest of October 17, that they acquired privileges equivalent to that of the other residents, and the permission to fill positions for bell-ringing at the churches, in their flags and symbols.

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<sup>14</sup> HEKDESH (Heb. הַקְדֵּשׁ), consecrated property, property dedicated to the needs of the Temple ; in post-Talmudic times the term Hekdesh without qualification (*s'tam hekdesh*) came to mean property set aside for charitable purposes or for the fulfillment of any other mitzvah .

<sup>15</sup> The House of Study. Often part of the Synagogue building.

<sup>16</sup> 'True Slavs' used to identify those who were members of a Russian Orthodox Church.

Points regarding the Jewish settlement that was constructed at that time, which included Bershad, were enclosed in the limitations of the law from 1539 on, at which time the privileges of law, and the mercantile activities of the Jews [were set] in the villages of the nobility: merchandising, work, taxes, financial obligations and the rules of the conduct of people. To the extent that some of these people were in the hands of the wealthy-nobility, it was also for a considerable amount of protection. With all the negative attitudes towards the Jews, they did not permit themselves to benefit from their sources of wealthy Jews, and these protected the privileges of the remaining Jews by negotiation, and the giving of bribes, if not always being successful. This type of effort was manifested as one of the forms of mutual assistance, as part of the way of life of the Jews. The changes that were social, and political during Polish hegemony, that came after the wars with Russia, Sweden and Turkey in the years of 16 and 17, caused the disturbance of Poland and the decline of the wealthy class, and because of this, the envy of the Jesuit faith spread throughout Poland and Podolia – and brought with it difficult outcomes for the Jews in their different way of life, and to push them out of their economic and mercantile status. Plots of land were sold or transferred from hand-to-hand, Apart from Bratislava and its new residents, the cities and villages passed to the nobleman Lubomirski, and that because of the lack of will to remain in his new tracts, he turned it over to the manager and the assistants in his ‘*szliachta*,<sup>17</sup>’ that had risen in the Polish political stage in that time. The uneven contact that the Jews had with the nobleman himself ceased, and their affairs were conducted with the ‘*szliachta*’ of Grodno, which pursued earnings, and power. The Jews were pushed into an area of finance that was irregular: saloons, leasing, and to undertakings of servitude in the various yards. In the situation of having no option, they abandoned themselves to the hands of those who fed them, and took up their direction. There were frequent instances of expulsions and imprisonment and means to pressure [the Jews] and to squeeze out monies. Frequently, the sacrifice and abandonment and negative behavior of the ‘*szliachta*’ to resist, to the threat of being expelled or being sent to prison as a means to squeeze out money, and the sparing of lives from the communities of the Galilee, which was accepted by the Jews in that period of time. The style of degradation was always one: from the lessee who did not have the means to pay security funds, they would take the wife and children, imprison him, or whip him in public, or they imprisoned him together with his wife, tied up in cables on their hands, or whip ‘according to the law’ where from both sides the ‘*Haidamaks*<sup>18</sup>’ stood as servants of the nobility, who would do the whipping, using wetted branches that were thin, until the onset of bleeding and fainting occurred, and sometimes even death.

The Elders of the city would point to the two constructs of the wall at two sides of the city, which served as places for meting out punishment in that time. This is what they would indicate to the village families, lessees and saloon keepers, sheaves of tradition that had been put into their hands by their fathers of these elders in their time, which the nobility allocated to them in our time. In time, those walls were torn down, and replaced with shops, of these were built up lodging places for the ‘*Comakim*’ and gentiles who would bring salt and merchandise from far away. These lodgings were stations where these visitors could lodge for the night, at the time that they passed through with their merchandise and through an entrance, they would enter their wagons and horses to lodge, unhitching their horses, and standing them in a stall and themselves they would lodge on the wagons with the merchandise to watch over it.

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<sup>17</sup> The Common Folk

<sup>18</sup> Soldiers of Ukrainian Cossack paramilitary outfits composed of commoners (peasants, craftsmen), and impoverished noblemen in the eastern part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth

There were few whose infrequent ties with the nobles did not stop, these were the people who were familiar in Podolia and Galicia, Whose names were transformed into signs of wealth and strength, such as R' Isaac son of R' Yekeh'leh's, Rabbi Shmuel Zwitkower, to whom the nobles at that time trusted with the management of a number of villages, up to Uman. Their sayings and remarks circulated among the Jews of the vicinity, as if they were the inheritance from other generations. A clutch of people developed around their businesses, and to manage the issues of the Jewish communities with an elevated and firm hand. The nobles turned over their properties, and they themselves chose to live at quite a distance, playing cards, carrying on wildly in merriment, organizing horse and dog races and '*instructed that money should be sent to them in sealed barrels...*'

Memories of this period were guarded in the mouths of the Elders of the city, derived from the transmissions received from prior generations, with hands over their faces to recover. They would call out the names of the nobles, joked about their dispersion, on their neglect of their own property, and that they had left this place easily, for card playing, or perhaps for some woman... or simply out of tasteless arrogance.

One of the nobles – there were elders who joked out of a smile, along with a stroking of their beards to refresh their memories – Potocki... Zamoyski.. Or possible Sabinski, who was given as a gift the nearby village of Blonowka, because he had a thousand such villages in his possession. The approximate count of one thousand, which possibly one could blurt out with one gasp without making any impression displeased him, what is not counted here is the 999. This number makes a much greater impression... and he left the village.

And they related about one of the Sovenskis that wanted to provoke his competitors at cards... this was in Warsaw or Cracow. What did he do? Since they were preparing to 'perform in the theater' in 'some way' using song and music according to the 'rules' it was not permitted to appear in the theater without white gloves, he gave an order to his servants, who carried out his orders, to immediately buy up all the white gloves that could be found in stores and outlets, after which they would return to the theater, in the narrow space where he was, and he laughed out of glee regarding the homes of those who came in without gloves.

And Bershad?

The thought was – the Elders continued with nodding their heads sideways, and with a smile on their face – the thought was that Bershad passed from one to the other, sometimes here and sometimes there, until one of them earned the right to play cards.

So a group sat down and played cards. As luck would have it, the owner of the property did not have any money. He was much angered and he put up the 'assets' of Bershad and its environs, for luck...

Muszynski was provided for. He was a skilled man skilled who holds a degree in graphing and has a sense of his ancestry.

One of the nobles, Jarowiec, not one of those who has such a sense, who grew fond of the nobility of Muszynski. He became known to the old Graf and a flame of jealousy erupted in him. In time, he

recovered, and tossed Bershad and its environs, to the ‘breakthrough,’ of the *zhids* [Jews], with the analysts together. Since – he wrote to him – that you are a strong man, and noble blood runs in your veins, here have a present... after her death, she was privileged to be interred in the Catholic churchyard which in the evening at its palace, their Easter celebration took place, with festive rounds around the church with the ‘Holy Mary’, passing by her grave site , saying their ‘Yizkor’<sup>19</sup>...

And Jarowiec?

Went mad in his old age. He gave himself totally up to thoroughbred dogs where several hundred of them would run around in his yard, and no person would dare to enter there because of fear. He neglected his property, and gave it over to Kundrecki, the manager of his house, a lunatic like him, a miser and curmudgeon. And there are other things and actions that are in the ambit of the loss of one’s wits entirely.

He liked to spend the summer in Barlawaka ( a village close to Bershad) in his beautiful palace. He would transfer all his appurtenances — cooks, waiters, male and female attendants, people that looked after his goods, and those who managed the home, the horses and dogs, and also the orchestra of his house. And on this parcel, he built a pool in the middle of the yard for bathing, only several steps from the [nearby] river. What else did the designated old man do? His ‘economist’ would gather all the gentle young women, who were pretty, and force them to bathe in his pool and afterwards, to stand naked in front of his window.

Naked?...

Tfui!....

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Information about the rule of the Turks in parts of Podolia, that lasted for twenty-seven years (1672-1699) is scarce. Even here there are differences of opinion regarding that various section that were absorbed by Turkey. According to different sources, the area that was absorbed stretched for the length of the Bug and Dneister Rivers that split the area of Podolia up to Balta. Kameniec was the capitol city, which was the place of the Turkish Pasha. Nemirov – the place of the Ukrainian Hetman’s<sup>20</sup> residence that was counted as part of the Turks. The rest of Podolia, Bershad and further on, remained in the hands of the Poles. After the peace was made with Turkey, and the Sweden-Moscow War at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the pressure on the Jews from the [several] hegemons became more severe. First, the hegemon of Ber[shad?] and after him – the hegemon of Kaminiec, with the objective of debasing them and instilling fear of the Church, many could not stand up to the test. They tried to vanish in the vicinity, like a worm that tries to inter itself in that terrible sand, from time-to-time did this by crawling on their bellies. In due time, the rise of the *Haidamaks* burst out. Bershad was attacked more than once by their leaders, Warlan – who was the leader of the Duke Lubomirsky in the vicinity of Bretzlav, which had

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<sup>19</sup> The Hebrew word for ‘remember’ used to identify specific prayers, that were recited during services, in memory of deceased people.

<sup>20</sup> See ‘Ataman’ for a slight variation.

gone over to the *Haidamaks*<sup>21</sup> in vengeance against the *szliachta* and the Jews. Their accomplices were the Tatars, and members of their clan, who penetrated the points of the Jews with hysteria, murder and pillaging, taking Jews into captivity and leading them off to Turkey, the center of the messianic mission of Sabbatai Zvi<sup>22</sup> for which the loyalty of the masses was intense, even after he had changed his religion. Exercising good sense, a number of them fled to Wallachia, and they wandered there to seek traces of the Messiah.

It is difficult to relate the participation of the Jews of Bershad in this movement, because all we have is general information only, that the movement spread far and wide through Podolia, and it became stronger, and ‘in the course of many years, rooted itself deeply in the midst of the Podolia Jews, many seekers of God left Podolia in order to find a spoor of the Messiah.’

With all this, there are inferences in the ancient writings, which designate an unmediated connection between the city and the movement: R’ Raphael of Bershad, for example, about a hundred years after the death of Sabbatai Zvi (1677) found it necessary to warn against styles of prayer that has become rooted in the Jews of Bershad, that contained inferences and traces in the prayers of Sabbatai Zvi such as: – ‘that one should not recite the following during the prayer of the *Shmona Essrei*<sup>23</sup> – ‘In the house of their scribes’ beside the number equivalents regarding *B’Shmot* in reference to defilements.’

It is nearly certain that this stream of the movement had penetrated Bershad also. Among the simple Jews and laborers, indirectly preserved, from the mouth of one man to another, legends and the lore of past generations, who would quietly and secretly tell about this, about the Jews dressed in red robes with feathers, having long white beards, wearing white *kittls*<sup>24</sup>, tied up with colored belts, armed with jackets and staffs, who came to the city, to us in the *Bet HaMedrash*, sighed in tiredness, and were able to sway hearts with their tears and variations given at midnight.

On one occasion, a Jew came with his pack on his shoulders, and told that he was a detainee. There was something strange about the way he prayed and how he behaved, and he neither ate nor drank. Night after night, he carried on corrections at midnight while crying and in tears accompanied by screaming and the banging of his head against the wall, seeing him: as a Jew with much travail and also one who returns to the faith. However, one time, on the night of *Tisha B’Av* after midnight, a strange voice was

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<sup>21</sup>The Haidamaks (sg. haidamaka; pl. haidamaky, from Ukrainian: гайдамаки and Polish: hajdamacy) were Ukrainian Cossack paramilitaries of commoner (peasants, craftsmen), and impoverished noblemen origin in the eastern part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. They were formed in reaction to the Commonwealth's actions that were directed to reconstitute its orders [clarification needed] on territory of right-bank Ukraine,[1] which was secured following ratification of the Treaty of Perpetual Peace with the Tsardom of Russia in 1710.

<sup>22</sup>An errant Jewish man who proclaimed himself as a ‘Messiah.’

<sup>23</sup>Literally ‘The Eighteen,’ referring to a set of prayers recited during worship while standing.

<sup>24</sup>The plural of ‘*kittl*’ which was a white garment worn over the regular clothing during special prayer services.

heard. The *Shammes*<sup>25</sup> awoke and found this Jew standing in the middle of the *Bet HaMedrash* and was singing...

On the morrow this Jew disappeared.

This story was typical in the opening of the praise offered by the *BESh "T*: father-in-law to the sacred Teacher and Rabbi R' Alexander ז"ה (scribe and slaughterer at the *BESh "T*) told that there was a man that lay down in the ‘*hinnerplet*’ of the sacred congregation of Bershtad and this was at the time that a group of Sabbatai Zvi צבאות, adherents awoke and showed this man a place in the books where some Rabbis had erred and practically straying after the previously mentioned adherents. The author brings this tale as an example of ‘taking advantage of the dearth of miracles.’ This is because, ‘In those early days, they would lie down in the place of dearth called the ‘*hinnerplet*’ and when they awoke and were alive to tell of the awesome events that they had seen in the *World Up Above*, and for this reason he wrote the ‘Praises to the *BESh "T*’ taken from people of truth and firm faith in the Lord, etc.

S. Dubnow presents the story telling of the *Gaon*<sup>26</sup> Alexander ז"ה in the matter of the *hinnerplet* in the sacred congregation of Bersztat (Bershad in parentheses) ( in the preface to the ‘Praises of the *BESh "T*’) so it would seem that the men of the city, where not only mixed in with the Sabbatai Zvi movement, but also in disputes. They showed that man (deceased?) places in books that some had deviated from the Rabbis... And because of all this, many returned in repentance, and the faith became strengthened in the hearts of every man of Israel.

Under the name of ‘*Sabbatai Zvi*’, many people tried to fool and hypocrites in the name—‘*Sabbatai Zavuanik*<sup>27</sup>’ according to the Ashkenazi expression by changing ‘*Zvi*’ into ‘*Tzavuah*’ (a hypocrite), there was also the expression of ‘the angel’ negatively altered by adding the word ‘the deaf’ – the ‘deaf angel.’ (An inference to Chaim Mal’akh of the Messianic *Hasidim*<sup>28</sup>).

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With the strength of the *Haidamak* movement on the rise, they became impoverished and weak. This movement, that continued for 80 years, spreading to all corners of the Ukraine and Podolia up to Galicia in a wild rampage, and caused the destruction of the settlements and the impoverishment of the populace. And there was a further impoverishment of the Jewish populace and its destruction – the frequent and open incitement by the *Szliachta* to the Jews, driving them from the villages, as an appeasement to the farmers, which raised the pressure on the Jews to an elevated level. Once again, Jews were swept away by the tide of hatred, and in storms of bloodletting. Likening it , as if it had been swept

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<sup>25</sup> The Hebrew name for the Beadle, or Factotum who was the administrator of a house of worship.

<sup>26</sup> The designation, in Hebrew, for an outstanding scholar.

<sup>27</sup> The Hypocrite

<sup>28</sup> Many variations using this word as a prefix occur in the text (Hasidic, Hasidism, etc.) It refers to an ultra-Orthodox sector of the Jewish society that usually associated itself with a specific Rabbi as their leader.

away and sent deeply into an intense void like a cascade of stems.

The settlement in Bershad continued to shrink according to various sources, the number of the Jews in the year 1718 was close to 800 souls.

With the rise of the *Haidamak* movement, their numbers (sic: of the Jews) dwindled:

In 1765 – 438 Jews, 143 homes  
In 1776 – 267 Jews, 37 homes  
In 1784 – 490 Jews The number of homes was unknown.  
In 1787 – 650 Jews “  
In 1790 – 802 Jews “  
In 1847 – 3370 Jews.

The causes were [well] known. Every year brought chilling expulsions, and expulsions due to religious matters, and in the end, the wild rampage of the *Haidamaks*, that reached its peak in the year 1776 with the slaughter in Uman, Tolczyn, and the surrounding villages, and the betrayal of those who looked after the Jews. Those that remained alive fled to Russian Wallachia and Slonimsk. The writings of the Rabbinate of that period in time was replete with questions and responses about the murdered that were not identified, including abandoned wives and widows. The rabbinical leadership saw a lesson from God in the decrees of the *Haidamaks*, and the repeal of the decrees Ta”Kh & T”aT<sup>29</sup>, upon those that remained in their place of dwelling that were destroyed. In a few of the communities the decree was renewed in the period of the *Haidamaks*. Then, just as now, they could not withstand this decree and were weakened again, outcasts, and impoverished until the end of the killing.

In 1784, after a slight relief, the number of Jews in the city was 490 souls, and with the passage of 6 years, rose to 802. Many did not return, and were turned into wanderers from city to city throughout Podolia, impoverished and missing everything. The prayers of repentance, and the tales of the populace that were created out of the suffering in life, and the aggravation of the soul yearning for relief and salvation, and slightly relieved the sadness of the exile and lowered the burning of the ember that flickered among the ashes of the dead.

On one occasion, the *BESh”T*<sup>30</sup> בֶּשֶׁת passed through the area in his travels, and came through Bershad, and the elders of the city came out to him and tearfully told him what the cruel and wicked had done: They threw living old people and children into the river, where they fluttered like butterflies between the waves, these being spasms of death. The *Tzaddik* צַדִּיק looked at the river, sighed and put the following curse on it: — cursed be the river for all time, and in each year it will take one of them as a sacrifice...

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<sup>29</sup> The Hebrew acronym for the two consecutive years of the Hebrew calendar during which the assaults of the forces of Bohdan Khmelnytsky against the Jews of the Ukraine occurred.

<sup>30</sup> The English acronym for ‘*Baal Shem Tov*’ referring to an important Rabbi and scholar of medieval times, whose title implies that he was person of ‘good reputation.’ He held a Rabbinical Seat for most of his adult lifetime, and came to be venerated by all who came to him for either advice or a blessing.

To this day – the river is called ‘*The River of the Decree*’, and it is a set rule by the Jews of the city not to bathe in the river in the summertime, lest the river claim one of them as its sacrifice, whether a human being or cattle.

In the old cemetery beside the river a bride and groom were buried who were murdered by the *Haidamaks* while they stood under a wedding canopy: – On the headstones is etched .י.ג.ז the words: (the blood of the wedded to the priests). ‘*The beloved and pleasant in life and death, and were not parted.*’ The groom wandered for many years in the ‘netherworld’ having no surcease. And on one night, he knocked on the door of an elderly farmer who was culpable for their murder. On the following morning the farmer had a heart attack and was unable to get out of bed. Days later, he appears before a different farmer, a second, a third, some of them died of heart failure, a number of them vanished. And those that did get up in the morning had their body covered in contagious leprosy. The gentiles became upset and they traveled to the *Tzaddik*, confessed their sins, and swore never again to so much as touch a Jew...

These legends, and those who told them, passed through the masses. Among them were the ones who wandered from city to city, and from village to village, and were thirsty and eager for redemption. And those that by hand wrote, out of looking at the aggravating death and those who were heartbroken in the masses. Out of this intense longing *Hasidism* appeared. The movement of renewal and return to life – according to what is contained in the writings of those who documented the rise of *Hasidism* – that turned the senses to emotion and the imagination to reality as a result of one faith. And in the chronicles of *Hasidism*, there is an addendum about Bershad, a place of honor as a result of the work of one of its scions – the *Tzaddik* R’ Raphael of Bershad.

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It appears, that at its beginning, *Hasidism* — was a movement of the simple masses and the ordinary common man, who were a small section of the general populace. It was not a widespread movement, according to its essence, nature and simple scope of the poor masses. People of limited means such as these among the masses, wandering and poor, the victims of the *Haidamaks* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, were the first to weave the fabric of the legends and stories of miracles, which in time were transformed into ‘*The Praises of the BESh”T*’. They were dispersed these stories during their wanderings through the breadth of Podolia and Galicia with the awe for their experiences, and therefore their complete faith in the future which will all be good. This spirit of the populace, that pervaded the masses, is made more prominent by the first tales in ‘*The Praises of the BESh”T*’ from before his exile and after it. The view of the voice of the masses followed their image and form: – “*BaHilfer*” (A Helper) beside the elementary level *Melamed*, who conducts a class of children to their class; like a clay-digger in the Carpathian Mountains, and his wife brings his merchandise ‘by horse and wagon’ to be sold. A bartender in one of the villages, and wandering from place to place. His brother-in-law the sage, the Rabbi, R’ Gershon Kitower, stays apart from him because of shame. The tale of his birth is also formed from the same material. According to the grasp of the masses at that time: – invasion, capture, going to the home of the overseer, a daughter of this overseer falls in love with R’ Eliezer, his father, and so Eliyahu is exposed to the news that his firstborn son who was to light up the eyes of Israel [is so involved.] Also the essence of the nickname – ‘**Baal Shem Tov**’ – the common reference of the masses of that time. It was only in

the last days of the *BShe”T*<sup>31</sup> did *Hasidism* become a movement of the masses, centered in, and captured and taken entirely in by their diversity, and also the ambitions of the prominent men, men of Torah and of action: – R’ Dov of Meziritch, R’ Yaakov of Nemirov, R’ Yehuda Leib of Polna ‘the inspector’ who travels about to spread the lore and Torah teaching of the *BESh”T*, R’ Ze’ev Kitziss, and David Furkiss. The movement continues to expand along with its ambit and attributes. The masses continue on, under pressure. R’ Dov of Mezeritch, ‘the *Maggid*<sup>32</sup>’ takes the place of the *BESh”T*, a high-level scion of the group of Rabbis and *Kabbalists* that pave new ways in the grasp of *Hasidism*. His influence is directed outward, and at the masses around, to the groups of Torah scholars, Rabbis and *Kabbalists*. The character of the simple modesty of the *BESh”T* receives a noble place in the lore of the ‘*Maggid*.’ The selected *Tzaddik* is the influence, and the one who influences others, – ‘The sole one in the heavens and the earth,’ and like him is R’ Yaakov Joseph of Polna, ‘*The Emissary*’ of *Hasidism*. Like him [sic: the *Maggid*]. In the extent to which he elevates the *Tzaddik* to the level of perfection in him, in the same way, he lowers the masses to the level of camel with no beasts. ‘The masses have no curiosity, they are the people made of clay and are unschooled.’ To descend to this level is dangerous, these masses, who cling to *Tzaddikim*, who are the face and realization of the same material as the substance of beasts, except they have a soul.’ What is not here, where the body is separated from the soul, certainly would be described as dead. Therefore it is said (*Berakhot*<sup>33</sup> 18) those who are wicked in life are addressed as the dead.

In the clan of those who follow the *BESh”T* and the inheritors of the *Maggid* there were only few left as ‘*adherents of the old ways*’ who did not cease the living connection with the masses, but excelled in their intuitive and individual good will, these were: The *Tzaddik* Aggadi, R’ Leib ﴿לֵיב﴾ who attended fairs, and in villages among the R’ Pinchas common folk, R’ Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, the defender of the people; R’ Aryeh-Leib of Szafelah known by the nickname – ‘*The Szafelah Grandfather*'; a son of the village, the *Melamed* and *Shammes*<sup>34</sup> R’ Pinchas of Kuritz. And among these, R’ Raphael of Bershad was also included.

### 3. Raphael of Bershad

Who was R’ Raphael of Bershad? What was he like, and what did his family consist of? The people of Bershad didn’t talk a great deal about him, or it is possible that they didn’t know, or did not want to talk about him. Even the year of his death is not known: It could have been 1815, 1816 or 1820 in accordance with the opinion of the people of Taratsza, the city where he was buried. In the annals of *Hasidism* R’ Raphael is known as the student of R’ Pinchas of Kuric – who said ‘I cannot be responsible for anyone in front of the Holy One Blessed be He, [but] I take full responsibility that he will not deviate from his currently straight path. R’ Pinchas of Kuric – was schooled in Torah and was a doer of good

<sup>31</sup> Even though **BShe”T** is a more accurate representation of the acronym, it is often shown as **BESh”T** to conform to the actual pronunciation when spoken.

<sup>32</sup> From the Hebrew word describing a ‘Teller’ of parables or legends, etc.

<sup>33</sup> A tractate of the Talmud.

<sup>34</sup> The Yiddish equivalent to the Hebrew ‘*Shamash*.’

deeds, and is counted among the giants of *Hasidism*, He was a friend and a confidant of the *BESH" T* and like him, 'Did not learn *Hasidism* from any man, but only by recognizing him spiritually. R' Pinchas said – You cannot find a man whose soul does not instruct him every hour and every minute.

And just like R' Pinchas, the student R' Raphael was the same way. He [R' Raphael] would say 'As far as I am concerned, it is the soul within me that instructs me.' And that is where his knowledge of the lore of *Hasidism* comes – from the roots of his soul. 'Not with the shouting of The Lord – he would say on behalf of his Rabbi – and not from his Zionist ardor, but rather with an internal spiritual attachment, by doing deeds firmly, and not in the highest of heavens and not only in the spiritual world, but also in the world that does not have this spirit, only one that is dull and cruel. This inner source rested on his *Hasidic* foundation, that is told about in the annals of *Hasidism* – the *Hasidism of Bershad*.' It had a unique property – security, as an unshakeable spiritual faith in a *Hasidism* from on high, not bestowed with a conditional earthly or spiritual need. 'When trouble befalls a person – R' Raphael would say – he will trust unshakeably in the *Grace* from on high, and its spirit, and should not do anything, nor should he take any form of medical assistance, just to have faith, and not even pray to *The Holy One Blessed be He* about this and not to purify himself by immersion in a *mikvah*, and not to prepare anything, or anything else not within the ambit of the usual, only to have faith.' This perhaps, is the reason why the *Hasidim* of Bershad do not resort to the usual immersions that were common at the time of the *BESH" T*, expecting that by such immersion he would be entitled to some guidance from above, 'and when I come too the 'mikvah' the *BESH" T* would say – 'I shut my eyes and see all the worlds,'

R' Raphael sees the foundation of *Hasidism* in spiritual purification, and the earning of *Divine Favor* by doing good deeds and distancing one's self from bad deeds which include: lying, displaying pride, anger and arrogance. He would say in the name of his Rabbi [the *BESH" T*] – lying is more serious than incest.' 'Even if he is killed and not permitted to live, he is not to lie from his mouth, even about those that take his life, The *Hasidim* tell that – R' Raphael would explain the sentence, 'distance yourself from one who lies' (Exodus 23: 7) keep far from such lying speech, because such rumor mongering leads to lying. The *Hasidim* of Bershad were taciturn and quiet people.

And the same was true – when it came to maintaining modesty, 'A person who even has only a trace of arrogance, even if he were righteous and honest, is not to be considered proper, 'A person, who is at the level' – he would say in the name of his Rabbi – *the Divine Presence still rests on him*' the man who receives this honor is a man who is lacking that which separates him, because he is under the scrutiny of one who bestows, and the bestowed always below that of a 'giver' and how can one take pride in this.' Even in confronting *The Holy One Blessed be He*, a man should not show arrogance, and should try to strengthen himself by applying sincerity and elevated thoughts. Only by worshiping God with modesty and elevated intentions, and if he is worthy of it, will he be able to receive *Grace* from heaven. He also says – that if one is praying just to reach The Holy Spirit, and was of the opinion that by praying he will overcome this shortcoming, had a soul that lacks holiness,

Out of the collection of legends and tales, one can see the results of such in that era: an era of blood and fire, and ongoing destruction, a distancing one's self from being faithful to tradition and his religion, conversion to Christianity. As a member of the masses, the extent of the law is far from him, and he carries nothing in his heart regarding the *Leaders of the Faith*. The masses that are in need of the compassion and *Hasidism*. *R' Raphael was aware of this secret – the secret of compassion and love.*

Among all of the methods that influenced his personality, it was this that stood out in a special light, and the feeling of his heart, scattered in an organic way in the middle of this deed, he knew how to penetrate the soul of those who strayed, and to reveal within them, the hidden Jewish tone that lay under the weight of the present. It was out of faith that the branches of the tree that were inclined to be vulnerable to new ardor, after all, they will suckle from their roots, who are not here anymore, since they have been uprooted and have withered away.

The *Hasidic* legends tell – that he had the habit to come to all those that stood on the threshold of conversion, and pleaded with them that they should read the ‘*Shema Yisrael*’ every day by heart and in their memory. There were times when he would recite this litany, and they would respond to him word by word. There [also] were times when he would pray with them [saying], ‘Prayer envelops all of Israel, even the wicked.’

There was an occasion that R’ Raphael was invited for the Sabbath in Belta with R’ Ze’ev. There he found one of those who came to plead for ‘rededication of the soul’ – whom R’ Ze’ev pushed away with both hands, and in doing so, said to himself: – *Were R’ Rafael to hear this, he would become angry with me. Not one of us could speak of sinners, who were like him, and to return them to the level of being ‘kosher’*

When his wife would aggravate the *Shammes* – the annals of *Hasidism* tell – R’ Raphael would thunder – How could I aggravate a Jew, how can on cause him suffering? Every Jew is precious, precious, precious, precious.

In his many travels among the people of the villages and cities, at fairs and market days, he would encourage and console, planting faith and security in them. The masses were uneducated and simple, dressed in the outfits and colored belts like the farmers, and speaking in their vernacular, he would speak in their language, arousing them to pray and to do good deeds. He would say ‘*those who call to Him are also near to Him*, – He would say – *Every Jew can find his way to God by means of prayer.*’ ‘*Prayer and the Lord God are as one.*’

He would say – ‘*Every Jew can draw near to God and pray to him even in a dream.*’ ‘The Israelite who prays encompasses the entire Torah, even his donkey and cow, who are also graced by prayer, and when the *Path is Lit* for man, it will also reach his animals.’

*Hasidim* and people of action would assault him: – How can this be? Their understanding is limited, that of the Jew who thinks about the masses and his owner... ignorant.. unlettered.. They would shield him and he would appease them for this protection. He would plead for compassion on the loss of heart, for the hatred and jealousy that grew within the ambit of the Nation of Israel.

On one occasion – the legend tells us – A Sabbath in Savran (25-30 kilometers from Bershad), there was a guest *Hasid* and a *Maggid*, and he would disgrace him, and assault him with names like ‘*Ignoramus*’ and a ‘common person,’ and as much as R’ Raphael tried to appease them with soothing words, they would continue to disgrace and imprecate him, and R’ Raphael would feel bad about this parting of hearts and prayed to God to purify him from this transgression.

Out of his love for the simple masses, he would present himself, in his behavior, and way of life, and the way he dressed. As the legend tells us – that R' Raphael was in the habit of dressing modestly and he did not have a fur coat, and no handkerchief to wipe his nose.

He never sat on the front benches in the *Bet Hamedrash*, which was known by the name ‘*The Old Bet HaMedrash of R' Raphael*’, his place was behind the oven, beside the door, the place where the simple and poor people sat. The legend tells – ‘he had to assist the *Hazzan* during the *High Holy Days*, and to stand beside the ‘*spiegel bank*’(the display bench) and he suffered a great deal because of this. During the *Shemona Esrei* prayer, he tries to finish together with everyone, so they should not have to wait for him. ‘*He would say – as they wait for me, it was as if they were cutting my flesh to pieces.*’

Like this, so was – his furniture and all the things in his house – these were simple at the [dwelling] of the masses – all ruined, tree branches, A slab of wood to give light of a wick in a ruined plate with oil. The tale about the silvered copper wires, brought to him by one of the wealthier *Hasidim* as a gift. When he saw it, R' Raphael asked: ‘*where does this snooty item come from?*’

The *Hasid* answered: ‘*Rebbe*, the wire is made of copper but it has been silvered.

R' Raphael responded angrily – ‘*If so, it is somehow linked to arrogance as one.*’

The *Hasid* was compelled to take this gift back.

On one occasion, R' Raphael was invited to visit R' Yisrael'chi of Rozin. The small children were still wearing suspenders (to hold up their trousers). R' Raphael wondered and asked: ‘why? There is arrogance and luxury in this.’ And in this way Abraham-Ber Gotlower tells in his memoirs, that R' Raphael suffered from rheumatism and he had to use a staff while walking. However, he did not use it for he suspected this would be an act of arrogance.

R' Raphael would explain – ‘This is the garb of the *Holy One Blessed be He*, as it is written: ‘*God is the king of arrogance, and anyone who is arrogant dresses in this raiment of The Holy One Blessed be He, and causes endless pain, like anger, which is one of the bed rocks of impurity. Anger sullies unceasingly, and it scalds and punctures the soul.*’

Difficult moments in his life took place with the changes in *Hasidism* by the grandsons of the *BESh”T*, R' Baruch of Mezhibozh and R' Nachman of Bratislav. This alteration that is described in the annals of *Hasidism* as the era of ‘Righteousness’, incidentally, by placing the worship of the righteous one [sic: the *BESh”T*] at the center, and elevating him above the masses, generosity, wealth, and adoration that reached the level of being used at home by R' Baruch of Mezhibozh, following the model of ‘deception’ used by the nobility. There was anger and frustration in worshiping God, and in ordinary daily life. And as for R' Nachman of Bratislav, a great-grandson of the *BESh”T* on his daughter’s side, he served as a treasury full of research and possessing a deeply poetic soul, to begin with, but he was more modest in his bearing, but regarding the *Tzaddik* [sic: the *BESh”T*] he raises him to the level of a Messiah, and likens him to his Creator.

R' Baruch says – ‘The *Tzaddikim* are the holy ones up above. They carry themselves as though they were ordinary people, they eat and drink, rarely anchoring themselves in prayer, the character of their words has to do with worldly matters – and it is with these means they serve God. But a simple man needs to correct his deeds and if he wants to serve God in this way, his evil inclination will push him away.’

R' Nachman of Bratislav distances himself to a further sect: — the masses are the essence, not the many, but ‘The One’ as it is written: ‘*Abraham was Unique*’ (Ezekiel 33, 24). He who wishes to serve God, needs to be as unique as our patriarch Abraham. Sometimes he would attain excessive arrogance: ‘*I worked for God, and the Redeemer of Justice [the Messiah] will be one of my descendants.*’

The *Hasidic* legends, tell about the changes that took place during his life at that time, and the same with regard to the way he dressed and behaved, according to the way of Sages, but these changes did not affect his lore nor his style. The feelings in one’s heart are not vulnerable to change. It is the opposite: in continuing with his lore with regards to simplicity and poverty, a fountain of resistance showed itself indirectly opposite arrogance and poverty. In place of the ‘*singular*’ and the ‘*unique*’ he used the phrase ‘*the throngs of Israel*’, regarding *Israel’s affection* for prayer against disputes and separation. And he shows his style with emotion: ‘*prayer has to be all-encompassing and from the heart, and every prayer that is not made on behalf of all Israel, is not prayer.*’ ‘When a person sees that his associate hates him, he is compelled to love him, and that means ‘all of Israel,’ because this is from the ambit of *The Holy One Blessed Be He*, and when the children of Israel live unified and in affection for one another, the Divine Spirit descends upon them, and should, God forbid, there are a splits among them, and there is a visible outbreak and *לִפְנֵי*: (using this language – intent, seemingly about his Rabbi R' Pinchas, ‘*it [sic: the praying] becomes totally void*’ *And the sanctity falls as a shard, and it does so in a manner that is awful.* There were occasions , during the antipathy of the *Hasidim* to the grandsons of the *BESh'T*, that R' Raphael would silence them. The behavior against all of the grandsons of the *BESh'T*, for [R' Raphael] him [the criticism] was at a level that one must not be arrogant, and to pursue such behavior, and in all instances to reprove it, and to puncture it. ‘The *Hasidic* legends tell — one of those close to him attempted to speak during the his presence about the ‘*Bratslaver*,’ R' Raphael thundered, and that silenced them. In general, he would caution his *Hasidim* to speak softly, gently, and in the spirit of conducting study asking for a privilege. Relating to the unconstrained speech of R' Baruch of Mezhibozh and the *Tzaddikim* of that generation, and even relating to his sister’s son [e.g. Nephew], R' Nachman of Bratislav.

His public approach to teaching, encompassed issues concerning observance of the [religious law]: The crux of the matter was – not to burden the masses with loads of difficult laws. *Such difficult laws leads to being light-headed, and the shedding of commitments. The burden of these laws continue to extend the burden of exile, and the difficult laws come from the esoteric nature of these laws, and it is clear that one must approach everyone with the esoteric elements of compassion.* The severe laws frighten the simple Jew, and he does not betray its existence. As an example he brought the ‘*Be’er Heytev*’ in the name of ‘*Tolaat Yaakov*’ Is there anyone among the simple Jews that would not be subject to death?

The outlook of R' Raphael also changed in other areas. His lectures and discussions were drenched mostly with sentences of the law and the sayings of *Khaza’L*, in the way *Tzaddikim* communicate, in the style of the *Tzaddikim*, in his own way and style. In order to arouse the soul in the listener, as is written — ‘*Wisdom will revive its adherents*’ and the wisdom lies in the testing of one’s soul. By wit,

example and event, and the sayings of *Khaza "L* – to the extent of the grasp of the individual. This would not be like the people of our generation who criticize the received tradition, to a person in order to engender remorse, and the person (God forbid) cannot help himself to feel contrition.

After the passing of R' Pinchas of Kuric, the *Hasidim* of Kuric united, including Bershad, in the name of 'The *Hasidim* of Bershad.' The extent of his work spread far, R' Raphael became renown for his modesty and his good deeds that were based on tradition, even beyond his defined ambit. In his memoirs, Abraham Ber Gotlober relates what he recalls, that one time he was invited to Dovrosei (on the boundary between Serbia and Kherson) pursued by the authorities, and the *Hasidim* of Bershad offered him help, once they became aware that R' Raphael would lodge with his father in Old Constantine.

R' Raphael did not write any books. His lore and his sayings spread among his *Hasidim* by word-of-mouth and were only written down after his death. Among them are: 'Medrash Pinchas' in a number of additions there are awesome things, and praiseworthy assessments from the *Tzaddik* R' Raphael of Bershad' (5633), in the handwriting of R' Raphael of Bershad, which is passed down as a legacy among the *Hasidim* of Kuric and Bershad, in which one can find the lore of R' Pinchas and his speeches. He would refer to his Rabbi with trembling and compassion, sometimes not explicitly as was the custom regarding matters of holiness: He is remembered as a righteous man and his memory is an elevated one, 'I heard from the mouth of my holy teacher, ﴿خواص﴾, who would say, 'and this was his idiom.' and in to the *Hasidim* of Bershad his style of praying and the unique conduct in the Synagogue were unique in having been received from our teacher R' Raphael: — they were great in clear verses, such as on the *High Holy Days*, which according to the sense of R' Raphael — [he] wanted the clarity itself to be praises offered to *The Holy One Blessed be He*. They do not deal with issues related to immersion and *mikvah*. Praying is done in a whisper and quietly, word for word, out of the attachment of the heart, and not excitedly or in arrogance. They do not recite the *V'Kol Ma'aminim* prayer in a second, rather as if it were minute, and not in their schools but rather — 'according to the style of the writers.' the idiom 'in *Bet HaSofrim*', R' Raphael would explain. 'It stretches from the plague of the box into the house, apart from the litany of lies in their separate interpretation in the matter of *II Exodus* as mentioned above.' During the weekly days they do not recite — 'Yigdal'. The annals of legends tells us that on one occasion — he heard that R' Leib of Bralavka, who led services during the middle of the week, recited 'Yigdal', and so he sent a message to him, saying: On the eve of the Sabbath one does not recite *k'gavnah* but start from 'raza'. For this reason, one recites the prayer 'VeShamru' with feeling and with faith. The *Hasidim* tell that in the name of R' Raphael, when the Jews recited 'VeShamru' on the eve of the Sabbath, with zeal, a noise was heard in the heavenly heights. The *Hasidim* of Bershad were zealous in the matter of *Tzitzit* and Prayer Shawls, and in the details of the *Mitzvot* which would sweeten the issues surrounding the *Mitzvah* of *Tzitzit*.

According to what the *Hasidim* tell, 'R' Raphael would himself produce (Kosher) *Tzitzit* for the world at large, to be spread out according to the designation 'tzigyerin' (thin wool) and to orally and fully express [the blessing] for the fulfilment of the *Mitzvah* of *Tzitzit*, that they be twelve thumb lengths long, in order to make curls, and similarly with regard to the issues of making a Prayer Shawl.'

There was a *Hasidic* tale that had spread in Bershad and its surroundings, that the melodies used on *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, were accepted in most of the vicinity along with their heartfelt sadness, and their mysterious melodies, put together by R' Raphael. His Rabbi, R' Pinchas appeared to him in a

dream after his death, and taught them to him. To this day, they are called ‘The Style of Bershad’ (*Bershader Nusakh*).

## 4. His [R’ Raphael’s] Passing

R’ Raphael made a solitary place for himself. He hovered exclusively in the shadow of his Teacher. This tale did not embellish him in the stories about miracles and like deeds. The *Hasidic* legends knew how to relate about people of stature, inheritors of their father, bedecked with the good will of their ancestors. And it has little knowledge to tell about those, who do not demand to be sealed with the imprimatur of relationships, the holy men in life, being complete and simple, who were raised to a high level in recognition of the heartfelt imperatives that only they possess.

He can be likened in the annals of *Hasidism* to R’ Zvi Hirsch of Rimonov, with his religious teachings and straightness, his unblemished and unadorned character: He was a fundamental entity in the *Hasidism* of Galicia, a pupil of R’ Mendli of Rimonov. Both of them, R’ Raphael and R’ Zvi Hirsch were drawn from the common people, from the field of the simple folk. R’ Zvi Hirsch – a simple man, a servant, lighting the ovens at R’ Mendli’s, a *Shammes* and an *Emissary*. A variety of interpretations are available about R’ Raphael: An elementary school teacher, a *Shammes*, and there are those who say – burial of the dead. In any event, he is not adorned with a patriarchal pedigree.

A *Hasidic* legend tells, that R’ Pinchas of I was a tailor’s apprentice... I worked [there] for five years *like this*.’ This was analogous to the statement of the *BShe”T* who would say of his student R’ Yaakov Joseph of Polno: .’*The Holy One, Blessed Be He will hold a favor for me because of this Yossel’eh.*’ Similarly to this, R’ Mendli of Rimnow would say: ‘I came into this world solely for my attendant, Zvi Hirsch, just as the AR”I זבצ did not come into this world only for his student R’ Chaim Vital,’

R’ Zvi Hirsch did not hide his proletarian origins, he did not separate himself from it and was not ashamed of it. As a *Hasidic* tale tells us : that at the time R’ Yisrael’chi of Rozin with R’ Zvi-Hirsch of Rimonov, R’ Yisrael’chi – recounted his pedigree. He and his forbears – R’ Sholom Pohorwiec, R’ Abraham Mal’akh to the *Maggid* and the *BESh”T*. When they reached the line of the prospective groom R’ Zvi Hirsch, he got up and said: I was an apprentice to a tailor... I worked there for five years ... I was a righteous worker .. I did not enjoy access to anything that was forbidden... The *Rebbe* of Rozin got up and said: ‘*Enough, we have to write up the covenants of marriage.*

Tales of this sort also circulated about R’ Raphael of Bershad. Abraham-Ber Gotlober relates in his memoirs: he was not intimidated when they lowered his standing with the phrase ‘*Uneducated and an Ignoramus*,’ when they pointed him out in the street, nor his modest rural village garb, and he would forgive these insults completely. ‘On one occasion’ the tale continues – He forgot to count the *Sefirah*, and he was compelled to count without a blessing, and when he was distanced from the prayer stand during ‘*Sefirat Ha’Omer*’, he took this denigration as a great privilege.’

R’ Raphael used to say: How can one arrive at a nadir like that of Hirsch’l Wasserfuhrer (the water carrier) when he entered the house of the homeowner. ‘*Master of the Universe, he would pray – you have brought me to this level.*’

Both of them did not pursue honor, after a conclave of the Sages, despite the fact that both were masters of the Torah. R' Zvi Hirsch would say, *'He who expresses that which he is supposed to, will occasionally forget his lore.'* R' Raphael would recite his litany only that 'which his soul teaches him.'

When R' Mendli, his *Rebbe*, passed away – the *Hasidim* tell – that his relatives gathered around his bed, and decided to nominate R' Zvi Hirsch to take his place, after his son Natan did not wish to inherit the place of his father. R Hirsch heard this and fled. R' Raphael of Bershad did not agree to occupy [his chair] after the passing of his *Rebbe*, and remained a wanderer for the rest of his life.

The *Hasidic* tales, which did not praise him during his life, could not ignore the fact that he had left them at the time of his death, and they gave him an honest death on the altar of truth – the most important point in his life, up to the dedication of his soul. It was on this basis that this tale came into being.

On one occasion, a man violated the law of the land in a manner that made it obligatory to appear before the monarchy, but only with two of the *Tzaddikim* of that generation, R' Moshe Zvi Masavaron and the sacred Rabbi R' Raphael of Bershad who would swear that this Jew did not violate the law, and was not guilty in the matter of the merchandise, and then they will release him in peace. The *Tzaddik* R' Moshe Zvi Masavaron, upon seeing that bad things await the accused, and that his life and that of his wife and children were at stake, ruled that saving a life sets aside everything, and he made permission for himself to give this oath, even if there is some suspicion of wrongdoing in this matter. R' Moshe-Zvi concluded in his heart, that it was better that his soul go to *Gehenna* in order to save several souls of Israel from death. But the Sacred Rabbi R' Raphael, who adhered to the direction of his Holy *Rebbe* R' Pinchas of Kuric, who held that *Hasidism* rests upon the foundation of the purity of deeds, and all such deeds depend on the act of honesty, and who also fled from the specter of the lie, could not take this oath, and he said: – *'It is better that souls should be lost from Israel and that not one evidence of the truth will be uprooted'*.

The wife of the accused, and his children, did not give any money to him,. But did plead with R' Raphael and wept at his home for many days, from dawn to dusk, for him the grant himself this permission. And he, the compassionate one, who did not let a person leave empty-handed and was prepared to compromise himself, his soul and energy for even one tear [shed] from Israel, this time hardened his heart and did not listen to them. But they did not leave him, and when the last day of the period arrived to give the oath, they wept and did not move from his house. At night, R' Raphael sits closed and locked up: tomorrow is the judgement day of a Jew, the husband of a wife and a father to his children and he has, in hand, the ability to rescue a Jewish soul, his wife, and children. And saving a life sets aside everything, and one who saves even one soul of Israel, etc., and it is evident in this matter, that lo, the very *Tzaddik*, R' Moshe Zvi of Savaron is prepared to swear, and act according to the Torah, it is therefore incumbent upon himself to prepare to take the oath. However, how can he commit this transgression? Will he swear to a lie and say the opposite of what is true? How many times in his life had he made the effort to cleanse his soul. In his life, he had never said yes– yes and no – no, out of a fear that he will confess what he did. All his life he never said 'I heard, I saw, even in cases when he had heard and seen, All his life he had never donned dyed clothing, which was likened to an untruth, Because the lie is the father of uncleanness and the root of sin, but the truth is the foundation of the world. Everything narrows down for him to the point of the truth – the seal of the *Holy One Blessed be He*, the foundation of *Hasidism* and the center of everything, and is he now to forfeit all of this. No! He will not

commit this unclean deed... but... But the blood of the Jew will be demanded of him... and the wife and her children...

He raised his voice in a cry:

– *Master of the Universe!* You chose us from all the nations and gave us your holy Torah, and the following is written in your Torah: Do not lie! And you know that I have fled from lies and surrendered my spirit and soul to be tested. Take my soul from me...

He melted into tears until he lost his soul.

In the morning, the accused confessed his wrongdoing. The pupils hurried to come to the room of their *Rebbe* and he lay dead, and his soul is in the treasury of Heaven.

Another version:

Near Bershad there lived an informer that used to cause trouble for Jews until one person arose and in anger killed him, and secretly buried him. The wife of the killed one, in order to take revenge on the Jewish community, asked to be designated as an *Agunah*, and both R' Raphael of Bershad and R' Moshe Zvi of Savaron gave her this title, written down and sealed according to tradition. This woman presented this title to the law, and she proved that the Jews knew of the murder of her husband ~~פָּגָד~~, and because of this a great danger was seen to fall over all the Jews of the surroundings. Only after many presentations, a decision was handed down, that if the *Tzaddikim* would swear, they will nullify the judgement. R' Moshe Zvi of Savaron agreed, but R' Raphael of Bershad, when he heard the judgement he began to weep, and in the end he said he had an advice. He fled to Tracz, called on the *Hevra Kadisha*, laid himself on the ground and said: *Master of the Universe!* I, from whose mouth there never came a lie, in my old age am I to swear in vain? It shall not be. Death is better for me than this life. God of Truth, take my soul from me!

God heard his prayer and raised his soul to the High Heavens.

Abraham-Ber Gotlober in his memoirs about R' Raphael of Bershad underscores this telling of his death, and adds: these are the tales of an honest man and a total *Tzaddik* who spoke the truth orally and in his heart. But he was not a *Torah Sage* of his generation as were others, however, his righteousness and honesty, and lofty deeds of tradition, award him honor and praise.

## 5. The Legacy of R' Raphael

The socio-cultural state in the city of R' Raphael did not break up, in essence it was like the remaining cities in Podolia. As was the case there, a religious and traditional cultural life declined, in the face of ignorance and foolishness. Bershad suffered a double blow in this regard, partly because of the geographic separation from the central cities of Podolia, along with their Rabbis, and sources of income, despite the fact that the condition in this regard was not especially good. The *Parnassim* pressured the

masses with the power of their traditional rule, that continues yet from the Polish period, which since the partition (1795) did not cease. The Rabbis followed the *Parnassim*. The masses rebelled against the Rabbis and distanced themselves from them and the teachers, in the analogous distancing of the farmers, to be considered apart, from the priests and ascetics in whom they saw the root cause of their decline and being forced into labor. The proverbs and jokes of the masses were preserved to this day, in the cities of Podolia, illustrated by the negative relationship with them. Like them, so were the Jewish masses. The *Hasidic* tales of that period essentially describe the expulsion of R' Yaakov Joseph of Polno and from the cities of Reszkov and Bratslav, where he had served as the Rabbi. And he was not the only one to suffer this fate. He did not particularly encourage the religious-cultural status of the ranks of Jews during the Middle Ages who were literate, *Hasidim*, and adherents of tradition. These rose over the masses. We have no detailed information about the cultural status of every point of settlement, the status of the masses, and their mutual relationships. Rabbinical scholarship of this period describes the status in generalities, from which one can learn about the details:

... For example, they did not know about the washing of hands before a meal, and the remaining *Mitzvot* of purity, like – seven purifications, and the like. Similarly, they did not know of the prohibition against various foodstuffs during Passover, such as *kitniyot*, and beans, etc. A few of the cities made do with one *Etrog*, a single ritual slaughterer and a single *Mikvah*, and they were not particularly strict in these matters. They were concerned about one essential thing, that there should be a *Shammes* in their city, as a sort of scapegoat, who would assume all of the punishments and troubles that befell the city entirely. For example, they were afraid of being reproved, and with all their souls, they believed that whoever was called [for an *aliyah*] at the time that the *reproof* was being read, does not find his years, and because of this, the *Shammes* was compelled to take the *aliyah* on behalf of all Israel. He was also required to read it. During the reading [of the *reproof*] many people stuffed their ears with their fingers, in order not to hear this reading being read.

Not many came to pray on these Sabbaths. On the Sabbath that the *reproof* was read the city looked wrecked. It was a chore to gather a *Minyan* and there was no one who wanted to read the Torah at that time out of fear and anxiety. The *Shammes* was forced to be the Torah-reader for the entire year.

Another difficult problem confronted these ranks – to get someone to blow the *Shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*. They were afraid to even look at the *Shofar*, and as far as touching it, they believed that the one who blows the *Shofar* would not live out the year, and as a result, they had no alternative but to designate the *Shammes* for this peril as well. In the end, there was not a single man who wanted to endanger himself by reading the *reproof*, and the same was applied to the *Shofar*. And it was because of this, there was no one that wanted to act [in place of] the *Shammes*, and to enter into a state of great peril, but in the ranks of the elderly there were those who understood that their days were numbered, and they assumed this task to act as the *Shammes*. And it is understood that they were not going to have much longer life, not because of the *reproof* and not because of the *Shofar*, but because of old age, weakness and hunger, and as a result a great fear fell upon the entire city, believing that the *Shamashim* die only because of the *reproof*, and because of the awesome *Shofar*.

Insofar as the cultural state, it declined entirely in the village Jewish settlement. There were many Jews in the surrounding villages – lessors, saloon keepers, servants in the yards of the nobility and in those areas that permanent contact with the farmers of the growing and impoverished *Szliakhta*, and together

with their *Parnassim*, they suckled at the bottom of the surroundings, and were converted to being ignorant. In their speech, they adopted a type of speech typical of the village Jews, in their behavior and every appearance of the *Szliakhta*. In the eyes of Jews and non-Jews they were entirely not like the rural ‘*Yishuvniks*’ in the areas of Lithuania and Poland in that period. There were those who polluted themselves entirely, with the use of the aids of the cripples, the weak who were captives of a permanent fear, and out of a will to gain favor in the eyes of their *Parnassim*, they identified with them in their *szliakhta* dress, and to appear like all of them – from the size of their mustaches, clasped into tall boots, vests, and the feathered or glistening hats with glistening visors. In the course of time, many of them forgot the customs of the Jews, their way of life, the language they spoke and prayed in, and those that raised their external Judaism, yet naked of all culture, abandoning all faith and adopted the prayers of the masses of gentiles, the barriers were torn down, and the borders became indistinct and were taken up by the populace of the surroundings.

The endeavors of R’ Raphael in this area was plentiful and from here, it went on and spread to other areas that were manifesting similar conditions. On a map of the lower level world like this, his strands of *Hasidism* spread in the simplicity of the masses and from his good deeds. In essence this *Hasidism* was based on the manifestation of souls because it sprung from the midst of an individual’s grasp and the influence of the local conditions, the time and the surroundings, under the influence of outside forces – nature and the surroundings, and the color of the nature and its mysteries. And did not the influence of the awesome Carpathians, the fearsome residents there, have on the creator of *Hasidism*? And also, did not the influence of the Messianic Podolia, and was there no influence of the surroundings that contained those seekers of God amidst the Messianic movements? And also – the Master of the *Tanya* on the *Hasidism* of Latvia, poor in the appearance of the nature there and the surroundings and nature, and the scholarly surroundings, and the impulse to study in the depths of its concepts of wisdom, understanding and knowledge. The longings and emotions, and the poems in the *Hasidism* of R’ Nachman of Bratslav, educated in the home of the *BESh”T* with elevated revelations and in the teachings of the *Melamed* of Kuric, R’ Pinchas which drew influence from the simple ways of Lithuania and Wolhyn.

The *Hasidism* of the *BShe”T* – as circumscribed by the authors of the tales of the *Hasidism* – brought down from the Heavens to the ground, by the revelation of the Heavenly secrets in simple terms. The *Hasidism* of the Wolhynian ‘Mezeritch’ and was tied to the Torah and labor. The *Hasidism* of R’ Raphael conveyed God into the simple Jewish heart, without dialogue and symbols, rather by itself, by means of the righteousness of the soul, belief and faith.

The Elders of the city used to tell of the time when R’ Raphael addressed a Jew standing on the threshold of conversion [to Christianity], and he attempted to convince him and arouse the sense of return: If you are a sinner, why do you seek forgiveness by an intermediary who himself is a sinner and encourages sinning. It would be much better and beautiful that you should confess to yourself with a full heart and to receive the forgiveness from yourself, with the help of Heaven. If you do not know how to pray — Recite ‘*Shema Yisrael*’ with sincerity and with a pure heart, and he himself would repeat the prayer of ‘*Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.*’ It was in the *Hasidism* of R’ Raphael he found a [place for his straying heart and confessed because of the good simplicity in it, that relieve the sorrow in the path of faith and assurance.

The period of Bershad *Hasidism* begins with R' Raphael, even if the *Hasidism* of the *BESh "T* came first, according to the *Hasidic* tale, because according to the *Hasidic* tale, he visited here at the time the city was created. It was in this way that the reputation of R' Pinchas, the student and colleague of the *BES"ht*, and from that time forward R' Raphael became his apostle, out of his understanding of the Jewish sorrow and the ability to permeate even faraway places, since the sorrow of the Jews appears there alone. His methods had an influence on the spiritual sorrow of the city that was an heir to his law, and the elements of spirituality that passed over to them as an inheritance and they were called by the name: '*The Faith of Bershad*', '*The Poverty of Bershad*' '*The Style of Bershad*.' And this direction was extended also to the area of labor and work: '*Tzitzit of Bershad*', '*Prayer Shawls of Bershad*.'

## **6. *Tzitzit and Prayer Shawls***

A recognizable part of the Jews in that location busied itself in the production of *Prayer Shawls* and *Tzitzit*.

A factory was established by the Jews themselves being Kosher and Pure. This was not the case in other cities who were engaged in this factory with the help and effort of the Nobles, such as in Dombrovno, Lodz, and from here – that the fame and spread of this large factory. It is certain that the source of the factory rested on the purity and legacy of R' Raphael, who '*returned after the Tzitzit and Prayer Shawls as Kosher, for the benefit of the masses as one of the central Mitzvot, and unique intentions.*'

Like the *Tzitzit*, the *Prayer Shawl* was declared pure from the time of its outline and adorned with all manner of decorations. 'He, himself, would wrap himself in a *Prayer Shawl* without any decorative neckpiece, and without uniquely colored stripes. The branch of my factory was in significant demand after the death of R' Raphael as a tradition and legacy and remained in operation until the last of times without any improvements, more or less more modern. In the first period it was a primitive factory: a wooden loom, simple wooden doors in the first style of the building, filling the entire room from wall to wall, leaving a narrow entrance for the weavers. The manager of the factory sat beside the loom without a jacket and a wide '*Tallit Katan*', and a black silk yarmulka on his head, admitting the book keeper and the weaver. There was a copper jug with water for washing hands. The women placed their credible hands, that spread the threads onto primitive wooden wheels, with the threads slipping into a box in the shape of tubers. The children circled the wheels, washed the wool and manipulated them into a strand of threads. The interlacing of the *Tzitzit* was done in a primitive manner and kept kosher. This factory was a center, most of it in a part of the city called '*Dolina*' beside the river where there was the living quarters of R' Abba'leh known for his kosher *Tzitzit*, and the same for the factory of the *Prayer Shawls*, found in the upper part of the city – '*Yerushalyim'keh*'.

In this factory, many earned a living from straightening and bending [threads]. Except for the manager of the factory, who would be talking with wool salesmen, wool certification, getting them ready for Latvia, agents and moneylenders, and ordinary Jews. By and large, the merchandise was stored with the moneylender, or the manager of the factory, and they would continue this way for the period until its end. The local marketplaces were served by the nearby towns and villages. There were Jews who were merchants, working people, and people on foot wandering through the villages, they took sacks of *Prayer Shawls* and *Tzitzit* to be sold. A few wandered before the holidays, and the *High Holy Days* to the

villages that were close and some even went a further distance to larger cities, to the counties of Serbia, Kherson, Wolhyn, among the Bershad *Hasidim*. Among these ranks of *Hasidim*, the Prayer Shawls and *Tzitzit* of Bershad were known for their *Kashrut* and their sanctity. A God-fearing Jew would search for such a Prayer Shawl, they would grace grooms with a gift of a Bershad Prayer Shawl, and wrap the children in a Kosher ‘*Tallit Katan*’ from Bershad, as an amulet for the education of children in the spirit of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

In time, the factory developed even further, looms were added, thread straighteners. People with money and moneylenders were drawn here who sunk their monies into this trade. The distribution of the merchandise to distant places became compulsory, and Jewish messengers, and merchants, who traveled to the big cities with merchandise for them – Kishinev, Kherson, Zhitomir, Bandory, and they remained there during the weekly break days, the time of weddings, until after the *High Holy Days*, the period of repentance. On *Passover* and *Sukkot*, they would return home. There were also Jews behind shutters (?) God-fearing, who dressed in black *kapotes*, and *shtrymels* on the Sabbath, who also knew how to tell stories of *Hasidim*, and the miracles of *Tzaddikim*. The *mikvah* was usually in the Synagogue or *Bet HaMedrash*. During prayer sessions, they would lay down their merchandise, spread it out on the table, and would attract potential buyers with descriptions of the *Kashrut* of the merchandise.

This business at first enabled mercantile connections between my city and the villages of the surroundings. A Jew who was in need of a Prayer Shawl, would bring something to sell from the produce of his city, in order to save on the cost of the trip or to enlarge the price of his work. And there were others that brought merchandise in greater quantity, and they bought and sold. They tried in other branches [of work] and became engaged in mercantile connections, sending their merchandise by messengers and wagon drivers from here to there. These transactions were mostly carried out with the nearby towns, and neighboring cities: – Khatzavto, Savarin, Trusteiniec, and Oborka. In the fulness of time, they broadened [their efforts] to the surroundings and in the amount they handled, they seized upon various avenues in the working of various grains for the villages: rice, flour and millet, that became known for the quality of the goods and were called by the city’s name: – ‘*Millet from Bershad*,’ ‘*Flour from Bershad*.’

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In essence, the Jews of that location mostly made a living from the towns in the surroundings in a mutual manner: there were store keepers, merchants, real estate brokers. Those that had mercantile connections with the villages – millers, people who drew income from river quarries. During the period of the fairs, they transported agricultural goods, and products of wood from the territory of the nobility to even further distant locations, and to even more distant locations, they brought merchandise whose arrival was sure to sell: salt, steel, linen, and woven goods for the administration. There were only a few of these, and the people of the city looked upon them with pity: It was difficult for them, our people who had to take to wandering the ways outside their homes, and they were given best wishes, and from the depths of the heart – ‘income on the spot.’

This was before the train tracks had been laid. They traveled in wagons loaded with sacks of harvested grains, about half a ‘*goren*’ per wagon, drawn by three bony horses, of which the middle one had a bell used to announce their arrival, giving off the ring for the path which was extended, hard, and dangerous. There were overgrown forests, thieves, rain, and mud in the fall. Lumps of slime stuck to the wagon

wheels, the horses would hold back, breathing with a restrained breath. In the winter, wolves would come out of the thick forest, their eyes lit like lamps, which would focus on the strip of snow and the heart sensed their blood-curdling growl as they drew near...

On the night of the Sabbath, in the house of the manager, owner of the mill at the hour of drinking tea, and the elders turn over conversations and memories on times gone by. The city was already connected to the steel rails, and the train dropped off and took on travelers to various destinations. They sat around a table, and the ‘samovar’ was boiling, they drink one cup after another, they drink from the bottom while sucking on a small piece of sugar, and incidentally as they took no notice in the midst of a weak smile, memories flow like a distant vapor from past days...

The trip was like a decree from heaven. A fate like no other. Since it was his fate to travel, walked about oppressed and sullen. The fast of an individual, a chapter of the Psalms, amulets and good luck charms. This was a privilege that was stuck since the days of R’ Raphael זצ”ה to read Psalm 21 seven times a day – ‘*may God answer you in a day of stress*’ an addition during prayer, the sentences of ‘*shiviti*’ and Jacob went his way and someone among the relatives donates pennies on the day of departure, and made it into parts to be divided among the poor, the test of ‘those who are emissaries of Mitzvah are not subject to harm’...

The wagons leap along the unrepaired roads, full of pits and potholes and leaps over the arguments of the passengers regarding lodging, and food places in the hotels. A Jew is sitting at the intersection of the roads and holds onto a ticket for lodging. He stands at the counter surrounded by drunkards, wagon drivers, mustachioed gentiles ‘*Czumakim*’ wearing high hats and broad trousers with a mustache that goes down two braids, they are sitting in a group and smoking ‘*lilyuk cibek*’ (a pipe), and the smoke rises like a dark cloud, ‘*Kuzarim*’ the blind and members of the *Szliachta*, nobles gorging on meat and milk, gelled fat and salted fish, whiskey, ‘*vimoruzik*’ and again – whiskey, mead wine. There is noise and pandemonium from those entering and leaving. It is not possible to hear what is spoken, and one cannot see through the nearby thick smoke. Among them, our Jews mingle, owners of dozens and having appearance, merchants and intermediaries, ‘children and grandchildren with large red handkerchiefs that stick out of the back pockets of the *kapote*, circulating, worried and sighing. A few wash their hands alternately in the barrel, others sit and murmur a chapter of the Psalms and those sitting at the table eat something on a thick, dirty tablecloth that has been spread on the table, they toast with a ‘*L’ Chaim*’ and tell of the miracles of *Tzaddikim*. Suddenly the conversations become surly, they set up opposing chairs, and they get up on them, one facing the other.

- who is yours? Can he stand against me?
- idle words!
- any gentile could sell them...
- you dumb *Hasid*!
- *Trayfnyak*<sup>35</sup>...

Others get up and get involved. The pushing of hands causes incitement, the hat is at the back of the

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<sup>35</sup> One who indulges in unkosher food.

head, they get worked up and get emotional. The gentiles are standing and laughing out of drunkenness:

*Rabina Bayut...* (The *Rebbe* is getting beaten)

Frequently, wedding plans are created in the inns. A Jew is sitting and twirling his side locks, and affably hears how the wedding broker recites the varied connections of the [proposed] father-in-law, how large are his assets and wealth. One of our Jews is as honest as can be and believes what is presented. him, he is the buyer and does not refuse. By and large, this is concluded purely to and with a loss. Sometimes with strictly Kosher wine for four glasses, sometimes with *Etrogim* for the covering of the Holy Ark, or secular items: – linens, wool, cotton. One of our leading Jews covers the company for four Kosher glasses and he bought a keg of wine, this was before Passover. When he came home, the wine had soured into vinegar...this in many places such as Kameniec, where they presented the Jew with a covering for the Holy Ark. Near the house, he saw two youngsters sitting on the ground like mourners. His sense was relieved being God-fearing. He comforted them with the compassion of Zion and Jerusalem, Meanwhile, he was asked to join and complete the *Minyan*, and they showed him a place in the kitchen where he could wash his hands, and when they entered there and bent over to his hands, they stuffed part of the Prayer Shawl into his mouth and plundered everything that he had, and nobody said a thing. One person went out into the street and saw something valuable — a gold ring. He picked it up. And here, as if out of the ground, a fellow appeared and argued: they should divide it. The went off to a side street, they surrounded him, and emptied his pockets of all that he had.

And how many times did it occur that a Jew got up un the morning, in the hotel, and finds that he has nothing?

Our Jews – the Elders would smile – collected and cleaned their belongings, guarding against thieves in the hotel: They used to hide the water for washing of the nails in the bedroom...what sort of Jew would get up in the middle of the night, walk four steps without an ablution of his hands?

People were pressed into the list of work that was available in that place, freeing themselves from travel and changed their roots. Sayings were also created in the sense of common recognition, such as' It is better to make do with less among the many thieves.' 'The local resident is more important than a Rabbi from an alien location.' 'Fortunate is the man who went,,, ' the number of stores grew, merchants, accountants, and eating places. A set number were pushed into spiritual forms of work – arranging weddings, teaching the art of speculation, lessons in faith and the community. At the end of the matter — the house did not fill up to cover its deficiencies. The number of people without a means to earn a living and those who walked around with nothing to do, grew.

Others got pushed to the villages, and developed relations with the nobility and gentiles. A new layer of Jews coming from the villages of Podolia in the first half of the nineteenth century – millers, forest workers, people that flooded the stone quarries. They sat in the villages for the entire week, and for the Sabbath they went home, to spend some days with their families in the village. They sustained a connection with the city, and conducted themselves affably with the gentiles, taking workers from them, laborers and porters as well, thereby adding income to the city. There were occasional instances of small loans when things got tight – a sack of flour, grain, feed for the cattle and birds as a way of paying for labor.

The wives of the farmers worked as servants and helping out with running the house. These were *Hasidim* and men of action. Among them were literate people and people knowledge in Torah, wearing beards and side locks, paying particular attention to their clothing and their behavior when being in contact with nobles, this was the about a consideration for themselves among the gentiles. They would bring specially chosen *Melamdim* to bring home with them, and the Russian teacher for a little bit of Russian and mathematics. Respectable people remained in the city and were put to work to raise *Tzedakkah* and the *Rebbe* would send them letters with his blessing by the standing *Gabbai*.

They sometimes would alter their path in the village to be near the *Rebbe*. In time, they spread out. They were a source of information from, ‘*HaBoker Or*’ ‘*HaShakhar*’ and ‘*HaMelitz*.’ They sent their sons to gymnasium and they produced enlightened men, cohorts of thinkers all quietly and secretly. The first sparks of the *Haskalah* in the villages came from them in this period.

There was another layer – tavern keepers of all sorts. These also did not become polluted among the gentiles. They observed tradition, hired *Melamdim* for their sons. They were exceedingly simple, and something from the gentile leadership stuck with them. This ‘something’ proceeded to grow and become enlarged in the passage of time, as a part of their being, and they also did not find the will or capacity to leave their boundaries. Among the gentiles, their conversations and issues came out of connections in their lives. Their children became friends with the young folk of the village, they grew up with them and together, they became the youth of the village with large crystals (?) And a hat tilted to the side, they fumbled about with non-Jewish boys and girls. The parents, if they were made sorrow, kept it secretly, among themselves they would take pride in the celebrations of gentiles, in them and their displays of heroism to demonstrate their strength and to frighten them and emphasize their public standing in the village. In time, they became working men, engaged in merchandising, and they forgot the ways of their childhood.

In the city, they were called ‘Masters of the Body’, Masters of Bundles, misers. They collected things and would store their money in a hotel like the gentiles. Being skimpy in their clothing and food, always wearing a skin overcoat, along with large heavy boots, they would eat together, etc. together from one bowl and sucking their fingers with their lips. By contrast with this, they were not stingy with *Rebbes* and ‘prominent people,’ they would bring good-luck charms and amulets when they traveled to the city for the *High Holy Days*, they would bring wax candles that were large, in order to seek forgiveness for their sins. They tossed coins into the receptacle of *R’ Meir Baal HaNess*, and would host prominent people with suitable dairy produce. They believed in magic, whisperings and good luck, benefits and miracles , in their dealings with gentiles they would recite the measure of compassion of the *Holy One Blessed Be He* and stand *Him* as a witness. In occasions with feasts by gentiles they would roll out discussions of the miracles, about the miracles and wondrous deeds that took place among us and them, and occasionally partake in conversations with ascetics, and wandering hikers, the seller of lemons examining the village, who was thoroughly knowledgeable in the beliefs of the gentiles and Jews together.

— By us and by you, Hirschku, one God... is that not so?

— By us it is the pope and you have the *Rabbin*...

Hirschku recalled the *Rabbin* of the city. Who already said nothing because of the children. And after

all, is it his business? Truly — like the pope — who had a yellow beard that was broad and was also fat, scratching his beard as he was sunk in thought and was listening.

— Hirschku, do you have *shaydim*? As to the daughter of the Makar, Nastina Makar of the fat midriff — hey tell — that a *shayd* entered [her body] and sucked out all of her blood... she was as pale as the plaster on the wall, covered and looking like she was dead. She will die...

Tell us, Hirschku, have you ever seen a *shayd*?

— And the *Rabbin*?

It is said that the *shaydim* have paws like those of a rooster, broad and black. Black from the accumulation of the terrible things they did, by the blacksmith. Dwarves and reckless, leaping from place to place with their long tails that winds like a red snake's tongue like a fire in a large vessel there being a complete river in it for when they are thirsty.

— May God watch over us!

A neighbor enters. He is tired, his head is uncovered. His overcoat is on his shoulder — his eyes are shut because of the space left by the air, he keeps quiet and listens. He looks to the sides as if he were listening to someone take out of his pants pocket from a Prayer Shawl with a small case, he shoves the small case into the pipe and lights it, he sucks strongly on it and spits.

— People have told of the miracle. It was there... not far from Gorodyvko

— Who told?

— People ... Vasil, who is Katerinka's of the long nose. They saw sparks coming from the well...

— Who saw this?

The bones of Saint Sylvester were revealed in the well...

— How?

— Did you see it yourself?

— What does what I saw mean? Vasil, who is Katerinka's of the long nose... there were sparks of life in the well... The bones of Saint Sylvester sparkled.

— And he saw this himself? ....

— He did not see it... he told about it: — A man went to draw water from the well. He took the pail, tied it to a rope and let it down to the bottom. And there is no water, only sparks of fire flew from the middle of the well...

- And the man himself saw this?
- Who knows? Maybe, maybe not...
- Maybe the priest...

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There were also Jews who took in guests, wandering misers, who derived material for the fertile image of the village Jews, their women and these [guests] completely absorbed these stories with a thirst, and complete blindness. And those [the villagers] made an effort to strengthen their lust with the power of the image of scenes that didn't take place, and there were no times when [the listeners] did not become victims to the lies hidden for them in these untruths: *Elijah the Prophet* stands not far from the village and is waiting for the clothing, to go to the circumcision of the son of R' Shabtai Nachman... ( *Shabbat 'Nachamu'* ), R' Shabtai Hazzone ' the sacred ( *Shabbat 'Hazzon'* ), and is in the nearby forest, and it is possible to send someone selected by them for this One who is close to the True *World*... The women sent clothing by hand, redemptions [from sin], diadems for the soul, candles, the souls of relatives...

The – Elders tell– that there was a shoemaker in the city, [named] Raphael, who in his old age, left his work and circulated among the villages dressed like a *Hasid*. As a grandson of R' Raphael after whom he was named, used to receive items of redemption and notes to rescue souls from the burdens of *Gehenna* through the name of his holy grandfather. In time, he was seized in one of the villages, and disappeared.

They would also tell of a tax collector from a nearby village, who awoke on the night of the Sabbath before *Selichot* [Services], he hitched up his wagon to travel to the city for *Selichot*. In the dark, he searched on the upper shelf the was above the closet built into the wall, for a *Selichot* [Prayer Book], that had lain there for the entire year along with the other sacred items. He seized some book, jumped off and came to the *Bet HaMedrash*.

Though the lit windows, a burst of noise came out which were the voices and weeping. The Jew entered, cowed by his fear of *The Day of Judgement*, and sat himself on one of the benches, opened the book and fell asleep from great tiredness. A person walked by, and in looking at the book, he saw — pictures sticking out from the open book of the village Jew, and he saw an image that nullified the holiness [of the book]. Permeated [by what he saw] he began to shout. The book was a Russian Orthodox psalm book, that one of the wandering ascetics, had exchanged for a drink. The Jew put it back on the high shelf between the book and in the darkness he could not read it.

In the meantime, they surrounded the Jew. Jews, replete with side locks and a beard that had returned from the *Mikvah*, shouted and became angry: --

For *Selichot*... it is unclean and nullified in a sacred place!

An embarrassment for Israel! A Gentile!

The Jew answered honestly: – What is the shouting all about? The Gods have not yet spread among them, the God of the Jews, and the God of the Gentiles... to all who participate, who knows where the truth lies, here or there?

For the High Holy Days they would come to the city with all the dignity of household items, and the useful things of the village. They brought large wax candles to the *Bet HaMedrash* sat down, and tearfully prayed, and caused the air to quiver in fear with their voices. They cried over the ‘incinerated cattle’ that Hebrew words in the Prayer Book were expressed in a disturbing manner and jumbled: ‘*mi barekhev u’mi b’erev*’ – which should have said (who by sword and who by hunger), in the prayers of ‘*unSaneh Tokef* ‘*v’et rodfeha hishlachta bamlotzot (bimetzulot)* *kmo evven b’mayim Zaim* (should have been *Azim*)

On the Sabbath all members of the family sat around the table , /the Master of the House in his black, Sabbath kapote and a wool hat, and boots shining from their decorations, that exuded a strong odor, he would bless the wine, hold his nails to the light of the Sabbath candles.

After this – it is told – he honored each household by the songs according to the neighbor’s houses, as an amulet against forgetfulness:

Everyone who blesses the Seventh [day] **Kirila** )(*Ko’rooy Lo*)

**Kol Shomer Shabbat K’Dat Mikhilo (Mkhallelo)**

Drink very much according to **Pablo (Po’alo)**

Ish al makhaneyhu v’ish al **danilo (diglo)**

## 7. The Cantonists

A separate chapter in the history of the city is constituted by the ‘Cantonist’ *Decree*, during the period of the reign of Czar Nicholas I (1825 - 1855) and the rebellion of the masses against the heads of the community with its [Cantonist] spread. According to the presentation of the author of the Jewish history in Russia— this decree struck the rural towns more than any other such affliction of that period, and it caused dismay and trembling in the settlements and the Jewish families because of a fright about their young ones who would eventually taken from their homes.

The Cantonist Decree (26 August 1827), compared to the general history, the obligation of military service by all ranks – small and new, and Cantonists. Among them are the children of combat troops which the law places under especially unique military obligation from childhood on according to the general [rule] of Okczev: ‘*Children of the military belong to the military.*’ As to the Jews, they took their small children without condition, in order to enter them into the work of the army, and these years of training were not counted in the sum of years of service in the military, which began from the age of eighteen and up, The Jewish Cantonists were obligated to serve in the military for 25 years, additional years from their youth until reaching the age of maturity. The objective of the rulers was clear: To convert the Jewish children to their [Russian Orthodox] faith. This objective was clear to the Jewish man: since they were seizing his children in order to impose a forced conversion on them. The authorities would distance [the children] from the area populated by Jews, and turn them over to the priests and their assistants, or to very religious Christians just to be managed and educated, The Jewish community that

was subjected to giving their children up as collateral for the demanded ‘recruits’ – were required to provide them at the demanded time. The authorities were able to use manual force to take the required numbers, and levy a fine on the community or to commit the heads of the community themselves to military service. Listed merchants, laborers from the folio of the skilled workers and also people of advanced knowledge were not obligated in this respect.

After the *Decree* was promulgated, the Jews declared a fast on the Jewish community, they tore their clothing, and sat on the ground. This was a cry of despair for the hearts of the entire community, which resounded from the synagogues from the depths of their souls up to the heavenly heights.

The tales of the people relate that, as the Jews of Old Constantine, most of who were *Hasidim* who were shaken up by the *Decree*, proclaimed a fast and recited *Selichot* and in the end, performed a populous act: They wrote a ‘*Koblana*’ to the Gods of Israel, and placed it in the hands of one of the community who had died in those days, in order that the deceased will convey their plea on high... This complete *Koblana*<sup>36</sup> was to be placed before the Heavenly Kingdom concerning the Kingdom on Earth and describing the arousal in the Diaspora together with the distribution of the Law, which was seen as a rebellion in the eyes of the authorities. This came before this rebellion, the rise of the masses in Old Constantine against the heads of the community. The brother of the Czar lived in this city, Constantine, in his gated palace, security tunnels of Nicholas who was forcibly crowned after Constantine abandoned the royal throne because of a marriage deemed inappropriate to an heir of the throne, who halted the *Decree* of using a forcible hand, and he was full of fear of his enemies the Poles and the Jews. (It is accepted that Nicholas banished his brother Constantine, heir, who halted the forcible drafting. This incident of the reference of the *Koblana* to heaven, appeared to him, that this is a sign of his leadership of the rebellion. According to the palpable notice of the officer of the province, Havalin, of September 1827, the Jews fashioned a connection against the order and *Decree of the Monarchy*, in connection with the talk about the ‘recruits’ and he had to make use of soldiers. This notice aroused a reaction in [St.] Petersburg. A unique proposal was made to Czar Nicholas I, and by order, those who were guilty were arrested and taken to a military court of law. During the trial, it became clear that there was no revolution, and only a few remarks were dispersed in the gathering place of the community.

A similar incident of rebellion also took place in Bershad, according to substantial sources, and remarks were distributed in the homes of the appointed members of the City Committee, and a few of the wealthy and in the chamber of the community. According to the tales of the elders, a ‘revolution’ occurred after the seizure of a few children from the *Heder* towards the evening, during which candies and sweets were distributed to the children, and they were persuaded to be led home as if this were a public order, and were brought to the community House. According to another version, this took place at the hour the children were discharged from the *Heder* in the evening: This took place in the evening, and a raging wind was blowing and a piercing rain was falling. The *Rebbe* ordered the children to walk beside the houses, spread out, and not to light their lanterns. Suddenly a tall man appeared and after him another, and then yet another, and together they drew close to the children, seized them, and put them into sacks, and fled with them.

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<sup>36</sup> A complete dissertation on the arbitrary overreach of the Russian authorities.

The children screamed. People came out of the houses, they pursued the kidnappers and entered into battle with them. They pursued the kidnappers and engaged them in battle. At this moment the soldiers appeared. On the following day, the 'rebels' surrounded the community house while screaming and wailing. The women fell upon the community leaders, tore at their beards and side locks, threw mud and rocks and the adult men were smashed like fruit, they broke furniture and doors. It is not known if the perpetrators were brought before the law, and after the echoes of the incident reached the upper windows — and it is thought that after the incident in Old Constantine the reaction of the authorities was not so severe, and from the start they attempted to equate this outburst to a local incident of dispute that was local. The Elders of Bershad pointed out to the families that their parents or relatives were rescued from the kidnappers at that time.

This Decree appeared in each and every aspect of the conduct of city life. In areas [around the] city evidence of deception and lying were found. Friendly relationships ceased. The kidnappers, in their cruelty, did not differentiate between those who were eligible and those who were not eligible, between those who were obligated, and those who were free [from such an obligation]. The community leaders were agents of the police and out of fear regarding the responsibility that was placed upon them, they intensified their cruelty and changed themselves into people stealers who did not exhibit even a trace of compassion.

And who were the community leaders at that time?

The Elders did not report names; they spoke in generalities only. Even their headstones — which spoke out of the sentiment of those discharging this responsibility, were swallowed into the earth as a punishment from Heaven. Similarly, they would identify those families, that were struck by fate, whose predecessors belonged to the kidnappers. A severe battle had broken out in the city at that time. One side resorted to the power of the authorities, the other side with the power of their resistance. The children were the victims of both sides [of the battle]. Fathers hid their children in the forests, pits and cellars, without any light, and no [fresh] air during the course of weeks and months. The children grew weak and died. Many [parents] infected them with a malignant leprosy as an obstacle against possible seizure, however [the kidnappers] paid no heed to this, they dug around like moles, and they searched for, and seized [children], without regard. On one occasion they broke into one of the cellars in which a child was hidden for several months, and as they prepared to take him, they found that he was dead. A number of the parents turned their children over to [gentile] farmers. that they knew in the villages, and the gentiles frequently told lies. There were those that relocated themselves and their families to new settlements in their surroundings, that had been established in the decades of the thirties and forties, and the *Decree* was not applied to them. The elders of these settlements would tell that a number of them were settlements by Jews from Podolia, such as — Dombrowyny, Wartyuzny Lyubly, and Bericba. These took over the parcels there for the appearance against the cruel *Decree*. In the memory of the Elders, of these settlements, there were some interest reference to these 'farmers.' Most of them continued to live in their Podolia homes. They dealt in merchandise, and these families resided in the settlement. During the years of foray instituted by the monarchy, they would come, go out to the field along with all the tools of their work which they borrowed posing as 'silent witnesses', until the end of the foray. When the *Decree* was repealed, they sold their goods and returned to their permanent places [in Podolia].

There were early-age marriages at the ages of 10-12 — this was the age of age of those Cantonists who

were family men and free from the onus of this *Decree*. This period of the Cantonists, creates the continuation of the bordering situation almost from its start: female children aged 9-10 dress as scarecrows, in wide, long dresses, and on the Sabbaths, would go to the residence of the bald priest, on whom the moon shines on their foreheads – sitting and playing with their husbands, of age eleven, dressed in a ‘*Tallit Kattan*’ and a jacket and ‘*kapote*’ with their heads covered. There were instances where the ‘wife’ rebelled against the returners [sic: kidnappers] who seized her, and threw her out, while the parents were terribly upset, wanting to ‘*return her to good graces*’. There were times when her ‘husband’ assaulted her, and she fled while crying. For the parents this was a severe test amidst the sufferings of sadness and fear, and they courageously tried to orient their children to serious adult behavior.

The *Decree* regarding husbands was canceled in the year 1834, and along with this, a fine was laid on the parents for permitting an early marriage. This amendment to the *Decree* did not forestall the tricks of the community heads and the kidnappers. Weddings before the time of the *Decree* remained in force, but they required the possession of a permit. This requirement was in the hands of the community heads, who used it for the benefit of their own interests. There were instances when the community heads turned over such husbands to the military, as a threat against the parents in accusing them of the sin of breaking the *Decree*, and rebellion against the monarchy.

This period became etched in the lives of the Jews with blood and tears. Its repeal led to a public notice, in the deep feelings full of sorrow of fathers and their sons. The Russian literature also dealt with this in a later period of time through the publication of the memories of the Cantonists, and the victims of that period.

In the Jewish masses, this *Decree* remained as a wounded eye for generations, which did not heal even after the *Decree of the Cantonists* was repealed. Even during the reign of [Czar] Alexander II (1855-1881) and in later periods, when military service had become more proper, the *Decree* was not amended. The wound remained open. Many different approaches were taken to get released from this onus entirely. The diligent were early; and with the birth of male children, they registered them according to an agreement with a family that had no sons, in the registry of newborns in the name of such families as an only son who would be free of any obligation to enter the military as the *Decree* specified. Others were able to obtain Turkish nationality. There were also documented privileges that carried with them, issued by the authorities that enabled the purchase of an annulment of military service. The infliction of bodily wounds, among those who were eligible for service, did not help, as did not a bodily wound and personal blood loss. Despite this, they [the Jews] did not flinch. In comparison to religious conversion, they followed the rule of ‘*let him be killed but not convert*.’ In the end, those who had disappeared in the cities, numbered greatly in a relative sense, and the government fought them to the full extent of the law, There were places where the authorities succeeded in revealing a recognized number of ‘*disappearers*’ and demanded of the community to fill the quota that was levied on them by others.

Among the bodily defects that was most widely imposed was the cutting off of the right big toe. This was done without revealing it, out of carelessness. As a fact, there were Jews who performed this *Mitzvah* (!) In the *Name of Heaven*. Beside the house near the back door, they would put wood and beside the wood, a sharpened axe. Mainly, the act was performed beside the houses bordering on the river, traversed by people coming and going and who do not live there.

The lad would approach the wood chopper, pick up the ax and address the toe. All of this was done in the blink of an eye. Remedies were made available at the outset, because the results were accompanied by fighting, fainting, weakness and nervousness that was not small in relation to the number of lawful complications that arose because of deception, but in general, most of the condemned left in peace, which was the way they presented what was done without care or out of the ordinary for physical work. There was no proof of eligibility for this privilege of the condemned were always found in quantity.

The people with these inflicted wounds sometimes served as relief for others: they showed up at the name-changing and were excused by the fact that their true husbands shared the same name.

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In the city there were a few *Cantonist* families of the last of the returnees that had converted to Christianity, and those who retained their Jewish faith. These last ones were called ‘*soldaten*’(soldiers) – *Meir Soldat*, *Koppel Soldat*, *Menashe Soldat*, etc. This designation passed as a legacy from fathers to sons even after the death of the fathers. The Christians were those who returned with their families, and they settled in the suburbs, because the authorities granted them parcels of land: they did manual labor, the sale of agricultural produce, the sale of swine meat and their pig bristles.

They had relatives in the city, and since they had converted to Christianity, they were considered to be gentiles, and the members of Jewish families with patience, as well as the residents of the city. Part of the life experience that descended upon them – forced conversion to Christianity – aroused feelings of pity and forgiveness. One of these, that had brothers and an elderly woman in the city, he would sell swine flesh in the marketplace, [He was] old, a fairly tall man with a Jewish face, on which he sported a white mustache reaching down to his shaven chin, in the Ukrainian fashion, wearing a short farmer’s fur jacket glistening from fat and a hat of sheep wool on his head. He would come day after day in the morning to the area of the market with his wagon, harnessed to a healthy and stout horse, and stood him between the upright shafts, with his face pointing at the wagon, with a small sack of animal feed tied around his neck. His Hebrew name was Raphael (perhaps in memory of R’ Raphael?) But upon being converted to Christianity, he was called – Ivan. He would ask the Jews, who bought pig bristles from him, to call him by his Christian name and not to speak Yiddish to him. He would avoid public gatherings, and sharp discussions that led to shouting. He did not join farmers in their partying – on their holidays and during their fairs. It was said of him that he had assumed, as a sacred responsibility on himself, not to publicly disgrace the Sabbath, at the time that Jews were coming out of the Synagogue and going over to the marketplace. On the Sabbath and [Jewish] Holidays, he would not go to the marketplace exhibiting the appropriate reason from his side: [He has] a Jewish soul...— they would say, and he is not culpable in the fact that he was captured and exiled among the gentiles while still a child? But now, it was too late...

One of them had settled down in the city, having come from a far-distant village. It was said that he had deliberately wandered to a place where no one would recognize him. His wife opened a tavern for the farmers and he, who was literate, became an intermediary in courts and trials. He would go through the city streets, with a bent back, strange looking eyes, soaked in mourning, his legs wandering out of drunkenness, [and for this reason] the Jews placed the message on the bloated and red space that was under the cap lid that covered his eyes. He shunned friendship from Jews and gentiles alike, and apart from matters of business and earning a living he had no discussions or matters to deal with people.

On *Yom Kippur* Eve, during the recitation of the prayer ‘*Kol Nidre*,’ he would stand outside beside the Tolna *Kloyz*. drunk, red, his hat pulled over his eyes, he approached the Eastern Wall from the outside, where the *Hazzan* would be standing [inside], and would feverishly be listening to the traditional melodies being chanted. For days he would disappear and leave his wife and her tavern. It was said that he had lost his mind.

On one occasion, a Cantonist officer came, who was one of the children of the city, and approached his sister, the head of the broadly-branched family. This took place on a Sabbath morning. The family was at the Synagogue. They sent a message to notify the sister, but she did not recognize him. His prominent Russian uniform, from his branch of the army, his thick mustache that falls and spread upwards onto the compressed onto the tanned face and his eyes that speak of aggravation, revealed the oddity of the atmosphere in the Jewish family of cousins, male and female, who had come wrapped in their *Prayer Shawls* from the Synagogue on the Sabbath morning to receive the arrival of their uncle. He traveled away before evening. The parting was cold. It was told that he said to his sister:

— *Susyoot!* (You who squeeze the heart)...I longed to see the city, the house of my parents... but not this...There were those who became caught in a slingshot being tossed between Judaism and Christianity. They were inclined to be melancholic, silently going between these two boundaries, insane and sick. There was one person who was born in the village and circled around the various villages of the vicinity not far from the small city of Tarnowka, He was called Yehoshua’keh. His Christian name was Stefan. The lore of Christianity that had been forcibly placed upon him did not excise the lore of his mother [people]. In the midst of the singing in the church, tunes came up that were traditionally Jewish, prayers of the Sabbath and Holidays, which raced around in his mind with trembling, songs coming out of his memory, until he was compelled to articulate them out loud and let other share them. At times like this, it was as if he had remembered something, Fear of insanity would attack him and he would cross himself [and say]

— In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost... *Huspudyi Familiyu!* (Lord have pity!).

He was once invited to a nearby village, on the Eve of Sabbath, in his stained and torn clothing, with his jacket under his noble hands, and his staff and a hat having a shining front.

An endangered Jew...the Jews said out of pity.

They asked for his name and his family. Where did he come from? They had heard that he possessed a pleasant voice, and they invited him to lead services on the Sabbath at the village *Minyan*. One of the wealthier leaders invited him to the Sabbath Feast.

The ‘Guest Jew’ enjoyed the honor bestowed upon him, and the clothing that the Jews dressed him in, the village Jews enjoyed his recitations of prayer and his pointed tales. And here he sits on the Sabbath afternoon at the ample Sabbath Feast, and he interweaves the melodies out loud. In the distance a cortege of Christians are approaching with crucifixes and flags, bare-headed gentiles and curved gentile women, in leather footwear that are strong and sparkle, with colored handkerchiefs on their heads, and they are carrying braided loaves of *Challah*. An ark was carried on shoulders and behind was the priest with the

‘*Trabnik*’ (The Book of Prayers) and the ‘*Dayak*’ with a burning platter exuding a smoke that spiraled upward, and a chorus of gentile men and women, escorting it with song imbued with sadness. These recoiled and grew pale, until the sons of the house busy with songs and the Woman of the House with serving food, and the Woman of the House upon serving the food, crouched and bent on the window sill. In a minute, he took off the *kapote* that was lent to him by the Master of the House, leapt outside, seized a crucifix from some gentile and joined the march.

In time, it became known that he, also was one of the Cantonists, who converted to another faith. ‘*Yehushua’ keh Meshumad*’ they called him. In his old age, he went entirely insane. He would flee from Jews who wore the *kapote* and *shtrymels*, and he would stroll among the villages, barefoot and partly naked because his jacket was on his shoulder, muttering prayers and confessing before the priests.

Various jokes circulated in his name about priests, ascetics, Christians, imitative readings of their prayers, and occurrence of apostasy. He also did not desist from lashing the Jewish ‘*Holy Vessels*’. Attributed to him was the joke about a joke of the common people, that in the coming future the Jews will pass over a paper bridge and will suffer no harm, and the gentiles will go by way of a steel bridge, which will collapse under the weight of the load of their bodies, as if the Jews were very weak and delicate, that even paper will provide a support under their feet, and will not tear.

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The relationship to the ‘*Soldaten*’, was something entirely different – to those who returned home with their Judaism {intact]. To begin with – they were Jews who sanctified *The Name* profusely, who suffered misfortune and pain because of their Judaism, but in spite of this – it was felt that they were distant and there was a lack of familiarity. They wafted through the traditional surroundings like shadows in the midst of a struggle, and it was hard for them to adjust to the new-old lives. External signs stood out in their outlook and military straightness. They could be recognized by their straight walk, allotted to them, and their thick beards which obscure the evidence of the ‘toe-cutting’ had left with them, their steps. Which was most pronounced among the shy elderly, and the array of Jews with bent bodies leading the movement. Their speech is odd, with many Russian words mixed in, was tiring and served as a subject for jokes. The differences were most pronounced at the time of prayer at the Synagogue – by their passive positioning. Wrapped in Prayer Shawls on the ‘*kashkai*’ that is placed diagonally on the head without a head covering and no belt, their fringes stuffed into the pockets of a jacket, they prayed — like children in the home of their teacher — from a prayer book with large and bright letters, which they intermittently kissed. They were not called to go up to the Torah, and only as servers of wine without a blessing – to ‘*Hagbah and Gelilah*’ or to hold onto the second Torah during the reading. Even here something odd could be seen: They used to approach stiffly erect, straightening themselves out, smoothing their mustaches with two fingers to the left and right, straightening themselves out like soldiers standing for the ‘*Dom*’ then take the Torah scroll, in its awe, kissing it with a squeeze, and sit down as if frozen.

These people felt themselves to be set apart, lacking in worth and separated [from everyone else]. This feeling weighed on them with the force of a burden. As a favor to themselves, they tried to erase the restraint of the military past. Also, the work that they did for the country among the generals and officers.

The people of the place listened with great care to their tales, their experiences and their memories from life in the barracks. This was the case despite the fact that tellers would repeat their stories many times, and their intent was overly obvious. From excessive use of the boundaries between matters for comparison, and the boundaries were mixed. *Itzi Soldat*, excelled in enriching his tales of the front in Sevastopol, and what he did in the military among generals and highly-placed army officers. He would skip and jump from the facts to the broad areas of comparison like a horse that had gone wild and skipping away and speedily ran to the mountains and hills without restraint. Itzi excelled in his journeying about to the extent that his name and nickname ‘*Itzi Soldat*’ was transformed into a desired name, and a designation for men who exaggerated and spread such items.

*Itzi Soldat* was a barber by profession during his service in the military. He also was active in nursing cattle [back to health] and became an expert in this area. From here — a measure of vanity and arrogance — lo! a veterinarian! (And if this is a trifle in your eyes!) When he was asked to attend a sick cow he would behave with the slow speed of the army doctors. He instructed the members of his family to call him back home immediately and at once with the excuse that one of the exalted nobles was waiting for him, in order to attract a sense of importance and worth to himself. He was a Jew of middling height, wide in form and stubborn, with the signs of the toe-amputation quite visible. He was impressed into the army before he had reached the age of maturity, and he was sent to the front in Crimea, and this event served him as a rich source of stories and deeds. While telling his stories, his eyes sparkled, the signs of his face became formalized, and in his moving about he would imitate the movements of the army officers in all their detail, and when he conveys what he says, he used Russian words. And if anyone got snooky with him, doubting the truth of his words, he would answer in a serious tone:

— What, why are you making a ‘sour face’? Have you ever been to Crimea in your life? Or in the Caucasus? Have you ever spoken with a general? What are our Jews? They live all the time in their city, and they have no concept of the wider world, what do they know about war? Was anyone of them ever in the Caucasus? Did any one of them ever see the Czar?

— We — he would begin after such a preface — we were in a special unit of His Royal Highness the Great Prince, whom I recognized just as I recognize all of you. I was in his orchestra. This was in Crimea during wartime, We stood with other soldiers in a formation beside a barracks. I was the drummer. There were other drummers, gentiles and Jews, and ‘other nations’ with flags and marks. In a bayonet battle, the essence is, you know, the music. That means if there is no music beside the drum, What is music without a drum? Without a drum you have nothing. [It is] totally central during war. If you stop beating the drum — you have, for all purposes, stopped everything: the process of the war, the rhythm, the heat and aroused ardor. The horses are not horses, and the men are not men, it was as if their lives were taken away.

And so we drummed. Our *Kappelmeister* was in the middle and we surrounded him. We drummed ‘*Da Falidny Kapli*’ (to the last drop). What do we care about shooting, what do we care about bullets? We stand before life and death. The war ceased, fragments and fighters horses and people, we — continue to drum to urge them on and to give them ardor, for the Czar may his honor rise, and for the land of our birth...

Suddenly an order came: Stop!

We stopped. We drew a breath, we wiped off the sweat. Whoever was thirsty drank from the bottle on his belt, Whoever is hungry ate the radishes in his pocket. I took out my tobacco case from my trouser pocket to smoke. My 'Kamerad' stuck two fingers in it, he reached deeply inside and on the tips of his fingers was tobacco to put in his nostrils, and look — stoop — his head was not there... he rotated and fell.

He was given a military funeral and burial. The '*Polkovnik*' gave a speech. He, all honor to him, knew how to assess everyone even a Torah-believing Jew like me, and there were others like this.

There were instances when he set sail on the geographies of the lands. Caucasus, the River *Sambatyon*, and the river gives evidence, that in Caucasus, the river winds all around to broad plains like the entire world. Mountains bedecked by clouds whose tops reach the heavens. There is the story of a plain soldier who galloped on his horse and went up a mountain like this — but he did not have the time the restrain himself and go up to the heavens, because all the tribulations used to cause a setback and defeat to his unit... And there is story in the Russian military, who compromised an important Russian general, indirectly because of him and because of Itzi, an incident that was benign, but it needed to be taken into account during the war.

And yet again, in his unique style, with a short introduction and in putting forth the details by the use of questions:

— Who among you know the Russian generals? Russian generals love to decorate themselves , before they went out to the front in protective clothing that were festive, with shoulder pieces, and medals, stars, and medals, and took great care to be shaved bald and barbered, and having clothes pressed as if they were coming before (*Fon'yeh*) (The Gentile) and perhaps die...

We had a general that you have not seen the likes of all your days. Fat, tall, healthy, having a moustache that was substantial, and with a ruddy complexion such that blood spurts from it. Having a mustache both of whose sides were intertwined pointing skyward, with thick beard stubble under his chin, that fall far, far down on his broad chest, and his head was as if stuck in his fat throat that reached down to his shoulders. It was terrible, I say to you! If you were able to see his chest that sticks out beneath his battle medals, as if stuck in his throat, and the bulge of his medals underneath his tightly colored uniform rose. As he proceeds, the ground underneath him trembles, and when he roars, it is as if a lion was roaring. And for every mistake, he sought order, for even the slightest transgression — [whipping as awesome as] mountains and hills, this was the standard punishment he meted out.

The general was dressed as his usual, before he went out to battle, he passed his right hand over his right cheek and his chin and pronounced: I am not shaven...

With a tumult they immediately brought *Itzkah* to him.

I stood myself in front of him. My hands were down to where my pockets were on my trousers, there is

a step there, and here a step, and is right hand is under the covering —

---- *Waszi wysuku praskhaditelstvo...* I have the honor ...

---- Lo, you are Itzkah, face me, as if I were a Jew... ‘molodiec’ (young man), quick, shave me!

--- Pleased to fulfill this command, Your Gracious Honor.

I took down the ammunition according to the order. I rolled up my sleeves. My servant stood beside me ready to help. I seated the Honored and Elevated One into the seat. Soap, brush, warm water— Everything was prepared. I took the razor with my fingers and the privilege of my ancestors stood for me; everything was in order. When I passed over to shave the back of his neck, he coughed, moaned and bent over, and suddenly — the razor is gone! It disappeared.

Where is it? To where has it disappeared? Look there. The flower has vanished... The razor is not here!

And he is like ---- a man on fire. Why are you holding me up? What happened? Do yo not know what is waiting for me?

I stand confused. I hear the breathing through his nostrils, his heavy movements, as he furiously snorts like a steam kettle, He leaps out of the chair and shouts heatedly trembling, and out of anger:

--- *Soldat!* One hundred lashes to the *Toranic Zhid*, Itzkah!

With no hesitation, I was placed on the ground, and they cuffed my hands and feet. The lashes descended on my body and all my limbs. He, the general himself, stood and counted: one, two...To the end. Because of the whipping, the battle was delayed, and the army retreated and incurred a defeat.

I got sick in body and limbs,. I fainted, and they poured water on me, they cuffed me and placed me in the cellar on straw.

Simply, it [the razor] was forced from behind the fat of the neck and was swallowed between the side and a wedge. I didn't see it, and he didn't feel it. Towards evening, when they took off his clothing and tucked himself into his military bed — the razor dropped. They raised some noise:

— His Excellency – it is here!

— Too bad about Itzkah, he is not at fault! Go quickly and liberate him! As if I were Jewish,,,

## 8. In the Circle of Generations

Life slowly goes on, Night, Day – Days that resemble each other. Today is like yesterday, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, also appearing like yesterday. Far from the railroad, rooted out of the larger world, the city was left on its own, shadow of past generations. Like a bear in its cave who sucks on his paw during the winter. All of life is extracted in the form of traditional imprints, the deeds of fathers and

what was inherited from forefathers. The chain of generations in forms like each other and glued to each other with a bond to the past Life, if a Jew was housed as if in the street of the dead, the city [was like] a cemetery. The city, in the same section and in the same house in which his fathers and forefathers lived. He even received this house as an inheritance. He and his forefather from the cradle to the grave.

Even there ways of making a living were under pressure and limited: storekeepers, saloons, the Jews of the 'nobleman', they are engaged in works and professions that are unique under strict law, There are also trades in which women engage to support their husbands, such as: whispering on a bruise, applying compresses to the sick, to those giving birth – which also pass down in inheritance from mothers to daughters. The stores are also in the hands of the women, they are better suited to it, because she can grasp the thinking of the buyer and can come in touch with the 'body', a thing that does not befit the dignity of a man... Stores that are marked in an explicit fashion – a sign of manufacturing; a barrel of salted fish beside the door – whose odor pervades the surrounding – the sign of a market, a sign of manufacturing, Rounded wax candles are placed on the counter tops, honey and matches on the shutters of wood spread out for this purpose. Glass vessels and vessels made of earth stand on the grounds beside the house, glisten by the light of the sun, in order to attract buyers. Tar and pitch stand near the house among a sea of low-hanging branches beside the store and with various vessels and utensils on them, with drops of the tar sticking one the surrounding ground, darkening it.

The stores in the market, beside the low counters on which cinnamon, pepper, laurel and poppy seed were displayed in small, open linen sacs, so that the merchandise appeared ready [ for sale]. Cosmetics, strong smelling soap, dyed strips, coral, and little glass jewels, especially for the 'gentile women' of the city. During the summer the women storekeepers sit under the shadow of large white coverings, and in the winter they are wrapped in the wool of sheep, and a vessel full of embers whisper quietly underneath their dresses to give warmth.

The saloons, restaurants, full of 'forbidden items', loose tobacco, acquired without permission, and illegally acquired whiskey – the familiar owner, the children follow after the government orderly, the woman cooks, putters with it, and serves it.

And other 'ways of making a living:' – Religious servants, and community servants, experts in bloodletting, and inflammations. Ointment makers, lines of work that their husbands did no qualify for, such as: wagon drivers, *Shamashim*, butchers, musicians, unemployed Jews. The test was – 'he who wishes to live must have food to eat... they are alive and sustain themselves, marrying off their sons and daughters, pay tuition, and give to charity. Jews who had interest and were 'business owners', always saddened and worried, and scholars, important and respected, wearing silken hats and carrying large umbrellas, who had large red handkerchiefs sticking out of the back pocket on a black *kapote*, and Jews who knew how to write a bit of Russian, [they] would come and go to the nobles and the village Jews that were wealthy, people of confidence and able to give advice, 'knowledgeable in arranging marriages', arbitrators, and people with the ability to come up with clever combinations, [They had] curious eyes that were also taunting and deceptively clever.

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There was a wedding in the city — a community event, conversations about everything and about all issues: storekeepers, workers, musicians, the clergy, pharmacy matters, butchering, *Shamashim* and poor Jews. For generations, their lives were full of fundamental and basic things in the aura of tradition. Friends would gather, relatives, neighbors-neighbors all beside the house. There were neighbors in the *Bet HaMedrash*, in the marketplace of stores. They would calm the frustrated and ask forgiveness from deceased relatives. They give gifts to the poor, to a nursing mother, to a pregnant woman; to the blind shoemaker who sewed the first shoes, to the elderly *Melamed*. To poor relatives and other family members. The bride is led to the canopy through side streets and with her head held low, she is hot from being shamed, then off to the *Mikvah*. Women are teaching the bride the rituals of the women as they come from the ‘fountain of purity’, requests and prayers are recited, the working people and poor go out towards the groom,, with a tight rope they cordon off the way back to the city, as a means of redeeming the souls of the pair...

In a *sukkah* made of tall boards — *shalash*’ — its walls decorated inside with filled sacks, the bride is seated on a padded chair, women weave her hair together in an honorable way, out of a deep sadness. Something hidden is beating in the depths of the heart, stimulating an internal pressure, bringing everyone to tears. Older women are squeezing small crystals of sugar, chirping with their lips and spread into [the bride’s] hair which are spread about, for good luck that is sweet. They are stuffing sacks with wealth, for her and him — for we are but dust... a white *kittl* for the groom — to memorialize the day of death. The distribution of the jewelry raises the level of arrogance. The joker stands and contributes to the response, the prayer, and the giving of *Tzedakkah*, the *Day of Judgement* and the Day of Death, the violin gives off a groan and speaks in the melody that is sad and penetrates the heart, the poor are shedding tears in the midst of deep groaning.

After the wedding ceremony — ‘golden soup’ especially for the bride and groom, from one bowl. Friends of the bride then go out and perform popular and traditional dances: ‘*The Sher*’ ‘*B’Rogez*’, ‘*Quadrille*’ ‘*Rondo*’. The musicians then bring the groom and his parents to a sumptuous feast with a special tune from a march, at a slow pace and touching. There is a large evening meal for all those who were invited. Gifts requiring explication, ‘*RaKh”Ash*’ (Rabbis, Cantors and the *Shamashim*), ‘*Mi SheBerakh*’. The orchestra plays ‘*To your satisfaction.*’ The Jews throw off their daily concerns and listen to the sound of the violin of Yehoshua Hirsch who is playing the ‘*Tzavaron*’ — the poor shepherd that lost his flock and he is shedding tears — where is my flock? Deep sighs follow the shepherd and his flock stands for the entry of Israel to exile — ‘Israel is like a scattered sheep’... Yehoshua Hirsch stands on a bench, his cap is tilted to the side, his beard is spread out onto the violin and his fingers are selecting the notes out of ardor. Now he lowers his fingers onto the thin string which makes a sound like a newborn child, and here he goes over to his ‘second death’ with a heart-rending sob. And look, the shepherd has found his flock, and the violin communicates his glee with the tune of a dance, the Jews sigh from relief, get up from their places to bring cheer to the bride and groom. The important people take the big red handkerchief, they hold one end and the second end, they stuff into the hands of the bride, and they proceed to move around in a circle idly and with their eyes cast down — ‘*a Kosher dance*’. The village ritual slaughterer, the comic at weddings, who knows how to make a bride and groom happy with staged jokes, takes off his *kapote* and his festive silk hat, remaining in a wrinkled velvet yarmulke with tiny feathers poking out here and there, shining above it. He takes a cane in hand and rotates it between his fingers and dances the ‘*Deutsche*’ dance while reciting the following words: ‘*Wenn ich gelt habe...*(if

I only had money...)

The Jews clap their hands out of great joy and derision towards the dumb ‘Deutsche’ who is full of sin, what does he have to do with money?

From what hidden corner does the grandmother appear, holding her dress in one hand, and waves a white handkerchief in the air with the other, while dancing to a ‘Cossack’ melody —  
Kosher...Kosher...

If a disease or a plague should come into the city — and if there be an endangered sick person in the family — then there is the opportunity to participate in joint sorrow, everyone runs to the synagogue — relatives, neighbors, friends — to pray and recite Psalms. Fainting women fall into the *Holy Ark* begging for mercy and prostrate themselves on the graves of ancestors, measuring the cemetery gate with a white thread and according to the scope, they divide linen to the poor and to the Talmud-Torah children. In the instance of children being sick — women neighbors and whisperers come, squeezing out lead wax as a symbol, and perform other deeds of virtue. The relatives change the name or add a name. The privilege is tied to the length of life — *alter, zaydeh, bobbe'leh, Chaya, Chaim*. Cures and medicines that have the tradition of generations and sunk deep roots in the consciousness of the people: a worn out sock that is dirty, around the throat — a shield against diphtheria; cinnamon, a dried out ‘*Hosha-Na*’ — against diarrhea: the tip of an *Etrog*, the residue from a candle used for *Havdalah* — for pregnancy: the web of a gecko under the bed — to stop bleeding: the cleaning out of the ear and a circle of money — for sick children with little blood, cabbage of a worm on the eve of the new month — good for worms in the belly, a louse in jam for Yellow Fever. During a plague , it is useful to draw circles that are black, using coal, around the houses, or to put up a black wedding canopy in the cemetery...

*Repentance, Prayer and Tzedakkah* envelop the Jew for all days of the year. Even the poorest of the poor does not pass over giving *Tzedakkah* with his hand, because it is possible that he was unable to make his repentance because of much work. He is helped by *Tzedakkah* and Prayer [as is said] ‘*And Repentance, Prayer and Tzedakkah cause to worst of the decree to pass*’<sup>37</sup>... Laughter and merriment are unknown. Even at times of merriment, they are full of sorrow, and in their ritual the smile vanishes. The house is wrapped in an eternal mantle of grief and sorrow — in memory of the [Temple] destruction, and from the high window above the door is a plethora of black — to memorialize the *Destruction*, under the wedding canopy at the time of joy, a glass is broken — in memory of the *Destruction*, and during the feast, they breathed more easily and conceal the knife under the tablecloth in order to indicate suffering. The entire life of the Jew is surrounded like a wall in observance of *Mitzvot* and reflections, repentance, sadness, and mourning within the bounds of tradition, and the processes of universal acts of fate: *Sefira*, 20<sup>th</sup> of Sivan, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, and between to self-abnegation, the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, to which they add a fast for a dream, and the entire city is sunken in grief, repentance, as a sort of dark cloud, gray and cold, satisfied but stern, as if to say the entire world will be covered with a new flood covering the sinful world that pulls all of its inhabitants if they do not fully repent. The *Shammes* of the *Great Synagogue* passes through the city during the night, and in a firm voice, he causes hearts to tremble, and falls on the silence of the night and he awakens the Jews to the Worship of *The Creator*:

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<sup>37</sup> To be added later

Israel is a Holy People  
That wandered off the place where the Creator is to be Worshiped  
Because of this is why they were created  
\* \*

A person worries about the loss of his money  
And Dot Not Worry About the Loss of his Days  
His money does not help  
His Days do not Return.

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And again it is winter, and once again fasting and confessions: On B”H, The 10<sup>th</sup> of Tevet one plays with T”aT. The fast of Esther, The fast of the firstborn, and the fasts of all the days of the week because of scarcity and poverty.

## 9. The Working People

Working people. Generations of working people, fathers, sons and grandsons, are called by the name of their trade from generation to generation: so-and-so, son of so-and-so the tailor, shoemaker, frying pan maker. These were Jews who had side locks, a beard, *kapotes* and *Tzitzit*. Those who were flung to us from faraway places such as Poland and Lithuania, married, assimilated themselves among the Jews of the city, however, they were still called by the name of their city of origin, such as Chaim of Zhitomir, the trusted shoemaker. The memory of the weak stayed with them from their city of origin and manifested itself in the unique pronunciation of certain words unique to them.

Patriarchal tradition ruled in the way of life of the laborers in the city, as a unique witness they were on the base of traditional Jewish work for generations, in amicable relationships, and partners in fate and worry.

The sons listened to their fathers, the young to the old. The knowledge of the Elders was constant and compelling. According to their telling, there were family disputes, working relationships, issues between people and their friends and between a husband and wife. There were times, before nightfall, after a hot summer day, they would run into the elderly who would be extending their feet in the house shoes, with a *yarmulka* and vests, which were noted as entertaining when they walked about. They enter the house, with their garb spoiled, or something happened to him requiring assistance. Excuses are heard, there are conversations and compromises made, or something requiring intervention. There are times — when the ‘cloak’ of tradition is called for in anger, when the cane in one’s hand forcefully hits a piece of furniture to the floor: Do not be an exception! Listen to what is being said to you!

There were those who were literate and took pride in their work. They would teach and review for the simple among them, to the young and those at the margins:

All of the ‘experts’ were working men: R’ Yohanan the Shoemaker, R’ Yitzhak the Smith...

They were simple and honest people, observing *Mitzvot* and taking care not to transgress. They tell about one tailor of women's clothing, that he never touched a woman and would estimate the length by eye. Tailors who served the men did not bow at the time they measured a garment for a priest with a crucifix on his chest, for fear of distracting him from prayer. Working men who earned their living in the villages, sat and fasted all week for fear of touching their 'forbidden bread', and on the floor on straw, is someone looking for 'Shaatnez.' They sat with *yarmulkes* on their heads and a large 'tallit katan' and wash their hands after being touched in private places... those who were literate, from having regularly attended the *Bet HaMedrash* to look into a book after praying, there were among them that did not know the meaning of certain words in the prayer, even though they observed *Mitzvot* rigorously: those who looked for a *Mikvah* on Yom Kippur before the *Ne'illah* prayer. A blessing for mingling certain foodstuffs on every night of a holiday. In general – the first to get help was during a fire, sickness, the pairing of couples during a plague, and to carry the staff in the case of a death, and the same for all the *Mitzvot* between two men or a man and his wife – this was the legacy of the working people for years back, whose predecessors gave this as a legacy to their offspring. There were those who distanced themselves from this privilege and the notoriety, and dealt with the solitary poor the blind, the crippled, and they dedicated themselves to such an extent, that in the fulness of time they did not know if they are the residue of their relatives or just plain people from the outside not fearing danger. Several individuals in the city were called 'Lamed-Vovnik'ehs (the people of the endowed 36), because of their willingness to approach those in need of help, secretly — the name given to them by the community of the Jews, crowned them eternal people of modesty, acting even when they are not seen.

If to separate their standing they did not appear frequently, this was due to the reluctance of the important people in the city to be seen, and the homeowners to be seen by working people, in public because of their public appearance that was not to the accepted method: – going to the market, purchasing from gentile women, not to mention sitting on a glass of wine on the Sabbath and during the middle of the week, concerning issues of trade and transfer, this reluctance was expressed in the issues of community and congregation, in the *Bet HaMedrash*, and with personal pride. From the important people of the community the expression of this reluctance manifested itself in matters of conducting community affairs. From among the important people there was grumbling below their noses, less than nothing, out of reluctance [to engage].

A Working Man...a Tailor, Shoemaker... a simpleton...

A literate working man let it be known:

— Does not the Rabbi personally buy fish for the Sabbath? And the literate to celebrate the Sabbath?... And what about the matter of the *Leader* who hoisted the bride onto his shoulders and danced with her while singing: The pleasant and pious bride?

— This is in honor of Heaven... In honor of a *Mitzvah*, and in his eyes this looked like a pale khaki, white geese...

— And what does this mean, that a tailor sews a dress for a nun but not to perform a *Mitzvah*, to support his household? And she is nothing more in his eyes than a pale khaki?

One of the well-connected instrument players in the city – it is told — would joke about the designation of ‘Master of the House’ ‘*Kol Yisraelni’kim* – how they were called in the city — with stinging expressions and ambiguous words: —

— Let the expression ‘*Kol Yisrael*’ be interpreted as ‘Bless My Soul’ And when they asked him: Why? Is this self-love by a Jew? He answered while smiling: I intend that this be to ‘*Kol Yisrael*’ found in the *Ethics of the Fathers* which Jews read in the summer, that the income of the ‘orchestra’ shall be like an eclipse in the midst of disrupting sorrow — *sefira*, among the Egyptians, *High Holy Days*, perhaps in winter, the period in which one reads ‘Bless My Soul’, there are no prohibitions, and earnings are available.

Those who were listening smiled out of great satisfaction.

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Most poor people are taking care of children, these being workers, who were working from early in the morning to a late hour at night. There were trades where the wife and oldest daughter also worked to provide support. Whoever worked for the ‘*Skarb*’ (property of a nobleman) would permit himself to engage an apprentice, even a worker for a set time, doing this from Passover to *Sukkot*. The ‘Master of the House’ and his assistant worked together for 16-18 hours in the day and even their meals were brought to them, his apprentice at the workshop, in the case he was a family man. Swiftly swallowing the crumbs given by the lad, he would bless the food quickly, and returned to work, under the supervision of an appointed watchdog of the ‘Master of the House’ if he allowed himself an occasional bit of Cantorial singing, of a quickly snatch conversation with a neighbor that came in, the Master of the House would comment to him on wasted time. During the time of the absence of the Master of the House, the oversight was given to his wife, or someone of his household.

A bachelor would receive money for food and lodging in his pay. On Sabbaths he would circle the table with members of his household. In time, he became a member of the household. In the case where there was a grown woman in the house, they would reach an agreement to a marriage. The Master would allocate the workshop equally, as a form of a dowry, and even allocated to the groom a part of what they made and related implements of work. In time, the apprentice became a fully-fledged workman himself.

The condition of the apprentices was worse than this. These, for the most part, were abandoned children, orphans, sons of paupers who were taken on for a number of years, without pay, but to learn the trade. The apprentice was required to help out in the kitchen, to respect the house, to go to the slaughterhouse, to slaughter chickens, and put the baby to sleep in a crib. He constantly lived under a rain of curses, rebukes from the Master of the House and his wife, even if the apprentice would stuff his ears occasionally. When he was free, he was given the opportunity to stand and observe the work. After the first year, skilled people and those who grasped what to do, would receive the crumbs of the food from the table of the house. Those who excelled – received a gift for the holidays or part of the ‘drinking money’ that the nobleman or priest gave to the apprentice for their service, because according to custom, these belong to the Master of the House or his apprentice. Those who were not intelligent remained poor. They earned beatings and reproof until they fled.

A survivor?

God forbid!

There was a patriarchal order to the learning of a trade. The legacy of ancestors. A workman himself, he, his father and grandfather taught him this way. There was a set chain from the generations for the Jews of that period.

## 10. The Grandmother

The political and social outlook that existed in Russia at the beginning of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – The Crimean War (1855), Freeing of the Farmers (1861), the Polish Rebellion (1863, and the Russo-Turkish War (1877-8) – cause an important change in the life of the city.

The Crimean War was not felt very much, since it took place at a set distance from Podolia, because of transportation, or more correctly – the absence of transportation – because it had no name in those days, at the edges of the world. Very few of the Jews from our place participated realistically in this war. This excepted the local Cantonists, who were sent to the scene of the war, and nothing was known about them, there was not a war but the indirect echoes of the fighting could be heard. From rumored news gotten from the air, from the yards of the nobility, from itinerant Ukrainians, who also were not eye witnesses, but hear from others. A recognizable impact was more evident of the later events – the Polish Rebellion and the freeing of the farmers. There is no detailed information about the number of farmers in the surroundings that were liberated in keeping with the decree of February 19, 1861. It is only known that their economic status was bad. They were lacking in land, and lacking tools, stables taken away along with the means to sustain themselves. In essence – even after the liberation – they were in an enslaved condition, relying on the generosity of the noble, as before. The story of the liberation of the farmers in Russia was not written in vain. It was witnessed by the farmers from areas of middle Russia and sections of southern Ukraine, causing them to turn to the nobility that owned the land and asked to be received back to ‘fanczina’,(serfdom) . Jews who were energetic workers and had a mercantile awareness were shoved back to the villages. The earnings in the city in the economic sphere was insufficient to sustain everyone. The population continued to grow, and sought some outlet in the villages, the farmers did not pressure them, but, it was the opposite, they saw them as saviors. The Jews brought in momentum and life with a conservative economy, after the stagnation and neglect going back to the days of serfdom. They opened up mercantile connections with the city by means of the introduction of new branches into the estates of the nobility of the past – sheep flocks, cattle, wool and skins.

The status of the nobility deteriorated as well, in the byway of the social changes. They were especially pressured by the failed rebellion, and the fear of vengeance from the Russian rulers. It was necessary to deceive them by means of constructive economic work with emphasis on social citizenship and settling into their places as a proof of their genuine patriotism. To accomplish this, they relied on well-to-do Jews who were rich, who took advantage of the possibility, and erected functioning factories in city and village: Water mills, labels for wool, whiskey distilleries, and sugar factories. Among the ancient boulders, they erected farms and settlements – Zyrnyki, Cymbli, Tartaki, Varuny. In them [they built]

flour mills, stone quarries, factories of weaving wool, and they made use of the treasures of nature: rivers, forests, and they put up factories for producing tar and lime.

Many Jews went over to the villages, and the plundering of the factories of the Jewish population ceased there. Wealthy monied people, and those occupying important positions moved there. There were those who came as a result of invitations issued by the nobility of other districts – from Lithuania, Wolhyn, as experts and they settled in the villages, and planted a cultural seed for the intelligentsia in the surrounding villages.

An important economic factor in the development of the city was the introduction of the railroad system which went from Kiev to Odessa, which was built during this period and it gave rise to branch lines to Balta – Goltal – Yelizabetgrad. Despite the fact that the closest station – Krizopol – was 30-40 kilometers away, and the Jews in the vicinity as in most of the Jewish towns took to the iron rails from the outset, — In spite of this, its influence was recognized, since it brought [people] to cities of commerce, – with it all it had a marked influence, since it reached mercantile cities, indirectly by the merchants of the large cities in the surroundings, who drifted into the new mercantile way of the local grains of the field. The Jews of the surroundings fell into this business almost despite their attempts. They would buy and sell agricultural products in that location to a variety of merchants who complained to them and sent them by the railroad. They did not have the nerve to do this on their own. In general, in the Jewish cities because of the availability of the railroad, they began to use the railroad from the beginning of this period, – especially in the cities of Podolia. If because of the competition with the Jewish wagon drivers, which limited their income, from the point of view of ‘not violating agreed to boundaries,’ or simply because of the innovation that had arrived. Whoever was lured into these ways saw it from the eyes of an aberrant man – that he abandoned this method, or stand to go bankrupt, or he was plainly stupid. Whoever sent a shipment of goods by train, was intimidated about showing himself in the street, because of the jokes and derision that were heaped on them. The city people were not the only ones. The opposition of the *Rebbes* and *Tzaddikim* that manifested itself in the common song:

‘Whoever saw, whoever heard  
That fire and water should pull like horses  
The *Rebbe* will show him,  
Even though he is made of iron.

\* \*

He devised an iron train  
And thinks, that he is wise  
The *Rebbe* jokes, the *Rebbe* laughs  
After all, he can leap the roads.

The people knew how to relate that one of the important people of the city, a *Sage* and an *Enlightened* man who avoided bad things, when they came to visit him when he was sick, the conversation rolled over to the iron rails, the discussion of the day, and related to everything. They tell: — strips of iron, steam, fire and water, carrying iron wagons with their cargo at a fast pace, that exceeds the speed of many galloping horses. The sick one listened carefully with a light smile. He asked for a little bit of

water to wash his hands, straightened the *yarmelke* on his head, and when he tensed his sore throat with all his strength, said: ﴿This was never the case in the entire world!﴾

A fool will believe anything!

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And in spite of these imprecations, it did not arrest the opinion of the people, and there were those who became contractors for the iron rails. How did they arrive at this branch of economic endeavor? It was perhaps by happenstance, or possibly through searching for new branches of [economic] endeavor that lay outside the boundaries of the city. Either that, or out of envy toward the merchants. In any event, they attached themselves to the stream of contractors. Those that were known to the ranks of the officials, as known contractors, men of reputation, in Russia. One of them, R' Mott'l ﴿Merchant﴾, owner of the large marketplace store in the city. A trembling and nervous man who observed *Mitzvot*, one of the *Hasidim* of R' Raphael, a donor, and who took in guests. In a black silk *kapote*, and white stockings and a dress shirt, he would appear before the officials and judged them in front of the eyes of the community. The authorities related to him with loyalty, even though he did not know any Russian. During the Russo-Turkish war, they award him the title of 'A Merchant First Class'. There are a number of tales about his relationship to the poor: he would seat them around his table and serve them. At times he would give away his meal or his bedroom to a pauper. Once in the winter – they tell – he came into his house after the evening *Maariv* service and found poor people gathered and sitting beside the table, angrily saying '*there is no water to wash one's hands*' --- and complaining. He took the pail and ran to the well on the second street to bring back water for ablution. Like him – his wife, Baylah, was busy and consumed with the needs of the city poor, pregnant and indigent, sick and exhausted. In preparation for winter wood was collected to make fires, pickled vegetables, servings of milk and fruit, that a special storekeeper would divide them among the poor. City residents awarded her the title of 'Big Baylah.'

There were others that worked as contractors: R' Baruch Heilperin, Wolf Ozer Angart, the Weizman sons. A circle of activists that were active in the internal affairs during this period were: R' Mott'l ﴿Merchant﴾ and R' Baruch Heilperin, known in the city only by their family name to separate the as they were latecomers, that were only called by their simple names, adding the name of their father, mother or wife. All this was done to them as a measure of their importance. R' Mott'l ﴿Merchant﴾ earned this thanks to his good deeds which were generous, and R' Baruch Heilperin thanks to his personal Rabbinic relationship. Few in the city knew that the family name of Wolf Ozer was Angrat, and my son – Weizmann. His name became well-known only after his death, promoted by his wife, and thanks to two community projects that she established: – the bathhouse and the Synagogue. – From that time on, her name became well-known, and in this instance, not in the family name but in the common name of her husband – '*Beni'kheh*' indicating that she was the wife of his son *Beni*. She was also awarded a nickname, '*Grandma*' – revealing the family affection coming from the men of the city, and on the basis of this nickname, the workers named her '*Der Bobbeh's Kloyz* (The grandmother's Synagogue), '*Der Bobbeh's Bod*' (the grandmother's bathhouse)

They knew of a sad incident that happened while Weizman was still alive, that moved the will of the

family to make a repentance on his part via ‘*A Korban Asham*’ on the community altar. Weizman’s only daughter became engaged to a young man named Naphtali Zussman, who aimed toward learning at the Rabbinical Seminary in Zhitomir, or he had already graduated from the Seminary; he was a young man who had mastered *Torah*, *Enlightenment* and general knowledge.

Weizman, who was a simple man, far from *Torah* and knowledge, did not know how to differentiate the directions of the *Enlightenment* and its details. For him, this was an appropriate match and an aid to his work as a contractor. Especially — knowledge of the Russian language and other general items of knowledge in which Zussman excelled, and even elevated his standing to the external world — *Torah* and its greatness in one place.

An episode occurred to him that had occurred to many of the *Enlightened* people of the traditional surroundings which were strict in those times. The matter began with secret whispering, and with a crooked nose it reached a total discrediting, attacks and pursuit. The matter became known to the family, and the atmosphere in the house came under pressure, family feuds broke out, anger and animosity. In the end, he left his wife and the two daughters she bore him, and fled...

Afterwards it was learned that he had converted to Christianity.

This incident caused the city to become stormy. This incident of voluntary conversion to Christianity without being forced to do so, was the first of this kind in the city. It is possible that the entire community sensed his guilt, and as a result pushed him away with both hands. This incident shortened Weizman’s life. Shame burdened the family, and after conferring with the men of the city, she decided to erect the two institutions as ‘a forgiveness for sin’.

In the following days, the matter became silenced. Zusman was given the role of a Chief Censor for Hebrew literature in Warsaw and afterwards went over to [St.] Petersburg in this capacity, and at the end of his days he was one of the senior officers in the *Enlightenment* Ministry. In the meantime, the daughters matured and got married — and their husbands received positions in the city/ One of the daughters visited him in [St.] Petersburg. It was told that even Zusman came on a secret visit to his daughters. He didn’t restrain himself a lot. It satisfied him not to arouse suspicion about himself, and it satisfied him not to encounter the Jews of that place, and that his aspiration for them was maintained until that time.

## 11. The Synagogue

The entire conversation was — about people who had enriched themselves in this last period. [This applies to both] city and village people. There were those who conversed for general reasons, others spoke out of envy and a feeling of odd luck about themselves. They raised memories of their past, remembered what these had been before, a couple of years before, the time they passed over to a village and what are they now?.... In such a short amount of time!... Carriages hitched to a pair of horses gallop by. They are decorated and have hair combed, the work of the nobility. In the city — these exposed their wealth among the residents: in their dress, their side locks, and combed beards, they wore a silk hat or a similar head covering during the middle of the week. They repaired their houses, improved their appearance and

color, bought furniture – implements for the house, a wall clock, ‘blitz’ menorahs, silverware and jewelry.

The Elders of the city would frown and get angry at the sight of a shortened *kapote* that they encountered, a combed beard, a clean silk hat, and polished boots. They wink and then grumble:

— It is Satan’s work... give the Satan one hair, and he will pluck out the entire beard...

In the face of a suspected change, there existed a sense of fear, – in the face of anything new. Everything new creates differences and disorders the order of things as it had been from time immemorial, The rule is: from the simple and kosher to the complex and forbidden. A quiet and still flow will sometimes forcefully upset the entire valley around.

They sat down and conversed in the midst of a sigh: R’ Mott’l מוטל, who exceeds him in greatness? He was welcome by the governor-general in Kiev, (?), even wearing a long *kapote*, white socks and a cotton frock. Everyone had to change their Jewish clothing items?

There were the young who were learning the art of defense:

At other times... distinguished clothing...

There were those who warned: and R’ Ephraim Lejzor? What does he say?

R’ Ephraim Lejzor, one of the most respected of the Elders in the city would warn against decorations that contain pride and arrogance. He’s a *Hasid* from Bershad, wary of that which was possible and everything that went beyond the limits of modesty, The permissible things strengthened the low standing of the exile, he would say. He would sit in the *Bet HaMedrash*, one foot placed in a white sock on the bench, and the second on the floor stuck into one of his shoes, he would divide his beard out of deep thought and say:

Sleep in the afternoon --- the *HaZa”L* would say, that takes the person out of the world... and in essence, all of him? But for what purpose? There is a unique meaning to this: to teach you that even something easy and simple can act to remove the person from this world. For example polished boots in a weekday... and what’s wrong with this? Is it a sin? God Forbid! Extravagance? Applying a bit of black boot polish whose worth is no greater than a penny? But then what? These are the deeds of Satan who incites and pushes the person first to something simple, for example, polishing shoes. If the shoes are polished once or twice, it is then not possible to appear in public wearing patched trousers and there is a need for new trousers that are new and beautiful with the shoes polished and it is not possible to appear in public in old and faded boots. Somewhere it was created that a new woven *kapote* is required, a new velvet hat with fringes, in the manner of the wealthy, a silver watch and chain, a nice umbrella, and a cane with a silver head. And in the house, again, your cognizance does not move from the simple furniture. The eye sees and the heart covets and there is evil intent, God forbid, inciting and pushing away...

This is what they said — It takes the man out of the world...

Woe unto him in this World, and woe unto him in the World to Come...

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As it happens, there is nothing out of the ordinary here. People succeeded and they rose, they became wealthy and reached an honorable station because of this it created the need for an orderly way of life that is tranquil. However, in fact, the streams of life behind the fortified walls insinuated their way in, and caused blemishes to it. The central part of the work of the wealthy, successful people, revealed the differences between them and others. There were however those that their community standing stood out, but being similar tho these only: those who went up on the rungs of the great ladder, and they stored their wealth in the way they behaved towards others, they would clean the mud off their boots that had stuck there, so as not to walk on the [clean] floors with them, straightened their hats out that had been tilted and cleaned it off with a brush outside [of the house], before entering their own home, they lightly sit on the edge of the bench, with their heads bowed for lack of activity. Something hidden floated out of the depths of their souls and placed a barrier between the standing ones and the sitting ones. It was this barrier by which they met in the marketplace, in a store, in a butcher store, in the street, and one grew was envious of the other, one group bowing their heads and then go limp, and those raised their heads and demanded the respect due to their nobility. Seeing that all of the life centered on the walls of the Synagogue, these differences stood out with greater clarity, with *aliyot*, honors, and seating at the *Eastern Wall*. They would extend the time of their praying as was habit of these important people – and those were compelled to wait. There were those who issued corrections to the teachings of the souls of others, and no one uttered so much as a sound. They would engage in sacred rituals and bow before them and do their bidding and there was no need to pursue all of them. On one occasion, at the time the *Torah* was being read, those who had felt themselves insulted burst out, exited, and established a special Synagogue all of their own – to anger the others.

In reality, this Synagogue was the first area that caused a fundamental breach. Further, these encounters were not the first among others, but these were of a different kind, differences of opinion between *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim* on the style of the prayers themselves: [as in] ‘*KaDavar*,’ ‘*V’Yatzmach*, *Na’Aritzka*. Matters and their intent best left for subsequent discussion, because one should not tarry after the intent and deeds of *Tzaddikim* in general. In the large, here was[ere] the place[s] where the intent of the simple folk [flesh and blood], the simple people differed markedly in the authority and power that lay on their fear on others in matters of sacredness and prayer. The first to separate themselves were the young working people. After them, came the Elders. In a warehouse close to the Synagogue beside the ‘polish’, they carved out a *Holy Ark* in the wall, got a hold of a *Torah* scroll, a stand for leading prayer and a *bema*, and they designated a way of [religious] life appropriate for the working class: Prayer at dawn on the Sabbath, that there should be no delay and no standing in an aristocratic way during the prayer of the ‘*Shmona-Esrei*’. No variations in melody that is superfluous, and no giving of honorifics. During the hours of the morning on the Sabbath, one could encounter, on occasion someone walking lightly to the *Kloyz* of these break away, in which he would encounter coming towards him those coming out from their *Minyan*. The last ones, the *Savranim* (Synagogue of the important people) or the New *Bet-HaMedrash*, did not separate themselves in the style of the prayer

and in the unique leadership of the congregation. They comported themselves according to the words and customs and accepted leadership and those especially designated [in this respect]. There was only a change in the congregation. The wealthy working class were the people of ideas and the people of honor. In time, these too, were made of high pedigree, and they demanded the honor according to pedigree for themselves. They sought the vengeance of enmity to those who sought to join the with imprecations. In the end, the working people separated themselves as well, and established Synagogues for each trade, and it was in this way that new Synagogues sprouted in the city for the visitors: of Tailors, Shoemakers, Sawyers, Carpenters, and the workers in the factories for making *Prayer Shawls*, and a *Hevra Kadisha*. Most of them were in the upper part of the city – ‘*Yerushalyim ’nikehs*’. As for those that bought a ready house, and left it to the Synagogue, and those that built a special house [for themselves], largely these were Synagogues found within ordinary houses, low in height and small, close to one another. From the windows [of these] that were open their voices broke out and intermingled with those of Cantors and Leaders of Prayer. On Sabbath afternoons, after a nap, the Elders of the working people assembled to recite ‘a Chapter of *Psalsms*’, ‘*Menorat HaMaOr, Sheyet Musar*’ and ‘*The Wonders of the Tzaddikim*’. And one of them who was literate would read these and explain them. Towards evening, with the onset of darkness, people stood one against another, and from mouth-to-ear one person would tell his neighbor about the days gone by.

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Only two of all the Synagogues in the city were conserved in the spirit of the past tradition: The *Bet-HaMedrash* of R’ Raphael of the *Great Synagogue*. A narrow side street at the split in the river separated the two of them. The *Bet-HaMedrash* served as a place of prayer for the Elders, the *Hasidim* of R’ Raphael, the guardians of the embers of the simple tradition. Even the *Bet-HaMedrash* itself remained the same with no changes during these years, in its internal appearance and simplicity, as a symbol to this tradition. A ceiling of wood in the middle, was left completely open, and a simple wooden ladder connects the warehouse uniquely between the roof and the ceiling and was used for older books that had been torn, and matters of sacredness that were taken out of general use. A place of guarding grain from the time of reaping until the making of *Matzo Shmurah*. At times, the sacks [of grain] were hung from the roof itself ... made of pure copper and hung from the center of the roof itself, and candles set in their holders, and it was only after the passage of some time were the ‘Blitz’ Menorahs added to this array, as well as the more simple furniture, thin and modest, with no changes practically from the time of R’ Raphael. A Cantor or a Leader of Services who was visiting and had never prayed up there. It was an accepted permanent custom that this *Bet-HaMedrash* was a place of Prayer from the Heart and not from song.

The worshipers in the *Great Synagogue* were ordinary Jews, workers, storekeepers and wholesalers. During the High Holy Days even the sitting Rabbi would take a place beside the Eastern Wall, as did the doctor and the pharmacist. On the Sabbaths when the ‘New Month’ was blessed it was the community Cantor who conducted services, and on holidays and the High Holy Days – along with a choir.

Worshipers in the *Great Synagogue* were ordinary Jews, working people, storekeepers and wholesalers. During the High Holy Days the sitting Rabbi would also sit at the Eastern Wall, as did the doctor and the pharmacist. There were no bookshelves there. A sooty menorah burned in a special niche beside the

building, serving as an ‘Eternal Light’. The Synagogue also served as a place where honored guests were received. On the ceiling and the walls, there were oil paintings of the seven planets and ten signs of the Zodiac. Inside the synagogue, in a special niche in the wall, was a diagonal drawing of King David’s lyre.

This Synagogue was one of the first ancient houses of worship, that was erected in the river valley along with the foundation of the city. A legend of the people tells that during the days of construction, the Haidamaks confined the Jews in the Synagogue. As the murderers drew close to the place, a fear seized them and they fled...

During the days of R’ Raphael, one of the walls of the synagogue became faulty, and he forbade prayer from being conducted there out of suspicion of a possible collapse. The Synagogue stood for a number of years in this state in which only two rooms in the annex on either side of the entrance were installed as places suitable for prayer.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *balebatim*<sup>38</sup> assumed the task of repairing the Synagogue. A special communication was sent to Odessa for the purpose of arranging a plan to construct something analogous to the Odessa Synagogue. They dug new foundations for the walls that had become faulty, and they placed them on stone pillars on the slope outside, to strengthen them. Inside they erected stone pillars that connected at the top with arches – in a gothic form, large windows with colored panes of glass having artwork on them. The entire Jewish settlement participated in funding the project, even those that did not worship in the existing Synagogue. The wealthy Jews in the villages sent their in their generous contributions. A few of the nobles also donated wood and building material. Skilled workers and artists from those known in Odessa were invited to beautify the walls and the ceiling with valuable renditions of art.

And it is told that when the artisan who painted the ceiling finished his work – the signs of the Zodiac and the stars with the tribes of Israel, he stumbled, fell off the scaffolding, and crashed.

This tale was as if told by the creatures. If it is only a legend, the fruit of imagination or a real fact – in either case, the source is unknown. At night, one feared walking past the *Bet-HaMedrash*. A legend of the people told, that the dead assemble there for prayer after midnight. Among them are those that were killed. because of a *Decree*

## 12. The Market Fair

An added economic cause was because of the opening of the Market Fairs, that began to be opened in a manner acceptable to the budding village industry. The first of them came about as a result of a meeting among the farmers themselves. They came together for the first time, for a period of two weeks or a month, to bargain over the price of grain and the marketing of everything else, prices, etc., In that time Jews began to arrive from nearby villages, who brought goods for sale: agricultural implements,

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<sup>38</sup> This is the Yiddish plural for the Hebrew words ‘*Baal HaBayit*,’ which means ‘*Master of the House*.’ The ‘*balebatim*’ is a term used to identify the more significant (perhaps wealthy) Jewish homeowners of the community.

whiskeys, and foodstuffs and garments to be sold, agricultural tools, whiskeys, and needed food and clothing. The saloons opened in a matter of days, and this necessitated a delay in the marketing of other products, buying and selling to a great extent, and in the meetings in other villages they were unable to supply the needs. The farmers then set aside conferences regarding whiskey to the city [itself. There the area available for buying and selling was much larger, and it was in this manner that the markets opened up and the fairs became permanent.

This was the source of income that we sustained ourselves from the beginning to the end. The market dictated the course of life, merchandising, income and expense, loans and borrowing, and a variety of merchandise. The market was created for a matter of holiness, that everything is cancelled or set aside from it, if they swear on it, or curse it: '*In this manner may the Lord reward me with a good market,*' or '*In this manner may the Lord punish me with a bad market,*' The market did not cease to function even in later years, when they started to sell grain wholesale while still in the field. And in village certain cadres along with the priesthood tried to raise the price for Jews out of the feeling that it would lead to a sacrilege of Sunday by emptying the church during the hours of worship. The Jews were not silent, and they fought back with all their might. They sent emissaries to Kameniec, asked of the local noble, a man of influence in manners of national offices — The market stayed in the city, but instead of pushing the activity to Sunday, it was pushed to Tuesday.

From the first light of day, people flocked to the market by all the roads available. Gentiles in the villages, nobility owning parcels of land, priests who control fields and gardens. Jews from nearby small towns streamed to them, beginning with the night watch, butchers, storekeepers, merchants in wagons loaded with merchandise crafted by tailors, fur coats, hats, and store management, grain merchants with scales on their wagon and empty sacks, merchants who sold horses, people with flushed faces when their legs are twisted about the sides of the wagon, and behind them, mares and foals gallop along their side, and then ordinary Jews dressed in gray. Gentiles in wagons loaded with the blessings of the field and garden, grain, cattle, fowl, a cow tied to the wagon and a calf running after her, a tired gentile on foot pulling a pig, the carpenter with a rope and he fumbles along because of snoring and snorting. From the hours of the morning, the city resonates with noise and confusion, the banging of hammers and nails. Tents and their struts are ground into the wide parcels, and sacks tied up with merchandise strewn all about. Jews with lowered hats handle sacks that are on the wagons of gentiles, they exchange in idle conversation, talk about grains, testing weight from hand to hand and air them out with their breath, they take straw out of their wagons, and they heave it on them in the middle of thought and stand someone beside the wagon to be a 'watchman.'

In a '*targowica*<sup>39</sup>' beside a Christian church, is the place for gathering all the cattle that was brought to the market. The Hetman doctor, an enemy of Jews, stubbornly refused and set the market for the cattle and horses on the other side of the city, up above, on a parcel of green growth. The merchants of horses and cattle, butchers smoking pipes and are tied up with red sash belts, their fellow countrymen wander about in the wind, stand and stare at the living merchandise out of interest. Speculators and plain talkers walk about, 'anyone' who had become a speculator or 'descenders' that came to the *targowica* on foot, just not to get separated. And maybe one of them will be invited to see something ... gutter horses,

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<sup>39</sup>

An open-air marketplace

baying cows, that stumble along on their legs when one of the butchers – from the sons of Gerszuk the butcher – a Jew, with a shining face, fat and a red beard, whose ends get wrapped up in each other because of walking, and in a torn lead garment with a belt of red wool on his trousers, goes over and feels the hips of the cattle by squeezing them, shoves his fingers into their mouths examines their teeth as thick flesh dripped from their mouths onto his hands, and he is wiping the hairs of the animals.

In a nearby place, a crowded group of curious people stare, how is it that one of the owners of a wagon – the Feivishim’ – the Elder that is in the group, short with a big belly and fat-headed, red eyes of a trout, that around which there are globules of fat, carries his body on his short legs, goes over to a pair of horses, and smooths his fat and canopied hands on their backs, and on their faces, he then harnesses them to ride, goes up on the platform and sits down, he takes the reins in his hand and uproots himself from the place as if he were on wings of eagles.

Bravo! — they shout.

The old man has not yet forgotten what he has learned...

Between the counters and the stores the men and women gentiles circulate, and they look with greedy eyes at the furs, and ready clothing. Trousers, shirts, hats. The merchandise is spread out and piled on mound after mound laid on the ground. There are barrels and pottery. Iron implements, hammers, clasps and pails. [There are] kitchen knives and sickles. Someone wearing fur carries the hide of sheep on his shoulder so it can be seen, the white skin glistens from the white lime and spreads about a sour but stimulating odor. A dirty haberdasher holds a hair hat with his hand inside, he spins it around and straightened the hair in large amounts and with a ringing sound. The chaotic mix of voices and odors rises and it intermixes: — the calving of cows, the riding of horses, and the snorting of pigs, the smell of skin, colors, tar, resin, smut and hair, the sweat of men, the ring if kisses on the hand, shouting and arguments, cursing and boycotting. A person is standing by, rubbing his hands together for lack of work and in the interim, he tosses jokes in Hebrew at the gentiles:

— Ivanu... here... ‘*Shir HaMa’alot*’ on the shoulder... and ‘*kakhah*’ on the head... and ‘smoothness’ under the feet...

The gentile begins to search around, looking at the sides, taking off his hat and looking inside, lifts a leg and looks at the sole. A driving laughter bursts out along the length of the line, the gentile curses, spits, and in the spirit of a ‘sutki’ (policeman) whistles that someone has been caught stealing. Everyone is pushed into a crowded circle. Amidst the gathering some blind miser had been pushed, having a bad head, being led by a little boy with flaxen hair, and is playing a sad melody on all of the ancient musical instruments hung up on his side accompanied by a screaming song, and when his mouth is open and slated, and the pupils of his blind eyes are raised upwards.

In the lines to the manufacturing stores, the men and women gentiles are pushed to the sides and they wait outside and ask for prices, touching and smelling, and measure according to the length of the whip in their hands, take the woven item in their hand to see if it is strong and propose half [of what is asked], The storekeepers thunder and curse and seize the garment from their hands. The sale is finished, it is

packed and pushed to the bottom of the conversation of the buyer. It is accepted by the merchants that the more you thunder at the gentile, and the more you curse, there is a sense of certainty that he will buy the merchandise that has been presented. It is an important generality in merchandising: the gentile buys everything, once he sees exposed merchandise. On the day of the fair, when everything is open for him to see, his will is strengthened and he is taken out of the busy village and he buys whatever he sees: linen, flax, toys, pins, pastes, pretzels, mini tarts -- toffees, sugar candies, all sorts of store goods — they look at the faces of the horses and fowl, and the remaining 'luxury' items that are not to be found in the village.

On fair days he entered a restaurant, to enjoy life and to spend some time with a group. Every purchase and sale ends in a restaurant, a place where one can recount the troubles [encountered] and to reveal one's heart and thoughts. The restaurants are full at the time of every fair. Every Jew who has a substantial house converts it to a restaurant, and it sustains him. Everything that is good is prepared for the fair: whiskey, cooked foods, salted fish frozen in sauce, white bread and other foods, according to one's taste. The restaurants emit noise from morning to evening. They crowd together on the benches, beside the tables, and the farmers and their wives are animated, some of them in ruffled cardigans, rural shirts and belts around, on their trousers upon entry, the wives with kerchiefs tucked under their ears, with some hair showing. Everyone is conversing and shouting and no person can hear what his neighbor is saying, and between one conversation and the next, the singing of a drunkard bursts out in a hoarse voice and strange screams. People fall on their neighbor's neck with kisses, with oaths and curses. Suddenly an argument breaks out, the women scream and cry, melting away from the tumult and the sour air of the food and wine, and the sweat of the people spreads all around.

The Jews suckle their earnings from the weekly fair directly and indirectly. Men who are not involved with a business help out beside their wives. They stand in stores beside the counter, and supervise. During a fair, everyone is occupied and busy, everyone with his own merchandise, products, the product of his work and skill. Mordechai Pesach, the doctor, a Jew with a white beard and clouded glasses, 'half a doctor' prepares leeches, for use in sucking blood, gets ready to open abscesses and extracting teeth. Leib Mordechai the *Hasid*, who has thick side locks, who has never spoken to a gentile for his entire life, prepares his ointments to be prepared for edema and abscesses, and the members of his household handle what he has to sell. And in the home of the local *Dayan*<sup>40</sup> they are beginning to prepare yeast for the women farmers.

The fair dissipates toward evening. The wagons begin to make noise on the ground, the tents are taken down, the people disperse, the streets are full of the residue of animal droppings, residual cooked food, and the droppings of cattle and horses. Jews hurry to return merchandise that took from the wholesaler to be sold. They pay their money and ask for an extension to the next fair. Others hurry to the *Bet-HaMedrash* for the *Mincha* services, to compensate for the faulty morning service, which they prayed

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<sup>40</sup> A *Dayan* is a 'Judge' in Hebrew. In this context, it is used to describe a fully ordained Rabbi, who does not occupy a Rabbinical Chair for many reasons. Among those are: the lack of availability of a suitable community or a lack of interest on the part of the subject to occupy a Rabbinical Chair. Such men, who obviously have considerable religious training, were often given a *judicial position*, in which they represented an extension of the authority of the sitting Rabbi. A *Dayan* would essentially adjudicate religious issues in place of the Rabbi, if the latter were not available to do so himself.

hurriedly out of the need to speed off to the fair. The Elders are sitting by the long table beside the stove, and await the arrival of a *Minyan*. They ask about the fair, and those to whom the question is directed reply while sighing:

Everything depends on luck...

### 13. The Decrees of May 1883

Between the stores, they conversed about a written order that appeared in the '*Yiddisheh's Volksblatt*' written by Noah Dorfman.

Not everyone read the newspaper. They related only what they heard being said, from the mouth of one man to another. One close to Noah Dorfman himself, showed him what he wrote, and read it before him. This person went and told others about it with the addition of wonder: — 'How he polishes the chin of the 'Beautiful Jews' those that receive *aliyot*, those who are knowledgeable, those who are weak on the issues of the city, and they rule without consideration for its poor.'

And so, justice [must be done]. For really, why do they take everything for themselves? In the end, who are they? They are useless! And who is this Noah Dorfman '*the Master of Tradition?*' Is he the son of Issac R' Yekleh's? In the end, he is the son of a working man!

After some time, there was another paper and Noah Dorfman again: '*I may finally announce from the Heder.*' The revelation of the secrets of the people of the community in matters of '*priziv*' (military service), taxes on meat and tax on candles. The people of the community who deal with the community funds as if it were their own. To where has the money vanished for the benefit of the burned ones? Every year, to where do the funds of the tax and the candles go? — He asks.

This was the period of the *Parnassim* of the community, a tax on meat and candles. This was [after all] the period of normalization of the lives of the Jews in the cultural sphere, and the social one as well. This introduction of '*Culture*' into the lives of the Jews forcibly and with firm resolve, during the reign of Czar Alexander III. The government levied an indirect tax on Kosher meat and Sabbath candles, for the purpose of providing school funds to teach the Russian language to Jewish children, trade schools, bathhouses and pharmacies. People with a high level of general *Enlightenment*, *Cantonists*, those who practiced professions that had been documented as free, and merchants of a substantial level. The pressure of the taxes have been sapping, especially among the ranks of the poor population, who have families busy with raising many children, who were not able to reduce the number of Sabbath candles which must be followed according to what the accepted tradition requires. We had here families that were compelled to make due with scraps of meat and bones for the Sabbath because of the high cost of meat in the face of the taxes imposed by the authorities made even more severe by the tax authorities. From year-to-year specific and recognizable sums were allocated to the country's treasury, as a result of the neglect of the *Parnassim* and the general opposition of the populace to the purpose these funds were allocated — to Russian schools for Jewish children, under the rubric of '*szkalehs nye zhalyehs*' we do not want schools. The officers of the government were interested in spending this money for their own enjoyment , but because of this there was a need for financial aid from the community, and their

agreement, and they did this. With the help of the village council and the priesthood, funds were gathered for the schools, hospitals, under the impression that the Jews of the village and city have a use for them – there were also instances of support for rural Russian Orthodox churches – as a donation of the Jews of the city.

The people of the community and their *Parnassim*, under pressure., did not withhold their signatures to execute this project in a realistic way.

There was also the issue of the ‘*priziv*’ (the military draft) that was transformed into something arbitrary, for the blackmail business and the details of the public members are wormed out. Nevertheless, in this area a change took place for the better by the Decree of 1874, that allocated the responsibility for military service on all of the men aged 21, especially regarding sons who were only children and other relaxations because of family considerations. Bestowing this relaxation depended on a real permission from the men of the community to preserve the family stability. The fear of service in the army did not abate yet, and in the time of presenting one’s self for service, the fathers went like shadows in finding means of rescue, which could not be reached with ease. Because of the large number of failures to appear out of the ranks of those eligible – and capable – for service, who purposely disappeared before the men of the community could consult with each other — they then drafted those capable from the ranks of the poor and lacking the means among them, including only sons – to fill the onus that was placed by the government, and it was only after the levy was met by means of this blackmail business and the details of the public members that were wormed out, only then did the deserters – set free – because there was no longer any need for them. Resentments were heard more than once, as well as the shouts of fathers and the crying of mothers. Could it be? Single sons only, wage earners, people with physical defects?... It was not once that the reading was stopped in the Synagogue. With screams and complaints they gathered together and went to the Head of the Community, directed, and intent to fight the war of truth and justice. However, after the gathered crowd heard the explanations offered by the men of the community, with this added lesson: – Why raise a commotion about nothing... why, in general to upset the order of the world... for quiet people like yourselves, it is not useful to arouse arguments between brethren and cause the development of tense relations with the men of the community and the community at large, these are relationships that will cause you to be the first to suffer from them. In the end, you are not rich...

They heard these revealed inferences and left with lowered heads full of bitterness and an aroused silence...

At the same time, a fire broke out in the ‘*Yerushalyim’keh*’ part of the city, in the living quarters of working people and the poor, which caused the impoverishment of the entire suburb for many years. This was a conflagration whose impression was deeply engraved in the memory of the city residents, and was set aside as a important entry in the chronology of the city. To add to this calamity, hunger came and at that time, ran through Ukrainian areas, and part of Podolia and was the cause of the collapse of the economic bases of the already shaky economy. As was customary, donations were gathered for those who were burned out, and the able wealthy did not raise a hand. The rich took part in the rehabilitation of the wrecked places. Despite this, a feeling of grudge was aroused on the side of the recipients as opposed to the donors; More pronounced barriers became more evident between the rich and the poor.

In this fashion the bitterness rose with the appearance of a widening gap between the rich and the poor. A flickering in the latency of the mind gave rise to a visible flame.

This bitterness subsided to a degree with the publication of the Decrees of May 1882, that became known by the name of 'Temporary Decrees of Ignatiev' that punctured the Jewish settlement on all of its lines of activity and led to difficult economic instability. The comparison of the external Decrees nullified the intensity of the inequality internally. All grievances that were aroused were quenched by the Elders: — Let us not search for the transgressions of the few, if others find sins of the many.

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The Decrees of May 1882, that were realistically limited as '*Temporary Decrees*' removed the permission for the Jews to live in the villages, the right to purchase stationary assets, and lease them in the villages. The same was true for the privilege of owning a hotel or inn, the endangered ones — business connected to the farmer and the village without an intermediary. This decree hit the Jews hard, since most of the Jewish community was connected to a village in a thousand ways, such as economic items of little value, directly and indirectly: partnership, loans given, investments, and loans taken out. The intent of these Decrees had been arranged as compensation for the farmers at the expense of the Jews, and especially to distance them from the influence of the Jews and to have them stand independently. The array of the '*Temporary Decrees*' supplemented the administrative decrees in the management of the village, that were publicized in the chapter of this time: The setting of independent privileges for those close to the village: 'Wolost' (an elected village commission); 'Straszyna' (Head of the committee) in large villages that in the bounds of its closeness, were points of settlement for small villages. 'Starostvo' (an elder of the village according to the limited number of residents) — and 'Sutski' (a policeman). In this reform and the independence of the village there was no intent on the part of the government to raise the cultural and social status of the village. Its proximity to work in this area was not expanded. The farmer remained poor and neglected as he was previously, and did not know how to read or write. In essence this was a permission aimed at closeness to the highly placed authorities only, and as for themselves, they remained dependent on the generosity of the area government official, who was not constrained by his powers — and they, the rulers of the village, stood before him with bent backs and bare-headed, and had to bear curses and scolding or even being hit with a cane in front of everyone. The revocation of the Jewish privileges in the villages, gave the farmers the possibility of demonstrating the power of their rule that was placed on their shoulders, as a form of compensation, that every person who carries a feeling of diminution and lowering, finds compensation for himself in the measure of denigration of the public that is weaker than him, and he saved those for his own satisfaction.

The *Temporary Decrees* gave their own sign. The farmers, with their rural guesswork, grasped the situation: First and foremost, they disposed of their obligations to the Jews, and dissolved any partnerships they had with them. The Jews could not take them to court, because they knew at the outset, that the Decree will not favor them. They gave up and then reconstituted themselves. The wealthy, who were connected by and large to them — as tenants, sharecroppers, and mill and forest owners, they asked for time to settle their affairs, and then left, afterwards having no choice but to absorb the losses. Others found an underhanded trick to bypass the *Decree* by making one of their bosses appear under one signature from the poor nobility, by using fictional contracts in place of the set monthly payments, and were helped, in this regard, by the owners of the parcels themselves. It was in this manner that the

ownership or a partnership was transferred under an illegal contract, drawn on the name of the poorer nobles, or a relative, and the Jew in question remained a partner or an owner without documentation on the strength of a mutual agreement drawn by the ‘*Owner of My Inner House*.’ In a matter of days, the false contracts were changed into advisors for the Jews, so that the farmers and the nobles were able to steal the assets of the Jews by exaggerated demands addressed to the owner of the contract, using lies and deception with the help of false witnesses, in the midst of relying on the absence of the possibility of a Jew to provide [other] proof against the allegations made. Most of the village Jews got away with their eyes and teeth intact, and moved to the city, and only a small number remained in the village under compulsion to do so: officers, servants of nobility, ‘*holy vessels*’ such as: a *shokhet*, a *mohel*, and ordinary Jews and notebooks of village children, that the Decree obtained for them the privilege of sitting in the village by means of presenting real proof by permission of the village commission. These presented their proofs and stayed for less than an hour, in a temporary fashion, in the turmoil of delay by the authorities and the members of the community of the village. Few were in the midst of many, depending on the good will of the ‘starszyna,’ the ‘starosta’, and the ‘sutski’ and by an ordinary genial holding out a fist. They were forced to seek help between their persecutors, to calm them down and compensate them, once with a bribe and another time with ransom money, with the saying of flattering words and pleading, and those who, just yesterday were bent over, in surrender got up straight now, in their place, in arrogance.

The Jewish home was turned into a mess, it was open to all those who wish to benefit from the wreckage. There were times, on the eve of the *Sabbath*, the ‘*Starshyna*’ would come and with a move of his head he signaled those who followed him, and he would satisfy his mealtimes in order to honor his guest with the famous stuffed fish of the Jews, *Challah* and whiskey, until this person would get drunk and fall asleep. There were times that this was one of the village homeowners, selected by the community, or just an ordinary gentile ‘*having a fist*’ or from the attackers and the knowledgeable people in the village. On Sundays, the gentile women would burst forth in holiday attire, wearing decorations, and with shards of glass that jingle, around their throats, strands of grain put on them, for the oldest daughter of the ‘*Starshyna*’ to observe. The woman cries silently out of worry, and the father sighs out of helplessness. The Mistress without companionship, everything that she is able to bring to sell without interest by her at the Jew, one can easily find false witnesses to as ‘seen acts’, especially the ‘*sutski*’. In general – a salted gentile that earned during his watch, and also the overseer of goods in favor of the Jew. A circle of a copper neckpiece on the fur coat that of the *sutski*’ is etched on it, with a long cane pointing upwards. ‘*Sutski*’ can be translated as ‘*the Master of a Hundred*’ Such as: – there are one hundred houses in the village under his vigilance. These were the busy visitors. He was the unconstrained ruler in the village, the Jew bowing to his master and his oversight was to enter [the house], fold his fur coat slightly and take a seat as ‘a member of the household,’ engages in conversation, drinks to an excess, and in a nutshell, speaks as he skips from subject to subject, as if he were speaking to himself:

– Hey, Yank’l, the times are tough .... It is a ‘*skhud*’ (a meeting), ‘*skhud...*’  
– What does the compassionate one want, from the ‘*skhud...*’[itself]?

– the intent of the ‘*skhud*’... the gathering... don’t you know?...to expel ‘*Srul*[ik] the shoemaker from the village. He is not wanted! May the Lord endow Yank’l with health. Why is it that you sit bloated like

a chicken? Drink, I say, son of a bitch...let us drink together! Sarah'keh, something peppery and salted!

— And what do we have in our village?

— *Durnitz!* So I said: Yank'l, Ber'keh, Shmer'keh, all of the Jews in our village... permit, a person, to speak! Don't interrupt...! What I said, the *Decree* is the *Decree*... the scud is the scud ... an I am a 'Stuski' ...

The *scud* takes and puts down the selected item: Seeing that in the village, a Jew named Yank'l resides, who causes injuries to the Russian Orthodox farmers, and he has no right to settle in our village, therefore: — we are to expel him from the village, he and his family with the workers that deal with the merchandise for 24 hours... send the paper[work] to the *Uradnik* ( the vice-overseer of the police in the city), the *Uradnik* to the *Pristav* (Police officer) until it reaches the minister, and comes back from the minister, one to another, one to the other, until it reaches the *Uradnik*. And the *Uradnik* calls to me: Expel Yank'l! Within 24 hours! I take the parer and come [to the *Uradnik*] the following day:

— My Lord *Uradnik*, Noble master! There is no Jew [named] Yank'l in the village.

— Where do you get the nerve, you son of a bitch!

I am for myself. I kiss the crucifix... there is no person like that.

He shouts, curses and insults me and I am for myself. You who cross yourself— in the name of the Holy Ghost — there is no one [by this name]! Get out!...

You hear, the *Decree* is the *Decree* — the Czar, may his glory be raised, he sits happy, and I, thanks to God, have a brain in my head... You are a good Jew, Yank'l, and not about something important, so long as God lives, the winter draws near... look, your boots are torn... a small slice of bread without a hot handkerchief... The big men need a vest... the minors need shirts. And your Jews in the city take off your skins...

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There were instances of conversion to Christianity, mostly among the daughters of well-connected and important families. There were many causes: the surrounding village, the denigrated condition of the Jews among gentiles and the absence of any traditional education for girls — a pus-filled abscess that broke open at the slightest touch. There was an instance in a prior period that a daughter of Israel married her fate secretly and modestly out of a natural attraction to the sacristy of Israel and a fated responsibility under the stress of difficult incidents, and thus, it was in this period that the patience burst. The surroundings weakened the spiritual stance of the Jew in the eyes of the daughter, and she turned her father's house into a symbol of distress and abandonment. From time to time, the helping impulse of a hidden love aroused the heart of the daughter to the point of rebellion.

They passed by them easily, and they did not make the burden any heavier by the suffering of the father and the tears of the mother, the alien surroundings, and the feeling of shame, and they adapted to it and

absorbed it from the field. They became gentile women that were fervently religious and modest, in a traditional garb of the village, long shirts and belts with small red crosses. Wrapped in woven clothing of black wool, around the trousers, and upper green belts or red ones, barefoot or in skin boots made of glistening doeskin, with ribbons and corals that jingled with the slightest movement.

They would come to the city along with the other women farmers, to sell their produce. They sat themselves down in the market with exposed legs as was the custom of the women farmers. The parents withered from sorrow and the pangs of shame. They plotted subterfuges, turned to *Tzaddikim*, to interlocutors, to the government and to the farmers of the area.

If it occurred that the parents turned to one of the *Tzaddikim*, the *Tzaddik* gave this advice: Gather together a *Minyan* of Jews at the hour that the daughter is sitting in the market with her consent, along with the rest of the female farmers, to read chapters of the *Psalms* rendered in the traditional melody. To begin with, the 'lady farmer' did not confront the Jews who wore side locks that moved and they were praying, not far from her. – She paid no attention to them. She turned her head to one side and did not look at them at all, however afterwards she took notice and stood up shouting:

– *Lyudi Dobry, Ratyuteh!* (Good people, come and rescue us!)

The farmers came together and raised noise and shouting. A policeman appeared, the *Uradnik*'s wife, head of the family had connections with the local advisory council and by her hand, the local authorities appeared, and she was spared from the punishment that she had coming to her.

A wealthy Jew in one of the villages, the owner of a mill and a variety of other businesses in the village, had, on the strength of false contracts, and connections with the local county officials using the locally-issued permits and those for the county, tried to rescue his daughter by a variety of dangerous means, who had fled to one of the monasteries but had not yet converted to Christianity. This case is a status that had a lightening effect, as it were, from a legal standpoint, because there is no punishment for thinking. In a few days, the gentile son appeared, to invite him to the wedding of the [Jewish] daughter with his son. Incidentally, he indicated that he would abandon the insults to Jews for his daughter, especially now, after the wedding if it is not his will to be exiled to Siberia. A similar incident occurred in one of the nearby villages, with the daughter of the ritual slaughterer of the village, a man who had earned respect among the *starszyne* gentiles, they kept quiet and still. [To the point that] even among the gentiles they could not detect his sorrow, at the hour she fled her father's house, whose community she was prepared to reject, if it became an issue to return [his daughter] to him. There was a gentile who advised that if the gentiles would decide on a (public gathering), in that she, his daughter is not wanted in her community, it would be possible to return her to him. An indigent man went from one gentile to the next, to the 'Starosta' to the "Starszyna" and to the 'Sutski' and he groveled in front of them and begged them about this. The gentiles assembled. A supportive spirit was aroused in each of them. One of them got up, to help one of the enlightened men of the village, took off his hat and rotated it his hand out of getting focused, and when he went up on the top of the severed tree [he said]:

– Russian Orthodox men... there is not much to say, this issue is well-known to us. This Jewish man is both good and honest. Not one of us has been helped by him.... it is a sin to repay a sin with a good deed. May God and the Holy Mother forgive me... all of us are pursuing a good suggestion like a cat

chasing a mouse... that the wolf shall be slain and the goat remain intact... the truth is the truth... good must follow good... but, my Russian Orthodox men, is this the truth? If his daughter is to come over to our faith, we are repaying a good deed... let her be a Christian like all of our women, wrapped in the wings of Russian Orthodoxy... the head of the school, the home of the field, the leader of the swine... what will be her end? She will marry a [converted] Jew with side locks. Then there will be little [pseudo] -Jews, and she will be poor, forgotten by God and man...she will not be permitted to live in the village. Are we not repaying something good with something bad?... Say something Russian Orthodox men, where is justice and where is truth?

The gentiles hears this and nodded in agreement:

– Mikita is right...

## 14. Preparations for a Pogrom

On that same morning, Feivusz the wagon driver returned and the killers showed up early. They crowded around him seeking resuscitation. He stood sullen and sweating, he kept silent and did not answer, then he recovered. With his hand, he wiped off the sweat from his face, straightened the head covering beneath his fur hat and began to retell – in the natural style as was his way:

It was a strange and different sort of gathering, dressed in the clothing of a *katzap*,. they fell upon the city on a Turkish rifle, which most of the Jewish stores possessed, they plundered stores and houses, despoiled products, they hit people and wounded them. There is a theory that they killed a few afterwards of dragoons (on horseback) and restored ordered as it was supposed to be. The external appearance of the city was desolate, the stores were closed, nobody is going in or out. People heard this, and nodded with their heads. Others approached them and asked for details. They asked about storekeepers, wholesalers, people they knew and relatives. A large nearby city stood out which had extended links of commerce with Bershad in branches of economic activity, and borrowing money from many of the wealthy residents of the city of Balta, Balta was a commercial city possessing a recognizable reach with the wholesale stores that had an appetite for a variety of types of products. Women traveled to the well-known doctor Knigiczzs. Those that had the means traveled to Balta to prepare to buy wedding clothes and jewelry for their daughters. It was a sort of accepted custom, that whoever traveled to Balta would be bringing back something woven from linen, wool, ‘manufactured goods’ for the house. For the mature daughter, a panoply of household items and furniture that one could get there cheaply, at the desired price. A wagon driver would be traveling every Sunday towards nightfall bringing products and invitations to Balta. To us, at the parting of the paths, in the village of Dimuvok, near the Jewish factory, on Thursday or Friday, he would return with a load of merchandise: food implements, manufactured goods, steel, sacks tied with strong rope on jagged pieces of wood tied on to the entire length and width of the wagon.

Storekeepers stood beside their stores, they would put their hands into the packages, and talk about

Balta. If a flame fell among the cedars, what will the owners of the wall do? This was a town that was small, without Dragoons and without soldiers? — one a gentile whom we could easily suspect. The village people dispersed. People who returned from the Fairs told that the gentiles were wandering in the market, but don't buy, look at the fragments of glass on the merchandise. Rub it in their hands, take measurements and go on their way. Bizarre people would show up in the villages, with well-kept noses, having rolling red eyes, sitting in the saloons and drinking, and faint away... then he would tell what he heard from the mouths of familiar gentiles, that on Sunday, the priest spoke, the Czar who freed them and was murdered... you know, that it was the hands of the *zhids* that was in the middle of it... is this a manifestation of the new Czar... who knows what else will be whispered among us.

— We must do something!! — one of the men in the polish shouts, in the classroom on the Sabbath during the reading of the Torah. — Sodom! How is it possible to make merry while resting in times like this? In Savaron — they say — the gentiles are sitting and sharpening their blades...

What can one do? Quite the opposite...

What is the explanation, what is there to do, what? There is a lot to do...to go to the *Pristav* and to request guards to be placed be side the stores. It is necessary to speak with the priest and to explain to him what is his responsibility to say on Sunday. It is necessary to explain to him that he who delays is as if he was stealing, and stealing is forbidden even according to their faith...

People wandered in the street, they pulled on threads, light threads of news and rumors, like the web of a spider in an air that is made compressed from one person to another. A list of the pogroms in towns and cities was related: *Aninov, Birzula, Yeli B'Tagrod, Krivozir*. A feeling of austerity arose causing endless conversations between friends about the rumors. Some gentile was invited into the city, he is surrounded, and someone sticks out his hand in friendship, a conversation ensued about approaches and intents. The gentile is quiet as if he is not a man of words, and when the patience is pierces, they move directly to the question: what is going on in the city? The gentile raises his wandering eyes to the heavens, he is silent for a minute as if he were listening to someone, he extend his right hand to his neck, and scratches his throat...

What's going on in the city?... it is the season of putting down seed, thank God, let us hope that God will give us health. The cow has given birth.... and the hens, thanks to God are [laying eggs]... may God bring the rains on time!

But what is heard in the town by you? Why is this being discussed in general?

— God knows... the priest, and in the end he will be marrying off his daughter Maria to the officer.  
— to where are you going you wicked woman! Evil person! From an unscrupulous root! — the gentile suddenly tells — he was uprooted while running after a strong woman who stuck her head into his sack of grain that was hung on the place where the horses discharge themselves, and he leaves the Jews standing with wild side locks, craving for news.

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On Saturday night after *Havdalah* they did not go to the lessor of the granary to drink tea, as was their usual custom. There were those who told, in the name of gentiles known to them, that on Sunday, the gentiles are preparing to carry out the manifest of the Czar... and so people stayed in their homes. They stayed in the *Bet HaMedrash*, spoke of the Fair of the following day. They comforted themselves [by saying]: Our gentiles are not like the gentiles in Balta. There are different types of gentiles. There were 'katzapehs' and by us the 'katzapehs' – the *katzapehs* of Philiponovol are honest people and people of stance. For all the money, they could not perpetrate a pogrom. Also our gentiles were completely different... there was one who dealt with the most hidden of secrets, around whom the butchers and wagon drivers gathered on the morning of the Sabbath and swore to stand with all their strength to protect their merchandise and homes.

In the morning they opened their stores but not peacefully. There were those who opened their stores half way. Those who owned harlequins stood beside their packaged sacks. Mothers did not send their children to *Heder*, working people did not go out to the villages. The gentiles of the area streamed in their masses on foot and by wagons in silos and sacks, boxes, cans, metals, pick axes and ordinary axes. Groups sat on loaded wagons with 'rebellious feet', aimed at the city. The Fair was crowded and packed. People stood by their stores in a state of uncertainty – what shall they do?

Suddenly something flashed on the horizon., on the other side of the bridge. They focused their eyes on the distance. They saw a compressed cloud, and rising from the smoke they saw coming a number of Dragoons mounted on their horses, and on their shoulders bayonets glistened in the sun. Quickly, the sound of military song grew closer. Several people quickly tied up packages and their merchandise, and others followed suit, they packed up and headed home. Boys and girls carried bundles on their heads, and boxes full of merchandise, carried by two of them and threes, and they exerted force in this, in commotion and speedily, and looking to their sides. Storekeepers pushed the old people and wanderers out of their store. They closed the store up in a state of commotion, quickly, and then fled.

There was quite a commotion. One person saw something, and communicated it to a second person, and to a third. The gentiles became upset, they seized their horses that were hitched to wagons, leaving behind women and children, they cursed angrily and hurriedly, and then fled. A number of the gentiles were taken down from their wagons, they were divided up and arrested. A few fled on foot leaving behind their horses and wagons. They hid themselves and then fled. The Dragoons stayed in the city for a few days, and quartered themselves at Moshe Yossi Bilinki at the level of the cellar, at the place that had previously held whiskey. Moshe Yossi did not withhold helpings of whiskey along the width of his still, and every day, the local musicians played for them, and they, drunk from their victory – danced. Jews that passed by, threw coins to the soldiers and to the musicians, and provided them with their needs for food and sweets.

It was told afterwards: that at the end of the Sabbath prior to this one, they had gathered at the tax collector's Moshe-Yossi Bilinki, as usual, the butchers and the loyal workers for their weekly pay. The ritual slaughterers also came. They sat and talked about Balta, the city and the towns that suffered from this, and about the condition of the city. Moshe-Yossi entered with a butcher to a separate room at an early hour. And afterwards, he treated them to a rich '*Melave Malka*' with wine and whiskey from his

still. On the morrow, he traveled to the officer, and they spent a light hour together, and he then returned home relieved out of a sense of security...

The name of Joseph Bilinki was recalled in a praiseworthy manner.

## 15. The Instances of Immigration

The intellectual world of the Jews was shocked. The pogroms themselves, that in their frightening terror aroused the revelation of thought that had been hidden in secret places. The ache, and more so the noise that it raised in the Russian newspapers to explain the reasons for these pogroms, stemmed from an agreed to reason, that these pogroms, essentially were a mass reaction against the despised Jewish businesses that are based on appearance and deception, a bitterness that had been accumulating among non-Jewish ranks, in the city and the village, for years until they burst out like a volcano with a mighty force.

One could not detect and difference between the liberal press and that of the Zionists. The reactions were unique to this contingent which was tied to the two types of difference, and were [different only] in their manner of expression, and in their style. This was the hour in which this raised a noise in the progression of the malicious intent. [The Jewish press] was more still and less harsh in its explanations and interpretations. However, the reasons given were similar. This thought spread also to the socialists, the revolutionaries who at that time appeared on the Russian platform as protectors of the Russian interest, and this also happened in the ranks of the Jewish Socialists.

Nothing was released by the cadre of the Jewish revolutionaries in Vilna, and during the decade of the eighties, no ruling against the Jewish nation? ‘*To the Jews of Russia* – the first Jewish socialist, Eliezer Lieberman [wrote] – *there is but one idol. The extensive idol of money, they bow before it, and for it they are ready to sacrifice everything.*’

And did not the Jewish socialist-revolutionaries, in the composition of ‘*Kol Koray*’ to the Russian farmers write a justification of the pogroms of 1882, as an act of retaliation against the deeds of deception and fraud perpetrated by the Jews against them?

Neither of these two groups could infer the understanding of the thin strands that were spread about by the Russian reactionaries in explaining the pogroms, the intent of dipping the revolutionary movement, nominated as the instigators of the murder of Czar Alexander II, in the blood of the Jews. And whoever had created the ‘real reason’ regarding the uprising of the masses that was, in essence, the work of the Jews of the Pale of Settlement still far from perpetrating such heinous events. And moreover so they could not connect the vanished ones and the hearty ones. With his healthy sense, the Jew felt he was standing between tests by socialists and economists, in the ambience of being tested by unscientific methods.

Like echoes from a distance, words of encouragement and solace comes from the Hebrew and Hebrew-Russian newspapers to ‘*heal the breakdown of my nation.*’ Songs of the type ‘*My Sister Rukhama,*’ are

not prevented from emphasizing periodically the socialist and economic defects in the lives of Jews, the earnings the culture from the air, their separation from the average [other] person and their isolation in the area of customs and unique way of life, and the absence of education and *Enlightenment*. It is not possible that Jews have rejected all of this, were the differences not so evident. And there would be no place for bitterness and enmity, and if there was no communication to the destroyers. For this reason, let us open the range of Jewish thought, nationalist and half-nationalist: — like Smolenskin, Moshe Leib Lillienblum, Dr. Yitzhak Kaminer, Y. L. Kantorovich, and others. From those who saw the cure in the *Enlightenment* and general education, and from that, in the changes in the order of economic life by means of going over to working the land, raises the conundrum yet back in the time of the RiB”L, the ideologue of the *Enlightenment* and working of the land, who, in his time, influenced Czar Nicholas I to found Jewish settlements on the territories of Kherson and in Serbia. The goal was enchanted and we were reawakened anew. The goal was revived and immigration plans were also put on the agenda to somewhat dilute the area of the settlement.

In the settlements of the Jews a movement of immigration arose as a natural feeling of saving those who flee from the danger and to paddle their way from one place to another of greater security, and also the spread of the ideas on the colonies of Baron Hirsch and on the first that permitted settlement, sprouted and sprouted clandestine feelings about freedom from all of the bonds of cultural economics from the air, and contact with the soil on homes in the midst of fruit trees, nature, fresh air, and lives of tranquility and security. Chapters of effort both written and oral, stories, songs ‘Die Sach...?’ ‘Der Kremmer’ inflamed the view in a vision of the future without worries.

Among the Bershad Jews it was still not possible to define a large movement for immigration . From the beginning there was an arousal to some extent, but it quickly faded and fell into sleep as if it had sunk into the thought, perhaps out of fear, whether from laziness or a suspicion for change in the direction of life that had been rooted for generations. Several from the villages and the city — working men, bachelors, and youths — immigrated, but their numbers were not large. Not all of them withstood the rigors. Of those remaining in the stations of transition – London, Hamburg, Koenigsberg. A part traveled off to North America, and of those that returned torn, broken , shaking in body and soul, and there was one who tried his luck by going to Israel, and after a few years he contracted a fever and a bitterness. A little time later, he died.

Immigration subsided, however, their emotional fears and bubbling up of spirits did not subside: – the matters at the foundation of the lack of productivity of the Jewish forms of making a living that were placed from time to time by the ranks of the liberal Russians, and the men of the Jewish community had its emotional fears aroused and thought about the times. In the end, all of us suffered in the ace of the total collapse that was thought not possible. The sources of making a living for generations dried up and vanished. From the detailed failures it is possible to learn all that occurred. Perhaps they would be saved by their sons? With the setting up of an education system, that promised specific privileges to working people, the will to get a general education grew stronger, the same for the *Enlightenment*, to grasp a place in the life and substance of the community. This was managed by the wealthy, people who had a desire for *Enlightenment*, for knowledge. The first of the Enlightened ones were those who sprung from the base of necessity for a purpose [in life].

In essence, the *Enlightenment* was a matter of purpose [in life]. These were the means of individual adults. Somewhat, they attached some romanticism and emotion, song and praise in their singing and in writing, which in the fulness of a fixed time served as inspiring raw material and refreshing in the settlements of the towns of the field. This was never a general movement among the people, not in its essence and not in related fundamentals, but rather the inclination of individuals. The details manifest themselves in the *Enlightenment* movement as an organic part of a group of adults with a manifest communal objective. It specifically appears in the *Enlightenment* movement as a separate item and its individual talents. Everyone tries to stand out from all, and advance in some level or another, and to liberate one's self from the remnants of the past of the world, from its surroundings and its group of friends. But even from the remainder of its effort to correctly assess the surroundings and what was going on in it. A movement of 'exceptional', a movement in which the 'general' was not deemed essential but rather that which comes out of it. It — was the shred that the flame of the *Enlightenment* grabbed onto.

The people did not follow the *Enlightenment* movement. This was the success that was not swept away by the current in its masses. It remained '*The Daughter of the Heavens*' pampered and spread, but not as a '*daughter of the land*' not tangible or of the populace. They, the *Enlightened* ones were drawn like butterflies to an alien source of light, seared by it, but they remained dependent, as if they were the dead taken up by the spirit of life. Wandering, and distanced by the inferiority complex — they that succeeded in breaking into the non-Jewish world individually, finished by shedding entirely the bonds of earlier generations and from the covering the legacy of generations in order to find points to fasten themselves to in another area, but in the end they remained a stub, blundering in the emptiness of heart. Of those who were flung by the slingshot for all of their lives, out of a search for a rectification for the straying soul with a hidden longing hidden in their roots, And of those that remained on the threshold of the traditional diversity, soaked in bitterness, they were 'exceptional' in life and in death. It was possible to silence the spirit of the nation for a while, but it was impossible to completely uproot it.

## **16. The Beginning of The *Enlightenment* (*Haskalah*)**

It is difficult to determine when the first sparks of the *Enlightenment* took hold in the city.

From distant columns of smoke, floating sparks of fire were tossed and carried and spread to a variety of settlement locations. From somewhere, parts of the texts of '*HaShakhar*', '*HaBoker Or*' and '*Maggid*'. They were scattered by set ways from the eye of the city — the books '*Khut Meshulash*', '*Migaleh Tamirin*', '*Zamir Aritzim*'. From some hidden storage place, a Russian grammar book got elevated, a book in the area of research and thinking — Initially, each person exchanged books with his neighbor out of disgust and fear, after enjoying the contents of '*Notayn Ta'am*'. At times, in the dimness of evening, people sat in the *Bet HaMedrash* and spoke from mouth to ear in the soft sounds of a spell of rebellion, other areas, and of thought.

Father monitored changes that touched upon the spirit of their sons. Remarks abbreviated out of spreading spirit, dawdling with side locks stubbornly and the cutting of hair strands of a beard just beginning to grow, beside the table. At evening meals various conversations circulate. The father poses one question. Instead of an answer — he gets a stubborn reply, question upon question. The conversations

continue and get sharper and angrier, more and more. The father walks like a shadow and poses these difficulties to a ‘good friend.’ Maybe he will have an influence. It may be possible for a stranger to do what may, from time-to-time be impossible for a father.

What is the issue?

Shall we learn the language of the gentiles as an incentive to earn money, why do you say this? How many of these kind (of scholars) can be found in the villages, who have command of the gentile language as if they were gentiles themselves, and see no benefit to their work? All of them – poor and paupers, and should you find – independence? – a Jewish youth marries a woman, receives her dowry, does some work that is pragmatic, and as a result he becomes independent and even a ‘master’ among his people. What if it becomes a sort of barrier against the decrees? This is plainly foolish. And should you finally know Russian as well as a gentile, ‘*Ivan*’ will be worth nothing in a village subject to a pogrom against the Jews?

The fathers would wonder among themselves, pulling at their shoulder from the waist: — Everyone wants to be a scholar. As it is written in the *Bletter, Jeroboam ben Nevat!* May his name be erased... How is it that all of them follow him: *Avrakhi-Meszi*, wealthy grooms, the sons of *balebatim*. And who is it that writes this in the end? At a lower level... but, after all, he knows a little bit how to write...

At the start, the *Enlightened* ones assaulted the *Hasidism*, this being the faith of ‘*Rebbeim*’ and *Tzaddikim* that was still strong among the men of the city, accomplished by the influence of books that reached their hands, or simply, because this was the path of ‘*Hitnagdut*’ that was the easiest. It was the luck of *Hasidism*, that together with the masses of their stalwarts they acquired many more ‘*Mitnagdim*,’ particularly among men who were *Torah* trained and followed the tradition. A ‘*Mitnaged*’ is not to be counted among the ranks of the apostates. It is possible to oppose *Hasidism*, to its end, but despite this, not to arouse suspicion of apostasy. Most of the men of the city were ordinary *Hasidim*, without any permanent loyalty to one ‘congregation’ or another. From the time of R’ Raphael, Bershad was a city not oriented to put up barriers to a variety of *Hasidim* and *Rebbeim*. Among them were many well-known in the area, being people of a reputation and close to the city, and among them also were unknown people who ‘inherited’ *Hasidim* along with their physical presence. The *Rebbeim* would lodge with a ‘*Master of the House*’ from among the wealthy, or with a working person who was of the ‘sons of the advanced’ who would dedicate their homes for a week or two to this important objective. The latter engaged in preparing their house in advance of the arrival of the *Rebbe*. They would take out the extra furniture, the beds and appurtenances. The people of the city did not refrain from assuming [the burden of] this work, because it had both honor and a blessing on its side. For every *Tzaddik* – they would say – he has an officer in the heavens and one does not tease the Lord God... In essence there were no *Tzaddikim* that were exceptional, and no *Mitnagdim* who were envious, they would visit every *Tzaddik* that came to the city, especially the womenfolk who gave ‘donations’ notes and requests [for divine intervention]...

This intrusion, that was not bounded by a gate of traditional *Hasidism*, the legacy of forefathers, created a place for *Tzaddikim* of a special kind – who dress up and were also deceivers, that used to come to a city and attract *Hasidim* and loyalists, receiving ‘donations’ and were subsequently revealed as

hypocrites and deceivers. One of the ‘*Tzaddikim*’ performing such wondrous things, once came to the city accompanied by an entourage, as was the custom of the *Tzaddikim*. The group lodges with one of the wealthy working people who was in harmony with his surroundings, a man of the community and his friends. People from all walks of life streamed to the ‘*Tzaddik*’, gave their donations generously and received blessings ‘recognizing the right of their ancestry’. After the ‘*Tzaddik*’ had left the city, it was discovered that he was a tailor from Kiev, who posed himself as a *Tzaddik*. One such was R’ Aharon of Lubavitch who presented himself as the grandson of the Schneerson family. The people of the city did not place great value on the family pedigree, but in the name ‘Lubavitch’ only. And he was able to draw to him many of the dignitaries and the wealthy. This was so, even after his deception was revealed.

Nahum Greenberg, one of the *Enlightened* of the city, poured out his heart in a letter to the newspaper ‘*HaMelitz*’ on the ‘*Deception and Shearing of the Sheep*’ The city ha not recovered from the Kiev tailor, and here came another one like him, R’ Aharon of Lubavitch.

From this time forward, it seems that the visits of these temporary *Tzaddikim* ceased, because the men of the city had become warned about them more that they used to be. The only visitors received were people whose name was familiar, and it was known that they had permanent [*Hasidic*] adherents in the city. These also came traveling for the *High Holy Days*, festival holidays, but this one incident created a distinct opposition to the *Tzaddikim*. The faith in them expired and the traveling visits ceased. This was so even though the ‘*Annual Presentation*’ did not cease, however their sacredness had run out and it became a fountain for ‘Charity Given to the Poor.’ And the following incident took place: A number of the bachelors of the place were invited for the Sabbath to the yard of the *Rebbe* of Skvir with his retirement from *Hasidism*. This was in the afternoon, at an hour when the Jews are clustered beside their tables in order to sing the traditional Sabbath songs of their tradition. One of the *Gabbaim* hurried over and related: the *Rebbe* is prepared to go for an ablution before the prayer.

Elimelech and Kessler reacted as follows: Is it allowed to recite the *Shakharit* prayer after the noon hour, so close to a large *Mincha* service? And what about using the *Mikvah* on the *Sabbath*? Washing, disposing of the clinging water and drying etc., is this not a desecration of the *Sabbath* in public?

They stood and discussed the matter. Being drawn into one conversation after another, this behavior went over to their general behavior of the *Tzaddikim*. The *Rebbe* of Skvir was one of the sons of the Chernobyls, who began to behave more loosely. They spoke of the [Rabbinical] yards in Skvira and Talna, they touched upon the mercantile connections with the wealthy and people of wealth, and connections via marriage with the sons of Orenstein of Kiev, and the partnership that exists among them... the subservience to the wealthy and monied class... are all of these characteristics of the *Hasidism* of the *BESh "T*, R’ Ber, R’ Pinchas of Kuric? And the sum of the monies involved? And the disputes between the [Rabbinical] yards?

The people having conversations were recalled in the ‘*Zemer Aritzim*’, ‘*Megaleh Tamirin*.’ and in the words of Abraham-Ber Gotlober in ‘*HaBoker Or*’. There was a distinct recognition of self by all of these, recognition in fact, and not just ordinary worldly conversation. Uncertainties were changed into certainties. They returned home with a clear decision, but they kept quiet and did not speak of it. At the coming *High Holy Days*, they did not travel to the *Rebbe* as was the accepted procedure. This matter

became known in the city. This created yet another conversation among the rest of the news of the city, but did not become an issue of protest, and did not elicit anger: All can come with complaints as to who held up the traveling to the *Rebbe*? The ranks of the *Enlightened* celebrated their victory.

Meanwhile, the incident of a *Hasid* from Tolna, who was from the nearby village of Psczenko became known in the city, who took the Tolna *Tzaddik* to the court of the gentiles in matters of an unsuccessful partnership, and receiving intermittent payment on account. Once again, we see negative things done by the *Rebbeim*. The desire of the souls of the *Enlightened* was filled. Faith in the ‘*Rebbeim*’ was shaken, it died and was broken open for everyone to see.

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Other houses received ‘*HaMelitz*’. ‘*HaTzefira*’, ‘*Judisches Folksblatt*.’ These were the houses of people who had standing in the city, lessors of grain mills in the villages, grooms being close to the table of their rich [prospective] in-laws, who are not generally praised. Several people from the elderly, who to begin with, look with displeasure at this reading in the ‘*Bletter*’ (pages) and sung out: ‘*Give one strand of hair to the devil — and he will seize the entire beard*’... But for days they pulled themselves to new findings, and even started to read about themselves in the newspaper. Within a specific reservation they justified their deed with an embarrassed smile: there is an interest to know what they think of us in the large world... Once a week, on Tuesday, it was the day in which the newspaper was received, and they would send a messenger to Moshe-Itzi, the one who controlled the mail in the city, to ask whether or not the paper had already been received. After disposing of the Jewish mail, and the arrest of Moshe-Itzi, when the mail changed into be an instrument of the government with its own appointed officers, who wore old clothing with glistening buttons it was not particularly pleasant to encounter them: and despite the fact that mail was by then delivered twice a week, on Monday and Thursday, by way of the provincial seat of *Ulhoffel*. They would then wait, spruced up for the Sabbath, and go to wait and see whether or not one of the subscribers of the newspaper will arrive and then tell everyone about new things. So, when one of these ‘Young Men’ appeared, he was surrounded out of great curiosity, and they swallowed every word with wide-open, gaping mouths.

On Saturday night after *Havdalah*, they would hurry, some in their Sabbath *kapote*, others with their velvet hats, and a weekday jacket, that they had managed to change into rapidly, to the house of the lessor of the grinding mill, one of the readers of ‘*HaMelitz*’ and ‘*HaTzefira*’, and they would seat themselves broadly around the table, in the large hall under the ‘*Blitz*’ *Menorah*, which hung down from a hanger in the room, that cast bright light almost ‘too difficult to see.’ A *samovar* stood on the table that hangs from a double rope, providing tea which they would then sip from the bottom, while enjoying the eating of a piece of sugar, and listen to the news. Even R’ Ephraim Lejzor was among the regular visitors in this house, in a Sabbath *kapote* and a scaled hat, set down his ‘*tzibek pipe*’ diagonally on the window sill, seating himself at the head of the table, stroking his white beard, with closed eyes, so as to not lose a single word. There were occasions where he had difficulty understanding the question posed by a questioner, and sought the explanation of the seemingly esoteric between the lines. On the morrow, all of the news is revealed in the *Bet HaMedrash*, each man giving his interpretation, and conclusions.

One of the young men distractedly released his understanding, after he related news in the *Bet HaMedrash* in front of his listeners, that in the ‘*HaTzefira*’ and an uninvited essay from and issue of the

organizer himself, R' Chaim Zelig Slonimsky, known for his scholarship and his thorough knowledge of all facets of the Torah, concerning the permissibility of drinking whiskey made from rye during *Passover*, since it is no more than sweat squeezed out of the grain and there is no prohibition against 'Chametz' put there by sweat. The owner of the essay based his argument on the sentences uttered by 'Rishonim' and 'Akharonim.'

The Jews heard this and were taken aback:

*Hey Timzi, Chametz on Passover? Have you lost your mind? An accused old man. Apostate! May his Name and Memory be forever erased!*

Since then, they added Chaim Zelig Slonimsky, and in the city he had a different name: — Chaim Zelig the *Apostate*. He was called 'the Siren' — just as they called 'HaTzefira,' which became unclean and nullified, inciting and delaying. — The news lost its power of attraction, and the place of 'HaTzefira' was seized by 'HaMelitz', which appears in the capitol city, edited by Alexander Zederbaum, who was a son of the Torah and observant of *Mitzvot*, an articulate user of the *Holy Tongue*, who grew side locks and he wears a *yarmulke*, he resides in [Saint] Petersburg, and they present to him between the powerful people, the spine of the issues of all Israel. [People] stream to him as if they were going to a *Tzaddik*, to separate him from Jews and their troubles, the dispossessed and expelled, soldiers and other military men, and they turn to him in matters of Decrees and riots.

Those of prominence aligned themselves a bit in connection with 'HaTzefira' during the days of Nahum Sokolow, and his work called 'Divrei HaYamim'. Meanwhile, 'HaMelitz' was discontinued partly because of writings that went against the spirit of the masses: [regarding] education and amendments to the faith, long essays on the matter of 'Arukhat Bat Ami' that had no use to the Jews of that area. The 'Divrei HaYamim' of Nahum Sokolow attracted [people] as if they were the whisper of magic. It became known that this Sokolow was a *Hasid* of Kutzk, who enjoyed the singing from the *Tisch* of the *Rebbe*, and he is a son of the Torah, modest, full of scholarship and wisdom, knowing 'seventy languages' like, — to separate him from — King Solomon, in his day.

Booksellers are the ones who spread the history of well-known people. There were book sellers that visited our city from time to time — sad-faced Jews who were taciturn, dressed in worn out clothing over their black kapotes, from which the smell of dust and moss emanated. They would come, along with their sacks straight to the *Bet Hamikdash* during the late afternoon hours, untying their sacks [of books], and organized them on the large table beside the oven: books by the RUM"l, Pentateuchs, prayer books, books of plea, books of mourning the destruction of The Temple (*kinot*), blessings to say after a meal, praises of the *BESH"T*, and his Holy Student R' Chaim Vital. On the side on the bench that was there beside the stove, were tales about deeds that were done, for women in 'Ivri-Teitch' of Yehoshua זצ"נ, Isaac Meir Dick There, they would also display the paintings of the *Great Sages* of the Generation:

Baron Hirsch who sported an extended Ukrainian mustache that was pointed and hardened. Around his neck he wore a white ascot, tall, and tied with a black tie, Baron Rothschild, who had a rounded beard, with a low ascot, covered with a wide tie, [Sir] Moses Montefiore with a black *yarmulke* on his head, whose nose sticks out inside from under his chin.

On the nights, after the *Maariv* Prayer, beside the candle that flickers in the dim light of the *Bet HaMedrash*, Jews approach, stick out their hand to give a greeting, take up a book, ruffle through its pages, and cast a glance diagonally at the glistening paintings as if under lightning, but dimly perceived by candlelight. Around this there radiates a silent but strong silence. Questions, answers, words and sentences abbreviated, and they float about slowly in slight sorrow. From the books they go over to the paintings. And once again, questions and answers on the side: — This is [a portrait] of Baron Rothschild. Our father, his father, R' Meir Anshil, is one of the Jews from our side, he is wearing a shirt with an open ascot, a long *kapote*, and wears a *yarmulke* on his head. He lends money to the nobility and powerful people. The latter remembered his generosity and in several days he became a powerful man of means, one of the richest men in the world, whose doors were knocked on even by kings. He prided himself, and was punished for it, God forbid: — he had a box in his cellar as tall as a man, into which he would enter and leave as if he was in a store, he would sit and count the money and run totals. On one occasion, when an officer of the crown came to him to do business, and R' Meir Anshil, remained inside, between gold and silver the height of a man, the door was closed and surprisingly they left R' Meir Anshil inside, between gold and silver, precious stones, and jewels, and no food. They searched for him, but could not find him. One of his loyal servants who kept his secrets, sent for calling the artisans, they opened the box and found R' Meir Anshil just as he was fainting from hunger...

And here — R' Moshe Montefiore, an advisor to Queen Victoria, who fears God's word and observes *Mitzvot*. He travels in a gilded carriage and never leaves without a *Rabbi* and a *Shokhet*. His home was generously open to paupers, Rabbis and Torah Scholars, who were gathered around his table in his fabulous halls He is perpetually full of worry about Israel, and feared for its fate.

And Baron Hirsch ? This 'Great Man' was poor and sorrowed with regard to raising sons. He could not get 'Nachas' from all of his wealth because of this blow, which God imposed upon him as suffering. He has a single daughter who had a defect. Her mouth, (it should not be on us), looked like the protruded nose of a pig. She would hide this in a miniature apron decorated with diamonds and pearls. This daughter died and he was left childless. Once, he sat at night in his palace in Paris between pieces of gilded furniture, decorated with valuable stones, and tears ran freely from his eyes, and fell on the gilded table:

'Master of the Universe! — the bereaved Baron prayed — Here I am childless, without a daughter or son, my treasures are full of gold and silver, but who will inherit this from me? For whom is all the wealth that you have bestowed upon me?

The *Tana* R' Yossi was revealed to him, who owned vineyards, fields, and cotes for fowl, and he said to him: 'Do not weep my son. There is a wealth held in store for him that owns it, your wealth is for the nation of Israel, they will inherit it all. You will transform the nation of Israel to vineyards and wine cellars, workers of the land, fields and vineyards. Go forth in this, your power, for you have helped Israel, and your final destiny is soon to come.'

On the morrow he retrieved a map of the world and examined it. His finger fell onto Argentina, And it was from then that the settlement of Jews in Argentina began, on his account.

On the walls of many houses beside the 'East' had been drawn, the work of a unknown artist, they hung the portraits of Baron Rothschild, of Baron Hirsch, and of [Sir] Moses Montefiore.

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Extraordinary events stormed through the hearts of fathers and sons.

Nahum Alter Tzyufiss, one of the completely trained *Enlightenment* ones in the city, traveled for a while to Odessa, the city of *Enlightenment*, who, with open arms, welcomes all who come through her gates to slake their thirst for *Enlightenment* and Knowledge. After a while, he returned from there, and was not seen in the street, and he did not meet with his friends. One day, they found him hung in his bedroom. This was on a Fair day, the parents and sisters came out in the early morning hours, as usual, to go to the store, and nobody was left back in the house. They spent the entire day in the store, working hard and busy. At nightfall they returned and found [his] door was locked. They knocked, but received no answer. They broke in through the door and found him cold and frozen. Members of his family went to his funeral, struck [down] by fate, and they received the aggravation of it with love. Afterwards, it was told among the *Enlightened* ones: Nahum became bored of Odessa and its enlightened ones, and from cohorts of single men from the cities of the field, whom he had met in Odessa. He was a man of quiet character and emotional, and sought an inspiration for his soul, Torah and the *Enlightenment*, and not a pointless rebellion that would lead to nothing. He strolled, sometimes like a shadow, being oppressed and with an embittered soul, until he put an end to his life...

There were other incidents that led to a deflation of the soul and disappointment among the youth, an emptiness of the heart and thought. Afterwards, these [individuals] sat in prayer and fasted in order to purify their souls from the scorn of the misguided and ugly world and the process of growing old. After a confession of sins by resorting to self-denial, and regret from the heart and soul, their fathers married them off. After their wedding the Enlightened Ones pursued 'those pigs in regret' using the full extent of the law. Others among them lost their minds and they lived their entire lives as if they were limbs, depleted of life.

Mordechai-Moshe son of Daniel David was a *Maskil* and a *Torah* student, fled the house of his father, a *Hasid* from Tolna, strict in his observance and a wondrous scholar, because of a dispute between them. The father drove his son out of the house. After some time, it was learned that the son went off to Kishinev, to Joseph Rabinowitz, the founder of a class of Israeli Baptists: From him, he searched for a synthesis between the frozen and rigid Judaism, and the measure of compassion and love, influenced by the essential concepts of Baptist Christianity, and not a similar cult, and the worship of the Lord as the *Mitzvah* for a learned men.

It was told: After he poured out in front of Rabinowitz the bitterness of his discussion, he raised his eyes to the Heavens and they swore on the book of the evangelists and the *Tana "kh* that rested on his table: everything is worthless and of no worth...

He also returned after a while with a torn and ripped soul. He did not return to his father's house. He wandered about, and worked as a laborer in the villages. After a number of years he undertook the translating '*The Book of Lamentations*' into Yiddish.

The reaction of the parents towards their sons who were *Maskilim*, after these events, as it was once, being sharp and involved pursuit. The sharpness dulled in part, as if they did not provide oversight. They were hit with the fear of their sons' fleeing and its resulting aggravation, and kept silent, as if their senses had taken off. This was so even though in private, they manifested feeling of sorrow and shame, but they did not reach a stage of revealing this problem to others. Mothers carefully searched for their sons, they followed after every movement, silenced the fathers in case of tension in order to eliminate any anger from the sons.

They [the sons] took advantage of the condition. They buried themselves in books, put forth ideas with the enthusiasm of their *Hasidic* pain. So this became a *Hasidic Haskalah* in the belief of youth in permanence, and in the romance of comparison. The pain of the *Hasidim* that, like their fathers, adhered to the teachings of the *Tzaddik*, believing that their sons believed in the writings of the *Maskil*, and excited themselves sacredly from everything said in the Torah, an explanation of an explanation of the sayings of *Haza "l* of Kalman Schulman, from every 'sentence' in the *Tana "kh* from Yaakov Reifman, from the ideas of Moshe Leib Lilienblum about the Rabbis 'shepherding spirituality', from the poems of Adam the *Kohen* and his friends, who were braided and strung like inner strings, line upon line that fire and encourages the soul. A Light from Above in the world disperses the surrounding darkness.

The *Haskalah* stream on the Jewish street in Russia was not essential. In the large, it ran out in a circle because of fluctuations, and shaking disturbances among the leaders of alien thought. What stood out more effectively was the influence of Russian thought, and its manifestation in its style, song and literature. There were many of these influences also actually going as the thought from the depths of the heart. Movements of this kind that rested in the Russian thought, influenced, in no small degree the direction and development of thinking, in the Jewish street, with the *Haskalah* going first, even if before it was able to absorb all its needs. The first of the *Maskilim* that only now tried to put their foot on the ground of harsh reality, and up till now still being shuffling around like an all-encompassing darkness, sought a staff and stake to hang the Russian thought process on with the ideas of Herzon, Czernikhovsky, Bilinski, Fisriv, and in the revolutionary realism that came from the abandonment of the similar illusions encountered in life. It was not a little that they adapted from their *Batei HaMidrashot* these are the ranks of Jewish knowledge, from the period of the *Haskalah*: *Abraham Yaakov Fafirna*, *Uri Zvi Kovner*, *Moshe Leib Lillienblum*, they stretched out a visit on the literature and poetry, in the romantic darkened twilight, where they also ran into *Ada "m* and *Mickh "al*, and did not stint on Naphtali Herz Weisel. In his treatise 'The Sins of Youth' M. L. Lillienblum rebels against the ossification of the silent lives they impose on their disciples. The sound of new bells was heard: there appeared M. M. Dolitzky, Abba-Constantine Shapiro, אבָּא-קָונְסָטָנִינְטָן שָׁפִירָן. The youths of the field suddenly shook themselves awake like the babies would at the time that the music of the cradle stopped in the middle. They stood up and rubbed their eyes out of much surprise: What now? Moshe Leib Lillienblum who does battle with the Rabbis for the *Haskalah* is moved by the onset of this ideology? That is to say — on himself? Can this really be? He, personally nullifies everything that he has written to date because of the phraseology without reality, well then — what is reality? And if everything must be tangible, of the earth, and an exceptional person that had no choice that he is just a machine of natural laws, that influence the direction of thought — what, then, is the soul within man? The Soul? Emotion? And what about those things that are above nature — Love? Faith? The creation of the world? This is how these questions were launched, they looked for explanations, and showed themselves in investigations out of honesty and

simplicity.

## 17. Micah Joseph Berdyczewski

Micha Joseph Berdyczewski who came to the city after his marriage to the daughter of the wealthy man R' Itzi Feldman, added a new stream to the wandering and rootless intellect. A bachelor and student of Torah, and the ardor of a Sage, the power of his magic and the spiritual influence left their mark on the heart and soul. The bachelors,, who were *Maskilim* reacted beautifully to this influence, that of a teacher and educator. The fencing that limited Y. Aharonowicz , limited his educational influence on the cohort of youth, to which he, himself, belonged.

Aharonowicz himself writes — the educator is not a teacher, and does not teach his understudies the *Torah*, just as it is. He teaches them *how to learn*. What sort of relationship does it have to the Torah, how is one supposed to think about and relate to others.

They would tell of Micah Joseph Berdyczewski that for a fixed time, he was a resident of the city, analogous to a groom sitting at the table of his father-in-law:

He was a gifted young man. [He was] the son of the Rabbi of Mitternovka, a wise man and qualified to formally direct, being both sharp and thoroughly knowledgeable. But strangely, not in the world of law...

What did Itzi Feldman see that he was drawn to make a marriage [for this young man]? His daughter Chana was an alert young lady, a merchant, knowing the business of the store, and ran it like a regular and seasoned storekeeper. Her gifts were given generously, food on his honored table, and an 'inheritance' after his '120 years.' Could he not have found a groom for his daughter who was a 'man among men? And not the son of the *Rabbi*, that among ourselves, saw that he does not know right from left?

It is possible that even the Rabbi of Tirnovka, R' Moshe Aharon, an honest and straight Jewish man, who detested using the rabbinate as a device with which to curry favor, such that he did not want to become a legacy for his son — he saw substance for his bright son to enter into matrimony with the daughter of Itzi Feldman of Bershad, but he is not a *Torah* Scholar, or from a pedigreed family but opposite this, he is rich and the master of many assets and businesses, 'A Tub of Fat.'

Maybe it will be that his son, Micha Joseph, [who became] rich at that time, and would be able to fulfill the *Torah* by expanding on it, a test — of *Torah* and greatness in one place.

Seemingly, this was not the way the son saw the proposition. In essence, he was far from accounting in general. '*There is no accounting for a set world, and there is not a permanent stance, and seizing things by hand.*' It is only through changes and replacements that are in the world, and in life, in the soul and the touching of the soul, that augurs the coming of the '*strong word*,' a relief that is expressed in the *World to Be* consisting of '*Exchange and Conquest*.' It is possible, that here, the signs of the the first of the spiritual struggle birth pangs, between himself and the environment, the demand for changes within himself, when they look like they are required.

The isolation that came to Micha Joseph, to his second nature, stressed the members of his family. He would keep quiet and distance himself from his surroundings. An obscure silence, that could not be explained, enveloped him and spread a silent aggravation around him. He did not smile and he showed no air of pleasantness. Occasionally at a family meal, beside the table, general discussions took place, in order to dissipate the pain. Both answers and non-answers fell from his mouth and occasionally — his delicate face became purified, and his dark eyes emitted gentleness and tenderness. He would enter the store of his father-in-law, the place where his wife spent the entire day. He would converse, ad answer politely, mixing in with his replies heartfelt stories that rang and there were occasions when he was loaned out to travel to the villages that were nearby, to the acquaintances of his father-in-law, acquaint himself to the Jews of the village who leased land, and his daughter's boys, he would enjoy and talk with them, and this experience became evident in the vibrant rhythm of his stories.

But there were few such days, and they were short., because his face would darken, and once again be covered by a darkened thick cloud, sadness. Again, he would sit in his room alone in his personal presence, in front of an opened *Gemara*, *Medrash*, or *Baraitah*. Because of restlessness, he would get up from his place and go to the *Bet-Hamedrash* — the *Bet HaMedrash* of R' Raphael, the steady place for him and his father-in-law. He sat there permanently. There were also youths that sat there and the regular cohort of the *Maskilim* of the *Bet HaMedrash*. Of them, there were many who came there especially to converse with him. He would spend many hours with them in conversations and the discussions excelled in their embracing and interesting analyses. Along with the questioner, he would plumb the depths in order to find an issue in order to direct the thought process to the desired place, and since there was no solution, but out of the analysis, questions sprung up and because of his profuse and complete thoroughness , the dark cloud dissipated being converted into a light of a source of new thoughts.

And it was these impressions that were codified and kept in their freshness to the smallest details in the memories of that cohort even after years. — because of their regard for the preparation of the teacher, and his and the great influence that he had on them.

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In the street, by the *Bet-Hamedrash*, they told [the following]: Itzi Feldman had no *Nachas*. 'He' [referring to Micah Joseph] has already left them [behind]...

On one morning they saw the fully-packed wagon of Joshua the wagon driver, traveling off to Tirnovka. The lady of the house carried a pillow in one hand, and a briefcase in the other, and the at the suggestion of the settlement. Afterwards, the groom Micah-Joseph came out holding a small package in his hand, and with the help of the wagon driver, he sat down in the center [of the wagon]. The family stood on the porch, and the wagon moved.

Days went by full of guessing. There were incidents of being tongue-tied and very joyful. They told of the trip as a messenger to the *Rabbi* in Tirnovka. Letters arrive from then and on. A Jew saw a stranger conversing with Itzi Feldman, and they immediately posed a conclusion: This is certainly about the issue of his wedding. After all, what else could it be? One day, they saw 'him' on the porch, and he then went back inside.

Afterwards, the following was told: After the legal matters and other things before the Rabbi, the sides compromised — to organize the couple in an independent business, in which he, too, will work. The cancellation brings on indolence and random thinking. The best of all businesses — a marketplace store which provides an assured living, and far from [financial] loss, and it is not at a limit of opportunities, with a concern that the store will exist one day, and be gone on the next. The need of market store does not resolve the matter forever. She, Chana, will be the storekeeper, and he, Micah-Yoss'l — that's what they called him in the city — will assist her, and in the fullness of time [he] will specialize in the work, and get used to it.

In the ordered memories of the men of the city concerning Micah-Joseph Berdiczewski this part is also made visible. The store was to be in the walled house of Wolf Ozer, in the heart of the city, between lines of attached stores sharing a common wall. On the flank of the laid-down flat area, as a sort of trap door, merchandise was displayed to be seen — honey, wax candles, and a variety of other kinds of products. Near the door, there were sacks of other products — salt, sugar, and before 'festivities' they had an assistant worker. As could be seen, this work was not absorbed in his mind. According to the memory of the men of the city, his wife was a grumbler, tossing off words into the air [for him to act on.] He was like one who hears, but doesn't hear. Even at his station in the store — he acted as if he was outside of it. Sunk in thought, he would stand alone as if orphaned, looking with his eyes frozen from exhaustion and silence. He would occasionally disappear, and caused accidents when the Fairs were in full swing, merchandise spread out, and the farmers and their wives were forcibly pushed into the narrow door. His wife would hurl words towards him, complaining before her parents. The business was not blessed with any extra success. Irritability and pettiness became more pronounced. Difficult moments reached both sides, sorrow, and suffering of the soul.

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After years, the men of the city, would recollect this period in the life of Berdiczewski. These memories were [also] an ardent partnering in his sorrow and suffering. He was spoken of within an elevated spirit, as if he was 'one of us, who grew up here and was elevated here, with us. This became his forced goal, the way of his suffering, the path to his suffering, 'a change in values'. 'We and they', Maybe healthy, maybe not', these were questions were expressed as a result of his personal fate, and were mixed in with the fate of the entire community. It was in this way that the first of the seeds of literature were manifested, here, the use of '*Bet HaMedrash*' referred to R' Raphael, under his tutelage he sat and learned. It was a symbolic link to that period in his life.

Bershad was a typical Jewish village, and was suspicious of anyone that didn't share its spirit and taste. Also, tensions originating in the house made its way into the street, even if the house had become public property. Whisperings grew and translation of things which caused a smile among a few, or anger and hate from the mouths of others. A Jew sat on the side, in the *Bet HaMedrash* as if sunken in his worries, but he cocks an ear and listens.

Through investigation, they found that he — Berdiczewski — had been educated in the Yeshiva of Volozhin. This made the matter clear, and there is no room for speculation: He is a '*Litvak*' and that is all. In the city, there was a special relationship to '*Litvaks*'. Tales circulated about the *Litvaks* that they are '*Son of the Torah*' but that they were 'casual' when it came to performing '*Mitzvot*' and

demonstrating a ‘*fear of the Heavens*’.

The father in-law of Micah-Joseph was a simple Jewish man, who doesn’t distinguish much about the issues of the *Torah*. He watched over the faithful with the cognizance of the congregation, he heard what was being whispered around him, and his spirit fell. Difficult, hard and sharp disputes, broke out in his house.,

There were difficult moments in the life of Berdiczewski — a man of an emotional and sentimental character, replete with traditions, far from envy and the instigation of sorrow and use of insults to the community, with a roiling heart, he searched among the things that surround him. He was seized by feeling of regret in regards to his family, from whom he is distant, and, as a result, this punishes him, and causes him suffering. After years, revelations of this became visible in how he expressed this in his creations on ‘*Sin and Its Punishment*’. Sin that comes from the impetus to achieve an elevated goal. A sin which is a sort of ‘*Sabbath of Robbery*’. Or a sin that comes because he does not see things as a result of changes that happened during his life because of spiritual fears and the onset of sorrow, that is not within free choice, but from the judgement demanded by the circumstances. Who can explain Justice and the Law?

These were subjects for discussion with his friends, coming out of his spiritual suffering. At their core these were – the sin of generations and the oppression of generations. In general – discussions spread out to encompass the perception of the will of the individual. However, everyone felt that which was hidden, inside of what could be perceived, and the secret of the creativity of life that were in his words.

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On one day in the summer, he went over to the village of Szumilov, to the house of Baruch Fabrikant, the lessor of the grinding mill, in the form of being a teacher to his children. There are those who say that, linked to this, was a definite intent when he was invited to the village. It was the intent of Baruch Fabrikant, a *Maskil* and educated, from his familiarity with the relatives of the relatives of his son-in-law, and he will influence him to have him return to a good state. Another opinion was — that Fabrikant, who was familiar with the tense relationships in the family of his friend, he who invited him with his foreknowledge,

Micah-Joseph relaxed a little bit. He was able to shake off the burdensome and oppressive atmosphere. The ambiance of the village, the silence and quiet, boulders at the tops of the tall mountains all around, at whose feet, the River Bug flows, dividing the village into two separate settlements — Szumilov to the right and Czernytko to the left – partly relaxed his spirit, and gave an agenda to his soul. On the wondrous Ukrainian nights, he would sit in silence, absorbed from within, listening to the sound of the water beside the dam of the grinding mill, that divide into a set of waves to the distance until the regional capitol Bratislav and further. This environment served him as a base to describe the poetic personality of R’ Nachman of Bratislav. This leads to the drawing of a painting called ‘*Across the River, and the like*’, that matured in this period of time.

Was this the case because of the tranquility of his soul?

During the first days, he felt a bit of rest. A spiritual reaction after storms and winds that came before it. But he had a stormy and fumbling period, rising up and then coming back lower. He sought a solution, pursued cures. He was a believer and an apostate in one, believing in apostasy just as he believed in his faith. He yearned for a secular environment, while he himself was replete with sanctity and spirituality. Rebelling and raising himself against the old and the mature, and spoke highly of the radiance of the old, against the evidence of its faults. ‘*We and Them*’ — A path to contemplation and the fluttering of the soul detached from character. and an image torn out of its roots, seeking a point to grab onto.

On *Yom Kippur Eve*, Baruch Fabrikant got ready to attend synagogue. Berdiczewski remained in his room, not wanting to accompany him. This was a breaking point. Their connections were cut. ‘I want to be faithful to myself,’ he said.

On the following day, at noon, Baruch Fabrikant entered his room to visit him. He encountered a strange scene: Berdiczewski was sitting on the bed, wrapped in his prayer shawl, In front of him was an opened *Mahzor*, and he was crying...

Regarding this *Yom Kippur*, from Odessa, he wrote to his good friend in Bershad: ‘*I did not eat, and I didn't fast, all I did was drink coffee.*’

At the end of the summer of 1887 he traveled with Baruch Fabrikant to Odessa, after an exchange of letters with business people that he was connected with.

In time, his leaving the country became known.

## 18. The *Sovatznik* Tractate

In essence, the expression ‘leaving the country’ was a result of importance. Something from an alien land and strong, that not every person had the privilege of entering there. Among the ranks of the *Maskilim* this was an issue worthy of endless praise, of discussions and explanations. The Elders and close friends of the family, chanted after him, an example — he ‘boiled his pot’. His ‘voice’ in matters of the faith and fear of the Heavens and all of these issues, are not appropriate for a Torah Sage. The *Maskilim* interpreted this as follows: An image that longs for tradition, far from envy and avoiding the possibility of causing anyone sorrow. Even when he took to criticism of the offerings of [past] generations, there was nothing in it that represented any critical assault in faith or tradition. This was an internal struggle he was having with himself, a struggle of the reason and the intellect.

He was philosophical, and sharp, and even regarding the extremes that were in this thinking there is a thread of geniality and good will.

There was an awakening among the young. They were pulled after him as if by magic. The flew on the wings of comparison – and stumbled on cold facts. Is it possible to go in this direction without the broad and deep ideas of his? They were taken in by study: the *Talmud* and its commentaries, Rabbinical literature, the wisdom of the nations and their literature. In days, the essential character of the *Haskalah* took on a different light: perhaps this came as a result of the educational and cultural influence of Berdiczewski, and possible because of the influence of the Russian literature of that time? Deeply

penetrating study, in order to broaden the thinking and its depth, and the desire to indulge in self-education by opening up the intellect and the traditional recognition — a quandary that sharply raised the sharpness in the *Bet HaMedrash* of the ranks of the intelligentsia in Russia at that time in connection with the place of intelligence in this reformed group. At the root of the matter what is the basis of intelligence? Does an academic background by itself earn a person access to the higher levels of intelligence or is it possible to reach it also by a traditional development, examination of the soul and the recognition of intelligence. One of them wrote: 'Not the title of 'Professor' and not the title of 'Doctor' obtain the privileges of intelligence in the life of this group.' It is possible — one of the Russian socialists writes, Dobrolyubov — to find more humanitarian orientations and intelligence among the simple folk than from someone with an academic title.'

This point of view spread through the literature, in Hebrew newspapers under the heading of '*Enlightenment*' to reform the lives of the group, belief in originality, and justice in the human world according to the vision of the Prophets that 'The Land will be filled with understanding.' A belief in the sincerity of the will of the government to extract the Jews from 'darkness' to light as one of the signs of progress towards which Russia is going to. Writers like Y. L. Lavado, G. Burgrub, Pruzhansky and others wrote with ardor on progress and enlightenment 'as if they were the waters of an enchanted sea.' And this was the same for the revolutionary writers of the previous generation — Uri Kovner, A. Y. Papirno, פַּפִּירְנוֹ and Dr. Yitzhak Kaminer, who sanctified war against being flowery [in writing] and poetry, and the romance that is in life, and Abraham son of Gotlober who gave battle to *Hasidim* who rebelled against the 'light', deluded people of comparison, the residents of the Jewish Pale of Settlement who were divided up according to their appearance, into two categories that were different: those of *Rebels of the Light*, and the *Enlightenment*. The old generation who are 'all guilty' that believes in meaningless hallucinations, and cannot grasp the new concepts of the progressive world, and the generation that is enlightened that is 'completely pure' has sunken its faith in a vision of the future and going toward a new Jewish world.

Enlightened people came out of these cohorts and into the towns of the field that were dubbed 'The Youth of Silk' people with thoughts and the outline of ideas, full of longing and hopes for lofty ideals, that circulate in their little town with wondering eyes and wrinkled foreheads, and in all of their scattered and busy appearance and widespread views, a stopped-up fountain that was also unknown.

These young men, depending on the table of their fathers-in-law, were taken by lofty ideas at home, in their families and among ordinary Jews, certainly disregarding every Doctor and diploma holder. Polished and glorious in their clothing, wearable white ascots that were straight black ties, and they would stroke their beards which had barely begin to grow; They speak highly of the world and its people who 'throw around sentences and the sayings of *Haza' L* as well as the things and proverbs and things said by the *Sages* of their time. By themselves they were masters of articulation, and knowledgeable to arrange their ideas in writing and in the spoken word, even after they had left the table of their fathers-in-law and were independent wage earners busy and tied up with marketing, a store, and with brokerage and mediating — they were drawn to the newspaper and the book. To peer at, and then get more involved, at every opportunity at home or outside they are prepared for conversations and the discourse of *Sages*, even at the peak of marketing work, from a spiritual force to express themselves, their ideas and theories.

A few of them gained notoriety in the city where they were known as *Sages*, learned in the Torah and masters of the *Tana* "kh and' general knowledge, they were taken up with arrogance, and recognition of themselves, and in doing so, they crossed the permitted boundary: they allowed themselves to criticize matters that were considered sacred, to reveal their unaccepted sources, attributed to spoiled leaders that were clothed among the people in an aura of sanctity and tradition, and they derided the dignity of the active community members and community leaders, wealthy men, merchants and usurers. And this — this out of a demand for a high level of truth and justice, and as advocates for human development, and so it invested every *Maskil* and enlightened person the right to advocate our departure from that which is old, with the hope of being able to rectify every shortcoming,. And to remove any pitfalls from the road leading to the development of the lives of Jews in Russia. Every *Maskil* looked upon himself as if he were a priest serving in sanctity.

The *Maskilim* especially put their message to the young generation, — this is the raw material that still has to be extracted in the printed word according to their taste. The always was a subject of stormy conversations. The *Maskilim* in the city turned to the 'Group for Dissemination of *Enlightenment*', and its leadership, Baron Ginsberg, in a long letter written in articulate paragraphs on the state of the younger generation and the inadequacy of their education, which is delegated to unenlightened teachers and the *Hasidim*, and ended with an elevated statement to show respect for those engaged with enlightenment in the capitol city:

Who are like unto you in the annals of wisdom, drenched  
In the esoterica of the *Sages*, who are learned and understanding.  
Are we to turn to Tolna or Skvira  
To Chernobyl or Sadegura?

An officer appeared from [St.] Petersburg thin, with a substantial mustache, a pointed beard, who visited the classrooms, and spoke to the teachers in Russian. At first, he was thought to be as some sort of a 'gentile' in a Sabbath *kapote*, they took off his hat and he was left with a velvet *yarmulke*, they became mixed up and replied in 'gentile jargon' mixed in with a panoply of Yiddish words. For days, after the visit of the officer, they released the information about *Melamdim* who were '*Haredim*,' who charged them with being able to identify knowledge of Russian and mathematics.

Suspicions grew: is this not the hand of the '*Hevra*' and is he not an emissary to uncover inadequacies in the middle?

One of the usurers was called to the '*Pristav*' which he 'avoided' making an appearance several times. The issue came to him about hidden caches, and until we got rid of him, the 'business owners' who were usurers, and the where the fright of the '*Pristav*' fell upon them, for how did he know their secrets in such detail?

Is not the hand of 'those' who constantly speak about these 'businessmen,' and 'moneylenders' in this?

On a Friday, one of the borrowers came to the usurer to dispense the money of the week, and as was customary this person smoothed out his beard, curled his side locks and finished [as follows]:

— Chaim, are you listening? I want you to extend this obligation, with God's help, to next week. I personally, need the money —

— Hey there, R' Levi Hona, who like him knows that the worth of the money I borrowed was sunk into merchandise. — The fairs are flawed and ungodly, and the gentiles, let them be an atonement for all Israel, they do not pay until after 'the crop [is reaped]'. — The money, thank God will not be consumed...

Why does 'not consumed' belong here? I don't suspect you, God forbid, and I am not afraid for even one minute. I just need the money, money is not chaff... and not like all the other businessmen, who invite me to the *Pristav*, who your son, and his like, stir him up in their 'gentile' language...

In the *Bet HaMedrash*, before the *Mincha* prayers, a bookish Jew sits and looks at those going and coming to the houses of the wealthy and usurers. One of his legs is folded under him, and the second is elevated on a bench. He engages the Jews he recognizes in conversation, and incidentally offers him a bit of advice" —

— Why is it, Yoss'l that all of these issues bring you only enemies, and is nothing put upon you and your family to rectify the world? Of what difference is it to you if everything will remain the way it was? Eh?

Fathers were in a difficult position. They could not impose their authority on their sons, In the street the talk is of anger and resentment, and there is no doubt that this had an impact on business. In the house there is tension, held back in secret, and is it possible for a simple Jew, to engage in conversation with knowledgeable and witty people? So they kept still. They look after their small children who are still in their control, and their authority is still on them. They watched over them with excess zeal, and cajole them, saying that they should adhere to the tradition they hear.

But all this was of no use. When they grew up, they were attracted to the lore of their big brother and not to the tradition of their father. They were charmed by the conflict of the strong versus the weak, of the Elders, and the heart demanded action, to exit the special preserve of childhood to the preserve of the masses. They were not old enough yet, tied to the rules of being minors, with their silly stories that caused the onset of conversations and scandals.

Stories about a certain zealous *Melamed* spread about, who was injured by an '*Uradnik*' for a demand that he bear witness and at every opportunity he would pour out the bitterness of his conversations about the '*Hevra*'. On one occasion, he fell asleep beside the table and leaned on his elbow while the hairs of his beard were spread out on the table. The students went and glued his beard to the table with wax. Once they inserted pins into the shoes of a teacher of Tradition, who sat in the *Bet HaMedrash* and was learning. At one *Hasid*, a usurer, they took out the substance of his Prayer Shawl in the *Bet HaMedrash* and the '*Khok L'Yisrael*' that he was in the habit of reading after prayers, and in its place, they put in a book for those that had been rendered null and void, and when the one we've mentioned finished his prayers, he stuck his hand into the sack of his Prayer Shawl, and as an act of Satan, he removed not the '*Khok*', but a book declared to be invalid for us, God forbid, which had square letters. The *Hasid* became panicked, spit, and immediately threw the book on the ground, and he stepped all over it with his feet:

a scandal broke out accompanied by cursing and bad language.

The Tolna *Kloyz* was full of battles with the *Maskilim*. They had not forgotten the incident with the man from Tolna who took his Rabbi to court in the presence of gentiles. They used to lend with interest, both to the *Melamdim* and ordinary *Hasidim*, and to the regular worshipers in the *Kloyz*, where they were attacked by the *Maskilim*. Among the top leaders of the camp of ‘*Shomrei HaDat*’ was Benzion Tabacznik, a thin Jewish man, who had a shaggy beard, straight side locks, into which Sheba (?) had thrown close to his temples, and sly twinkling eyes. His speech was moderate and clear, out of the treating his beard carefully, mostly being absorbed in thought, he was a shrewd Jew, perceptive, and as great his perception was, so was his envy. It was told that he was taken by the *Haskalah*, but in time he sobered up from the contents of the ‘invalid’ books and after his father in-law joined the *Hasidim* and became a fanatic. He had one sobriquet to insult every *Maskil*, with the nickname — dog. For this purpose, he would extract some sentence or remark by *Haza "L*, insert it into his conversation, with which he could skewer his opponent.

One of the young men – from the *Maskilim* – was compelled to travel to a village to take care of business during the period of ‘*shiva*’ he was observing because of the death of his father, and the local *Dayan* gave him permission for the trip. They told this to Benzion Tabacznik. In a few days, he encountered the young man in the street, and asked him: ---

Tell me young man, according to the *Halakhah*, [you] *Maskil* who is enlightened, is ‘Ivan’ in the village unable to wait until after the ‘*shiva*’ period? You are liable to be lashed according to the explicit law in ‘*Sha'arei Tshuva*’: -- ‘He who does not take off his shoes during the period of mourning is, by judgement to receive lashes’ ... and what is ‘*Sha'arei Tshuva*’ to a *Maskil*?’...

‘R’ Benzion... ‘the young man opened with his reply.

‘I know. I know all of this — he was stopped in the middle — the sacred text is explicit in the Book of Isaiah — ‘but the dogs of arrogant soul did not know of ‘*shiva*.’ About the investigation, but ‘*shiva*’...

On one occasion, R’ Benzion encountered one of these youths, who was holding on to a book near the house where they lived. The youth’s father was named ‘Abraham’ — Abraham Krupnik, a simple man who owned a gristmill, an honest man who took pride in his son, the *Maskil*, in that he was literate in the Torah and literate. R’ Benzion stopped the son in the street and asked him how was his father. Meanwhile he took the book away from him, looked at the frontispiece riffled some pages, and wrinkled his nose, and he began to speak as if to himself: — ‘the *Medrash* tells us: and God blessed Abraham with all,’ Our patriarch Abraham had a daughter, whose name was ‘*B'Khol*’ and also Abraham Krupnik your father, God blessed him with the word ‘*B'Khol*’ — a ‘son’ whose name has the numerical value of ‘dog.’

R’ Benzion would sneak after the youths outside the city, beside the Christian Church, where they would stroll during twilight time, and sit down there to have conversations. R’ Benzion would sneak up and be behind their backs, and using the notes of the Psalms: — ‘And they will return in the evening, and they will be like dogs and circle the city.’

His companions warned him, the members of his family shouted, but he was not swayed. This was a sort of sacred responsibility in his eyes, even if he made a burnt offering in sorrow and shame. He would also find a way to instigate a dispute between the fathers and the sons.

The patience of the youths ran out, they gathered and decided to react to Tabacznik's publicizing a parody in the style of the *Talmud* called '*Masekhet Subocznik*' – similar to his family name Tabacznik but with a variation: Subocznik – which was similar to his family name of Tabacznik, whose Russian translation— means 'the wailing of dogs', giving back one for one: What are you among dogs, we are also among dogs. This took place at the time that two satirical tractates appeared that were similar: '*Masekhet Amerika*', '*Masekhet Purim*', '*Masekhet Karten*' [playing cards]. The members of this 'tractate' revealed a competence in the real fundamental *Talmud*: fluency and acuity. The 'tractate' was divided into the *Mishna* and *Gemara*, with additions of the explanations offered by *Rash"i* and '*Tosafot*' using the *Talmudic* style: [Examples of *Talmudic* aphorisms]. And there was no lack of exaggerations in the form of 'Rabba bar-bar-Khona' by changing names and adhering to the issues of that place and time. In my memory here are a few excerpts of this '*Masekhta*<sup>41</sup>' [I cannot do justice to translating the two satirical excerpts that the writer documents as examples of the satire the *Maskilim* imposed on R' Benzion. Interested parties should either have, or acquire, a significant facility with *Talmudic* language]

— JSB

Joseph Aharonowicz was among the creators of this 'Tractate.'

## 19. Joseph Aharonowicz

At that time, Joseph Aharonowicz came to the city from a village, like many young men, because of their fear of their parents, and the terror induced by the rural surroundings. He quickly stood out and took a position in the ranks of the *Maskilim* who had heard of him previously, and a few who knew him personally — as one who has a good grasp of the *Tana"kh*, *Talmud*, and the Russian [language]. Those who knew him connected him through making of friends that did not stop during the years.

— In one of his letters to his sister in America from the 30's onward, he inquired about one, Kalman Francz, who came from a village as he did, and who was his friend and student from that period of time. About others — like: Hirsch Leib Zaltzman, Nahum Greenberg — he would ask about them in detailed conversations, when the occasion arose.

Aharonowicz was born in a village. His initial development was in that village. He did not know what a *Heder* was, the antics of little children, and the noise of the street. He got his education from his father. Most of the youth of Israel, in that period, had their development occur in a path that was not straight, which left a generation not straight. With Aharonowicz these generations were exceedingly sharp, that made themselves visible, and manifested conflict between life in the village and the life of those in closed homes. In a rural environment in the bosom of nature, and a *Hasidic* air that was silent and

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<sup>41</sup> The Aramaic version of '*Masekhet*.'

backward, and the dark shadows in the house of the rural *shokhet* who stemmed from the Bershad *Hasidim*, with elevated emotions such as ‘you have chosen us’ versus the ‘creator’ of the gentiles that surrounded them, his father was modest, reticent, and was the victim of a permanent state of melancholy, to the point that the occasional smile that appeared on his face were hidden by clouds of worry. A word or two ‘at’ traditional and Jewish, conveyed most of what he said. He was suspected of harboring arrogance, because of the recognition of his sense of self-worth that was spread all over. In essence, he was a wholly-formed Jew, a man of the people, possessing an aching but delicate soul that was given to groaning from its suffering.

The son was like his father. Threads of his being were intertwined with the inherited sense of suffering. He also held the entire community in personal high esteem, beginning from ‘*you have chosen us*.’ In essence he was a man of an emotional heart, and a heartfelt simplicity, with the ardor of the outlook of a *Halutz* towards work and deeds. The feeling of ‘you have chosen us’ always tied to ‘sanctify us through your *Mitzvot*.’ This is the product of an emotional institution that is not within the ambit of free selection as a ‘*Haredi*’ Jew who sees before him the Eternal Holy Name – ‘*I consider God to always be in front of me*.<sup>42</sup>’

From this special corner, it is possible to evaluate his works during the period of his life, that in the large, were not oriented to a fixed order, but rather those with a character and trend as generated by the times: — A deep concern for his parents, to the point of self-sacrifice, his educational-cultural work among his colleagues in Bershad, among the Jewish soldiers during the time he served in the military, among *Halutzim* like the ones in Brody, and afterwards in the land of Israel: — As an agricultural worker in *Ness Tziona*. He worked in the kitchen of those who worked in the street, he was the Leader of the first cooperative in the Land; He organized ‘*HaPoel Ha ’Tza ’ir*’, he was the founder and leader of the Poalim Bank, and for all of these — in his constant anxiety to assure he fulfills every *Mitzvah* without exception, this was out of an anxious adherence, the test of — ‘If a *Mitzvah* comes to your hand do not let it be unattempted, and a constantly present prayer on his lips: — ‘..*And purify our hearts so we can serve You in Truth*.’ ...

Joseph Aharonowicz was born in the year 1874, approximately, to his father, Simcha, the *Shokhet* of the village of Kirivko. His father could not find a way to make a living in this city, or to purchase some sort of ‘business’ as was the rule, because he had a large family. In the years of the 80's the owners of land – the nobility – raised a factory and flour mills that were on their property, and this was the new forms of work were created that attracted many of the Jews of the surroundings to the villages.

The creation of meager Jewish settlements in the villages raised the need for a *Shokhet*, and created opportunities to make a living for all the ‘*Holy Vessels*’ outside of the boundaries of the city. R’ Simcha *Shokhet* went over from the city to the village.

For his entire life, R’ Simcha was a pressured pauper, burdened with caring for a large family comprised of 10-12 souls, and as his family grew, so did the extent of his poverty, a *Haredi* Jew faithfully observing his faith, being careful in observing *Mitzvot* whether they were simple or difficult, always carrying a

<sup>42</sup>

The English rendition of the Hebrew phrase that is often affixed to the top of a Holy Ark.

Book of Psalms so as not to squander time by not praying. He educated his children in this spirit, especially Joseph, a precious child who was reticent and modest, but possessing a good mind and was able to grasp things with ease.

His house was small and narrow in the middle of the village, having neither any trees or a field, and it stood out between the other houses. In the house everything was enveloped in a spirit of sadness and mourning. From the *Mezuzah* that stands out at the entrance with a black symbol – to commemorate the [Temple] destruction, to the faded furniture and was notable for its age, up to the deep walls; it appeared that the whole place was running with tears. Everything was circumscribed by things being forbidden: it is forbidden to speak, it is forbidden to laugh, and it was forbidden to play games the way children did. Simply speaking – according to the behest of R' Raphael – leads you into committing sin, so much more so – laughter and the play of children that, to begin with, were in the area of sin. And children were also tasked with being small Jews. His wife, Sarah, the housewife who for her whole life was consumed with nursing babies and being busy with handling children, survey with an alert look, to make sure they will be going in the path of the Torah and Mitzvot, with a covered head and a *Tallit Kattan* with *Tzitzit*. She also helps with the upkeep of the house; in a corner of the house she ‘keeps’ a bit of a village factory, toys as well as pins and ribbons for the girls of the village.

Even R' Simcha himself, was compelled to seek out, apart from the role of being a *shokhet*, additional side business in order to support his large family: He served as the Leader of the *Musaf* Service at the village *Minyan* during the *High Holy Days*, Blowing the *Shofar*, and Reader of the Torah, he teaches *Mishnayot* at *Yahrzeit* occasions, reads the *Kaddish*, conducts wedding ceremonies, handle the sale of *Chametz*, and is involved with issues of clarification.

On Sunday morning he went out to practice his trade as a *shokhet*, to all of the neighboring villages, loaded down a bit with merchandise that his wife had given to him for sale or to trade.

More than once, one could encounter R' Simcha in his network of paths going from village to village, dressed in a black *kapote* and on which there was a torn gray cloth. The edges of the *kapote* stick out from under its edges. He carries a large white umbrella in one hand, and two sacks in the other hand, one for plucked feathers and the other for the merchandise from his wife's store. He would get an invitation from one of the village Jews who would give him a ride in his wagon. Recognized gentiles were not refused the right to take the ‘*Rabbin*,’ who was tired and exhausted, with drippings of sweat running down his face in a thin stream, from under his silk hat. And together with his son they went to the Jewish *balebatim* in the village to slaughter the fowl, and Joseph helped him by plucking the feathers. When Joseph got a bit older, his father took him [along] to carry the sacks, he was a swarthy young man, modest, having deep black eyes, and curled side locks, and a large ‘*Tallit Kattan*’ that stuck out from the bottom of his jacket onto his tattered trousers. He stood ashamed beside his father, chewed on his *tzitzit* out of mental distraction, his black eyes full of lightning and raised to look at the distance. After cajoling and entreating him – and sometimes scolding from his father – he would receive a ‘tip’ that the housewives of these homes and they were sent on their way, and he would sing from the *High Holy Day* prayers for the men who rewarded him with an extra gift of money, and a pinch on the cheek.

From his childhood on, Joseph absorbed the sorrow and poverty and state of constant need in a house

that was full of hungry children, dressed in ragged shirts, and having dirty faces. The poverty was more pronounced against the varied backdrop of the lush, fertile countryside, fields wide with grain, rows of vegetables, white houses and broad yards and the cows that chew their cud, replete with milk, and fruit trees whose branches bend toward the ground from the weight of the fruit they bear. Perhaps, it is here that his spiritual tendencies weakened, to begin with, because of the compulsions of two permissions adjacent to one another, and from here also, the thirst to work the *Land* when he came to Israel as a sort of ideal and echo of his childhood years of that period, The taste of the emotion, that possessed him all the time when he would compare, out of a longing envy, that revealed itself substantively.

The intense passion of the parents, to see the boy [develop into] a *Haredi* Jew that observes the traditions of the true Judaism, continues to grow. It was necessary to send him to the Jewish surroundings, which was far from the gentile surroundings that eats at the souls of the children of Israel who were true to their faith. But how to do this? For his assistance, even at home, was necessary. As a result he remained at home under the aegis of his mother, the father continuing to learn Torah with him, and the mother adds in conversation about *Mussar* and fear [of the Heavens], through her reading of '*Tzena U'Re'ena*.' '*Shevet Mussar*', '*Kav HaYashar*', the lauding of the *BShE* "T, done in '*Ivri Teitch*,' and from the eyes of his mother, faithful and fluttering, he created images of comparison of a different world. [This took place] far from the quiet white houses, with the spirit of the field that surrounds them.

Joseph became a *Melamed* in the villages. Like his father, he finds his way from village to village with a Prayer Book done in large letters that light up the eyes, and to inject Torah to the children of Israel: 'blessings', '*Modeh Ani*', '*Kiddush*' and a bit of writing and reading. He is a teacher and he also teaches himself. He borrows books and newspapers from the literate lessors and their adherents, he enters and leaves their houses, fills them with conversations about '*Khibat Tzion*', settlements in Israel, world news and Judaism, these were he first seed sown and then after some time, became imbedded in the vibrating memories of that Dark Period.

In the chapter of this time I saw Aharonowicz for the first time, on one Sabbath morning, at the *Minyan* held in my father's house, the lessor of the mill in [our] village, not being far from his own village. [He was] a thin youth, of a slightly larger height than average, and black eyes, half-closed, wearing a long alpaca jacket, that goes down beneath his knees, and wearing a '*kashkat*' that had eight sides, from under it, you could see his two curly black side locks, and he stands beside the reading table, reading the blessings of the '*Haftarah*' with the feelings of happiness that come with the discharge of a *Mitzvah*, and he reveled in it, and conveyed it to the hands of its owners, and to hear the compliments about his pleasant side locks which glisten in his black eyes where there was a light coquettish smile. When he would leave, I remember that my father told me this: '*If you will be a good boy and excel, I will turn you over to learn with Yoss'l-Simcha-Shokhet's, so that you will be able to read the *Maftrir* like him.*'

Aharonowicz reached our city a few years after the departure of Berdiczewski and he did not know him then, he had seen him once during his childhood – this how he told this, and after a time – when my father entered the *Great Bet-HaMedrash* – the *Bet-HaMedrash* of R' Raphael – and they asked him the meaning of the words, *Yoreh*, *Malkosh*, and *Geshem*. Aharonowicz was considered as one of the ardent followers of Berdiczewski, who was continuous in his praise. He secures a place for himself among the persona and raises him to the level of Educator of the Generation, the bearer of ideas of movement and

renewal: – *He educated us to criticize our own ideas and the ideas of the general people, and to retreat to the rear to avoid the accounting of the general world. He also forbade us to sit in one place, and ordered us to seek, and constantly seek.*

It becomes clear that this orientation appeared in the soul of Aharonowicz. The absence of silence had captured his soul, passions that did not diminish for a different world, large and generous, that does not harbor any permanence or a defined accounting by the masses. He travels to Odessa, and returns immediately. It is possible that he encountered difficulties both physical world and spiritual, that gave him no surcease. Something had disappeared in terms of his hesitation. He engages in giving Direction and learning, works in accounting at the owner of the mill, and on the Sabbath he travels to his parents in the village, to cheer them up in their loneliness.

His friends and companions sensed some sort of change came over him with his return from Odessa. In his conversations with them, he stepped away from those of spiritual emotion and dramatically went over to the writers and their heroes, who were not reluctant to confront fanatic faces in their lives such as J. Lillienblum, Berdiczewski, Abba (Constantin) Shapiro, and he praised Uriah Kovner, and the Russian, Tolstoy. His conversation settled on the heroes of the tale of ‘Anna Karenina’, the first of the heroes, Anna, the second hero in the ranking, Levin a liberal man of the fields, who opposes the assets of the common people, and yet he also guarded his assets with stinginess and envy. And from this conversation – he went over to Jewish education loaded with searching and revolutionary revisionism. According to his friends, the skills of a teacher became visible, as if he was getting ready to stand for the final-examination to qualify for a simple teacher’s license. On of the affectionate subjects of his was: ‘*Khibat Tzion.*’

The year of required military service draws near. His father attempted, with all his might to get him excused from military service, but nothing seemed to help. Joseph was tested and taken into the military. According to my memory, he served in Berdichev, a Jewish city vibrant with and brimming with a community movement. He entered the section for youth that needs to be trained. The days — days of the first Zionist Congresses. Expectations and visions. But for him he has the will to finish his training in order to be eligible for a teacher’s license, with the help of his close friends from the senior class in the Gymnasium. We do not know if he stood for the test or not, or that he served and was hurt. It would seem, that the tendency to be a Director got to him unnoticed. In the barracks, among the Jewish soldiers, he filled the position of education and culture, he taught them to read and write, chapters of history and *Tana”kh*. This tendency stood out in his national community work, and his work in journalism as the editor of ‘*HaPoel HaTza’ir*’. The teacher and educator published remarks in the local papers, where his affinity became clear.

After serving four years and then some, in the military, he returned to the home of his parents, to the village, the white houses, the vegetable gardens and yards. Again, they did not possess the magic he recalls from his childhood days. Something was rumored during this time, that they were moved to other territories. He returned with the sense of a clean heart, as did most of the boys of Israel did upon their return from military service, from the monotonous life in the barracks, to a life of activity and worry. The worries about the family were added to this life, a source of personal insult, in the village and the

surroundings. The transfer to the city was tied to a variety of difficulties. There was a need to lash these to the yoke of making a living to support the needs of the house. How? By teaching? Accounting? He failed in competing, and the supply exceeded the demand. It appears that even his heart didn't want to pursue such opportunities. Some sort of a strong feeling that was in his soul, drove him to more simple lines of work, that demanded bodily strength, he bought a horse and wagon, and together with a partner became an itinerant merchant. He would travel to Fairs from one town to another, from village to village and buy grain for the merchants and millers. One of them was Yeshayahu Drokhinsky, who owned a millet-grinding business, who lent him the initial monies needed to set up this business.

How long did this way of life continue? Was there not another line of work that was culturally-Zionist during this time? After many years, the people of the place reminded him of being a 'Zionist' dedicated as well to minutes of conflict that was difficult and hard. During this time, he traveled a few times to Odessa. He would enter and leave the cadres of the real Zionism. After a while, during the period of his Zionist work as a *Halutz* in Brody, he would turn to writing a letter to Menachem Usishkin in Odessa, with the complaint about the Zionist institution in Vienna, a complaint that was not possible because it would not be recognized by the previous people.

The Russo-Japanese War broke out. He and his brother who is of draft age stand in the danger of being drafted, and the parents are full of terror. But for Aharonowicz, this was an opportunity to realize his vision [of the future]. One night, he secretly goes out accompanied by the tears of his mother and the blessings of his father, and heads for the Austrian border, sneaks, across the border and reaches Brody, his first lodging place on his way to the Land of Israel. He is followed afterwards by his brothers and sisters: Nahum, Yaakov, Abraham, Tzipa, Chana and Malka. With the support of the office of immigration, he transfers them very quickly to America, though he, himself remained in Brody. Here – for the first time in his life – a broad field of work. Anole, with no one to vouch for him, without the worries of earning a living and being busy, with all of his flaming ardor, he turns himself to the work in the center of youth, he leads groups of *Halutzim*. He educates and teaches, he found the young institution called '*Halutzei Zion*' for making *aliyah*, for work by one's self, and to the preparation of one's body. The Land of Israel is in need of men and working hands, and every Jew is important for the Land of Israel.

## 20. The Journalistic Work of Aharonowicz

This trend – the general in relation to the specific and the place of that detail in the settlement and development of *The Land*, -- is underscored in several of his publicist sayings, sometimes not explicitly, but indirectly and between the substance. Every detail that supports the settlement in *The Land*, is a world unto itself and it is not permitted to deride it. He proves that all of those who are immersed in community and personal idealism and do not feel their responsibility to the individual. This thought was especially felt in his writings about Moshe Beilinson, '*Words that are ready to be said, but were not said:*' –

We do not even know the least of what has been given to the human being to know if we wanted it this way. The will and need to know the human being has entirely been taken away from us, all of the details., and to examine it. We are immersed up to our throats in community idealism, general personas,

and if the single individual is suffered, and that ordinary people are not perceived of having any value to us. He is entitled to attention, but only to the extent that it will be possible to squeeze out of him what appears to us as significant, on examination, are important to those ideals that we are working towards. The extraction of any worth that is [truly] his, and not only the worth that we have found in others, who are more comfortable with this squeeze than he, because if so, for us he is nothing more than a prison... and we have already reached that far, that millions of people will be led like sheep to slaughter in the name of the sanctity of those ideals, as an example, of the community that does not know who, or for what purpose or why? And we do no good by this. The ancient worship of idols... and who knows how many human sacrifices [were made], they know less than Beilinson, of the daily human sacrifices we make as a result of his complete and pathetic [allegiance] to the detail, to his like and to his blind faith that the sublime human ideals compel us to this pathetic state.

In comparison to this – he writes concerning one of the scions of his city, Y. Z. (Yeshayahu Zherdnowski) that he is a widowed combatant, one of the many ‘the owner of a store to sell tar on the main street, a community activist who delves in all issues [both] general and specific, and issues of Zionism ‘His affection for the *Land of Israel*, and his *aliyah* to it, and his desire to perform group labor in *The Land*.’

*Thousands of people of different ages, like hordes and who stream — he writes — their lives are detestable to them in a land where they are condemned to passivity. This is called ‘pursuing honor’ but it is not! Most of these people in large measure, their lives as members of the land while they are still in exile, the bore its suffering and were happy when it was happy. The work on behalf of The Land of Israel in propaganda, organization and collection of money for the [financial] institutions was the core subject of their lives and upon making aliyah to The Land, and saw the dream they had of their lives at the start of its realization, they have a spiritual need to align themselves with this process. And with this commitment, there are troubles of appearance in all of the cohorts without exception. The new arrival is not permitted to do anything. And is it true that only we possess wisdom? And therefore everyone of us is occupied in tens of Centers, Hevras, committee after committee, and is called upon to give some opinion, even about things in which he has no expertise, and does not understand them, and overworks himself and brings no benefit to the crux of the matter in which he is working. Is it impossible that we can make do with less business, and out of a generous heart, we will separate out a little bit of work for those who will come after us? Do they also not have wise men, dedicated men, and men with skill and knowledge like us? Let us not condemn skilled people to desperation like being orphaned?*

*To have access to a visionary detail, undoubtedly is a national intent. This is the way a man of the people acts; With heartfelt intimacy, sharing his emotions with that of the people, in an unending demand for honesty. These demands return to and are refined by Aharonovicz and not only just for the details, but also in connection to parts of the larger community and its branches. Occasions out of romantic emotions and faith in the heart, occasions from which one derives reality and facts, and even in his trials to go out the the larger [community] by embracing the general - national and general - personal [elements] he failed with those that were not wanted.*

*There is in this the irony of fate: one who was educated in the home of a Hasid, in the ambit of imagined but unreal worlds, he became transformed into a complete realist, on occasion — strict and serious.,*

*In writing or orally, whether in writing or by speech, with the clarity of articulation and the strength of spirit, with his aliyah, this intent begins to manifest itself: 'I made aliyah to the Land to be a teacher – in a Work Archive questionnaire, he states for the elders of the second aliyah, that on the way, I retreated from this thought. There is no lack of teachers in The Land. There are teachers, but workers are missing, and farmers. These were not in Israel and without these we will not be able to resuscitate the land.'*

And with what ardor does he describe his first test in working *The Land*. We think that this chapter on the foundation of the realism within it, narrows the vision of the world from the dispersed idealism. He does not demand payment for his work, yet he works sedulously and with ardor out of the real spread – 'Of real work, in the field work that I started, and in the sending to me of tobacco from Ness Tziona. 'At work, I have not yet tried, and because of this, I will not demand any pay' – answering the owner of the farm.

In an exchange of views with his teacher, *Ahad Ha'Am* about his essay '*The Hour Has Come*', he analyzes with a chisel the Salonika Zionism which is spiritual, and to serve as the basis for his realistic assumptions he brings in the spirituality of the Patriarchs.

In the polemics with his Rabbi, *Ahad Ha'Am*, in regards to his essay '*The Hour Has Arrived*', uses a scalpel to dissect the Salonika Zionism, which is spiritual, which he then uses as a basis for his realistic softening he brings to bear the spirituality of the Patriarchs. The Messianic idealism that is the foundation for the vision embodied in them, seems almost by itself to spread a pleasant idealism, and under the threshold there is the uttered recognition of the theoretical Zionism of generations, that created enchanting legends on the future redemption be a Messiah, which in its power the people were able to bear the heavy burden and suffer the pursuits in the world. In receiving this form of Zionism he counters with the Zionism of their sons. 'What did the Zionism of the sons create? Minimal projects, whose worth is less than the value of a cent, and screaming announcements before the project [was undertaken], during the project and afterwards, it is made to appear that the hoped for redemption is near.

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In no small measure did Aharonovicz adapt to himself the explications of Russian Literature: Hertzen, Czerniszewsky, and Tolstoy. In the images of their literature is sunk the tradition of Patriarchs and [subsequent] generations, also here from the Hebrew literature if the period of *Enlightenment*, he had the unique privilege, Aharonovicz did, to assemble ideas from outside of their privileges for himself after they passed under the whip of his analytical criticism, by linking them to his personal experience. The question of the workers with which he began his activity in the Land, reflects this specific privilege. His tendency here is to the working of *The Land*, the labor of the fields and the earth. It is possible to recognize the influence of '*Teudat B'Yisrael*' of the Rib"l, who saw in the working of the land a traditional value of Judaism, the end goal of life, and renewal.

It was as if a part of his life was a manifestation to the reality of the diaspora of a people taken from their land, seeking 'repair' through the path of work, and a life of reformation and despite the continuation after this solution, with specific reservations, saw it as one with independent Judaism.

He does not recognize any divisions into positions on the part of the people, just as he does not recognize any superiority of the Jewish people. *Ahad Ha'Am* finds such resident universalities in that spirit of Judaism that is a 'Light Unto the Nations' – with theoretical reflexes through thought, in conjunction with clever, eloquent reasoning imposed by reality. Similarly, he also finds, in the teachings of the positions taken by the '*Bund*' and '*Poalei Tzion*' a scholastic natural differentiation on purpose, because they have wrecked the existing foundation of the rickety economic basis, also in any case.

*'We are not like others – writes Aharonovicz – regarding the question of position of the order today for the workers in the Land of Israel, the settlement and the movement, labor and workers, it is a actual question in comparison to the question of repairing the eclipse of the moon... we, so to say, the Hebrew nation and within it, its workers as well. In a measure that we have these types, from the day we were uprooted from our Land, we don't take any position, because they are suspended in the air. The tractates of the generations try to give an order and permanent appearance to the obligations we assumed in every period of global culture, even when we were outcasts from one land to another, but this undertaking is the fruit of effort to justify our existence in our own eyes and that of others. We, in the form of a nation, economic positions are not unique, even in the opinion of those onlookers who see the division by group and the last truth of the science of culture.'*

The question of the workers is a question for the entire nation, and not by the improvement of the separation of the positions of current or future successors, but rather by the complete unification of all, this will be our solution.

A Jewish socialist for whom the yearnings of his people also touch his heart, along with the yearnings of the world, who sees a compulsion of centralizing all forces of the nation for the purpose of national revival, in which the entire world struggles, simply cannot lie. In his soul is the feeling to work during this period, and in one period also for the revival of the nation in all its endeavors, and also in the name of differentiation and separation, enmity and the fight among the positions in the midst of the nation. Two obscure things like this in one subject, can only be elucidated by debate. And it is the same argument whether we talk about '*Abaye and Rava*' or Marx and Engels, even if they have no place in life. This is *prima facie* for socialist atheism. The period is the years 5667-8.

The Jewish streets in the Diaspora rang with the noise of the socialist factions, it was a war of historic in positions and materialism. In the large, Aharonovicz was not taken up by all this noise in the name of the attached socialism. Stubbornly he fought with them out of an inner impulse, on a path and route that was not occupied. Also, he was not seized by the ardor of the Diaspora and its illusions afterwards, during the days of the Russian revolution of 1917, in a period of spiritual storming and a personal vision of the redemption: – 'we are the Jews who have inherited the spirituality of the prophets of Israel, who dedicated their lives to a struggle for justice and honesty and against the dominance of tyranny, the perversion of justice, evil, etc., we, the affected ones don't watch from the side... and despite this, we take no joy except in trial of joy in an alien wedding..'. Our condition is that of a nation enslaved in an exile which will not change at all with this revolution. And as for those who see Zionism as a remedy from the pursuits in Russia and hope that the revolution will bring freedom to the Jews , and in any case to the fall of Zionism, are making a mistake, (with the forgiveness of their honor), even regarding their methodology.

The dawn of the generations was the basis and guide for the thought and the revelation of the ebullient emotion, that Aharonovicz had, with a faithful compact with the saying, ‘*it is not possible to erase from memory, the legacy of suffering by generations*’ – writes Aharonovicz in one place – *and to sink him into the ‘Nirvana’ of the historic tales that are the most superior.* ‘*Hundreds of generations of believers absorbed the learning in the Jewish teachings, at a very dear price of the suffering in body and soul and the nobility of the Prophets, scholars and the wise, and the remaining people of spirit until it became a part of their lives, and they designed the spirit of the Jewish masses and of Jewish individuals.*’

With Zionism, and the historical revival of the nation, it is the squadron linked into the tradition of the generations, and it is impossible to sunder those squadrons that designed the spirit of the masses and that of individuals. For, after all, what is history if not a tradition that was dedicated within the nation? And what is that tradition, if not the historical events that were formed within the nation?

From this analysis he approached the assessment of life, development of *The Land* and the revival of the nation. He fought stubbornly for his assessment with the force of his inner impulse, and stubbornly he remained loyal to [his assessment] for all of his life. Incidentally: the stubbornness of Aharonovicz has its roots in Jewish tradition — ‘a stiff-necked nation, all who have no explanation for the distressed boldness of this position, in self-defense against external spirituality.’

In the center of our *Land*, in the city of Jerusalem – Aharonovicz writes in one of his writings — an ancient wall stands, darkened by smoke. Many breaks in it can be seen, many growth of grass can be seen in it, but it stands strongly. And this wall is the symbol of Jewish stubbornness. Who knows how many destructions of several invaders were heaped on its [formidable] stones, but it, in its stubbornness remains standing, as a permanent testimony to the victorious Covenant that was made between the Nation of Israel and the Land of Israel, that no cruel hand will succeed to nullify?

Chana – He writes to his sister in America – I was surprised to hear you say that there as odd a connection to the observance of the Sabbath. One of our contemporary Sages, *Ahad Ha’Am*, once wrote: ‘*More than the Jews observed the Sabbath, the Sabbath watched over them.*’ It is impossible, in general, to describe the preservation of this nation in exile, without Sabbath observance. I guess there are several ideals that have been lectured about observing the Sabbath in America, and who ever adheres to such a code of conduct, is not worthy of the honorific ‘Rabbi.’ As you can understand, I am talking about Sabbath observance in the form of a day of traditional rest for the whole nation. But with us, the Jews make no distinction: Either it is forbidden to carry a handkerchief on the Sabbath, or is it generally accepted that one can entirely disparage this assessment which is personal, Jewish, and strong, called the Sabbath, for which thousands of Jews sacrificed their lives in all the generations of those very lives.’

And here is a short discussion had in the year 1937, few months before he died. We spoke of the Sabbath when he visited my home. It was as if he agreed [with me] and briefly responded:

‘As to the Sabbath?... it is a bit difficult for me [to say]. The day of Sabbath for me is a day of sanctity and a reckoning taken of the soul. Something from the *Light Up Above*. And the rivers flowed in a *Light from Above*, and crowned the Holy People with a crown... his long and perspiring face, shined with the splendor of gentle sadness. From the depths he collected quotes, words, and he linked them to

judgements like one who picks flowers grouped them together and enjoys their scent... ‘Which explanation, which vision do you understand?...I am of the opinion that no other nation could understand this esoterica: ‘*Raza D’Shabta*’ .... And you shall depart from the seat of the Lord, and you shall establish, for the priests the Holy Place of the Lord. And even all of the Jews.... it is the secret of generations. The sanctity of the nation is embodied in its faith and hope....’

His face conveyed a yearning, with his eyes raised to the Heavens, they are half-closed, he began to hum the melody of Sabbath – ‘*Raza D’Shabta*.

In the same moment, he stood before a Bershad *Hasid* from the *Bet HaMedrash* of R’ Raphael, on a Saturday night in a black *kapote* girded by a broad black belt, where the tips of his fingers were inserted, and he sings out of a Heavenly adherence, the melody of Shabbat – *Raza D’Shabta*...

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At the end of his days, he was seized by memories out of a will to overpower reality, to return to the vision that was terminated, and perhaps from a spiritual need, and to echo impressions hidden in the depths. In this way, he elevated chapters of life in his village and in his city, from the time he was a youngster. They presented themselves as living people, types of people and characters. He is a thin man, having an elongated throat which caused his Adam’s Apple to rise and fall while he speaks or is swallowing something; he is a master of the Psalms, master of the faith and tradition, and prepared to sacrifice himself for the grater good. He was the one who had an aching sorrow for the ‘*Maskilim*,’ who blundered and got off the straight path, and he would beg mercy [for them], and that they change over to being people of repentance.

Now here is an individual... a simple Jew who did not even know the meaning of the words in prayers. Nevertheless, he possessed a wondrous honesty! And what modesty! Generally making do with less, literally like the *Tana* , who lived in the shambles of a place, from one Friday to the next Friday’ A radish, onion, a bit of beans – this represented what he ate all week. He would look after the poor, guests for the Sabbath, and having no choice – would take a guest to his home and impoverished table.

He dives into the lowest depths of his memory. The nature of his face was sadness, and he is reminded of something: Do you remember that man who was the lessor of the mill? He was excited by readers of ‘*HaMelitz*’, and was an ardent lover of Zion. He was a generous man when it came to the relations he had with the gentile workers who worked for him. And here, an individual from a nearby village, becomes a proper *Hasid*. I once tried to talk to him about ‘*Hibat Tzion*’— the fire of hell – and another one: a quiet thin man who was a miller of millet in the city. Beside his house in the side street, beside the gutter, from the time I remember, there always stood a cud-chewing red cow, and out of the cow’s calm, acting as a symbol of the peaceful and quiet way of life there. I always liked to trail after him on Friday towards evening when he went on his way to the Kloyz of the “grandmother” to pray. Some sort of glorious sanctity surrounded his steps which were moderate and measured, his face and side locks and black beard that still showed traces of his ablution at the Mikvah, and everything of his speaks of dignity...

The fountain of memories gets stronger, he adds times and years, raises projects of the people and their intentions, to 'raise the Dead'. His descriptions capture the surroundings – the air, nature, paths and ways in the fields, and at the parting of the paths beside the sugar factory, and images that he recalls from the days of his youth, from those times that he could spread his legs, together with his father between the fields of camellia and fruit trees and what was growing in the field, forests and pools – living grave markers decorated with memories are immersed in the fresh dew of childhood that revives them – and he is one of them.

His last days did not go by him without personal tragedy. The tragedy of yesterday's heroes, that history lowers from their platform, and exchanges them for others. These others are from their period.

History's heroes of yesterday are changed into [mere] dreams. The spirit of that stormy time takes of the crown of glory that beautified them up until now. They have remained the heroes of history, but not the heroes of life.

## 21. The Iron Tracks

With the installation of the narrow iron tracks (1896-1897), a change in the way of life of the city took place. These were southwestern railroad tracks that wound its way from the station of Rodnica to Odessa-Kiev, through Bershad up to Gayboron and from there split into two lines: one in the direction of Zhitomir through Hoisin, Vinnitsya and Berdichev, and the second as far as Gulto that is in Kherson, that linked Podolia with Yelizabetgrad with a line to Odessa-Kharkov

At first the men o the city reacted to the train hesitatingly. They smiled and made jokes: how many times have we already heard... even the nobleman tried. Who is more important than him? And it didn't happen... there, in Kameniec, they were stubborn. They want money. They want everything that is left in the '*korovka*' that has been assembled over many years, and are stored in the country's treasury. They should only receive the beatings on their heads as we got back in Egypt!

Afterwards, they came and told us that they were taking measurements for the line and digging in it. The gentiles of Podolia are bringing sand and earth, and are covering up pits, and straightening out the hillocks that are beside the new cemetery. We think this means that the train will be laid from the station to the sugar factory. Others added that in the station at Kryzopol there are already the strips of iron for rails of the new lines. From this time on, the hesitation stopped and they were actually reversed. The curiosity to see the actual line, with one's own eyes, grew. On the Sabbath days people would go to stroll by the cemetery, and look at the work as they passed by, and they would touch and feel the iron strips and the connecting pieces with their hands. They would engage the workers in conversation, but the latter do not know how to answer the questions, and the strollers would grumble: ---

Ivan, you pig! He doesn't know anything... either he does not answer at all, or he answers like someone who is retarded.

On day, an extended and hoarse noise was heard. People quickly came out of their houses, turned up their eyes and looked in the direction of the sugar factory and they saw a locomotive pulling [train] cars behind it, that were loaded with sand and winds itself like a Biblical Snake on the roads of the ground, emitting thick black smoke and whistling, and was swallowed into the forest center, rested their, and from there emitted a sharp whistle – and vanished into the unknown.

A smile of pleasure went across each mouth:

A big city. A train station.

For a bit of time, the train served as a source of jokes. ‘*S’halt mit ihr samal*’ – they joked ( what is it here: it is going to pile one more trouble on the others;) it moves slowly and stops at every station more than was prescribed, sometimes it causes lateness in the connected lines with Kiev-Odessa. The Jews of the surroundings would ‘pacify’ the train driver, but asking him to raise the speed to travel on the eves of Sabbaths and Holidays. Occasionally, he would stop [the train] along the way in order to take up or enable travelers to get off.

The writer, Sholom Aleichem, gave it a nickname, and likened it to ‘*Der Lehdiger*’ (the empty one) because of the few passengers it had – many of them without tickets — and its cars half-empty.

The train came once a day, at times coinciding with the schedule. After some time, it began to come twice a day from two directions, with travelers and loaded merchandise. Wagon drivers, that used to take the passengers from the station to the city, fell upon the passengers, and pulling them by their scarves, amid shouting and disputed with them an among themselves, they would drop the belongings of the arrivals into their wagons and seat them crowded together, and take the important passengers into the city.

The stop was not centrally located with regard to the larger cities and it also took its riders to Bershad,, having the air of a big city. And so, there began to come passengers from Odessa, Kiev, Kishinev, and Berdichev: People became more alert, as if they had gotten out of a refrigerator in which they had been sitting. A few tried their luck, and really went over to the large cities, merchants and store keepers that traveled from here to there. A few engaged in consultation with ‘their own’ and the larger merchants. In an accepted fashion, they came to the city in a reverse way – salesmen and not entitle merchants of grain, who sat for weeks and months and loaded and unloaded, paid in rioting at the cost of flour, wheat, grain and millet. Movement started again. The factory for tobacco and cigarettes opened, we were invited by workers from Odessa, Tolczin and Uman. New people and new spirits. From some upstairs room, thin paper that was printed on, was passed from hand to hand, secretly. We came to other work houses, among the young, and we put into the hands of the sons of *balebatim* – grains of sand among the youth carried without anyone seeing or sensing them.

Among the younger workers, were some who also traveled to the larger cities try their luck. Of them who stayed there and those that came back after a while, dressed according to the fashion [of the times] serious, and somewhat polite, and reading material in Yiddish and Russian in their pockets, and they touched the heart with the sense of strength and hope in them, and they also told secrets.

Days later, a strike broke out in the tobacco factory. The workers presented demands in connection to working conditions and pay, carrying on negotiations, and arrived at compromise. The strike left an impression.

An air of secrecy came to cover the ranks of the working people...

The issue of work had not yet become a subject for discussion. The issue of work when it is solitary along with all folded into it – according to currently accepted practice – was as follows: the standard of living and the working conditions that come out of it – were included within the limits that were under oversight: There are those who have, and those that don't have, and the fate of one that doesn't have is difficult indeed. Men worked for a variety of *balebatim* for years on end, and workshops that used shoemakers, blacksmiths and when necessary, the neighboring gentiles, those who spoke Yiddish but with a gentile accent, they recognized the issues of the city and the issues of their 'bosses' who are paying them. There were trades where gentiles were not taken in to their secrets because they doubted that they were able to understand them. For these lines of work, temporary Jewish workers were taken on, who began working while still youngsters, and remained with their 'Bosses' for years until they matured or became independent [workers]. The wealthier among the working people used to invite skilled assistants for a 'period of time, and we worked from Passover to *Sukkot* or from *Sukkot* to Passover, as if in the middle of this time, they did not pass judgement with regard to work issues that may have existed between the workers and their supervisors. Anyone who would raise this kind of question during the midst of a time stretch, was not considered to be a settled man, he was not a 'man of the settlement' but rather a wandering nomad, slightly out of his mind. Every normal working man who had his wits about him distances himself from him, and his fate was determined. However between the working periods, in '*Hol HaMoed*' it was a different thing: — the permission to undertake work was with the individual worker. There were those that changed 'Bosses' and others who stayed in place, and there were those that became independent. [The periods] end with a party on cups of whiskey, with the presence of hearing witnesses, with praise for the creatures of nature, making a living, and blessings. The normal way was: an independent worker is either a master among his people and a temporary worker or assistant — bowed down to his teacher. There are instances that the assistant knows he is 'an assistant to the poor' ... and for sure that he will not approach the 'Boss' with scattered demands and so he suffers in silence. Also the few factories – mills, shredding establishments, factories that process fat — used to engage workers, watchmen, and workers from among the gentiles that were nearby, but only ones they trusted, treasurers, accountants who were hired from relatives of the family or plain lowly people, who were respected and God-fearing. And that is the way of the world: the rich '*balebatim*' and 'their people' — who were poor. And the 'People' would pray for the success of their supervisors and their success, for if they succeeded, the workers succeeded. In exceptional circumstances, like: — a wedding, an illness, additional children, matured daughters, troubles and mishaps, they would tell their troubles to one of the honored ones entering and leaving the home of the Wealthy Man. This person would speak with him 'between ourselves, for ourselves', he would find a compromise for the issue, and would settle the matter – to the satisfaction of both sides: The Wealthy Man 'bought cheaply' and the worker enjoyed – that in the end he got something, The Lord not forsake us! Even in the instance that the demands could not be reconciled, with a promise of expansion, it was a line to cool off the spirit, that at least puncture the tension and made it easier for the one taken whose heart may have been pained. At least the Master of the House knew what it was that caused stress. Essentially – these issues were not

aired in public and remained 'between us and for ourselves'. In then these were things of no concern...

Another subject that has lesser popularity was socialism, which was still an idea that was clouded in darkness, unknown, and aroused fear. People were afraid to mention the word in the presence of children and those not yet mature. A few new the question of 'Socialists,' Most of them were from the ranks of the poor, tired, people who were not traditional and did not have good manners, people with long hair, oriented to ignite a fire in a wealthy house, and to obliterate it to the sight of everyone: to kill the king and do not believe in God and not Jesus, and they want to overturn the world's order. As they told about the Socialists, they were whisperers, they practically speak from mouth to ear, informed people who respect themselves went off to the side and expectorated...

'Between themselves and for themselves' – a few knew that Yaakov the son of Baruch Fabrikant, the owner of the mill in Shumilnovo, was apprehended, God save us, when he was a student in [St.] Petersburg in the same class. The matter became known, and the police went to search for him. Once, at night, they found him in a hidden place, they seized him and arrested him and, under a heavy guard, brought him to a black conveyance to be taken and hanged. One of the higher-ups got involved, or the Czar himself. Baruch Fabrikant did not rest or keep quiet. He retained lawyers from among the top, who were close to the monarchy, going from one senior person to the next, from one officer to the next, until he succeeded in rescuing him.

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The workers were talking among themselves: — a black cat walked through the group of them. The youths were breathing hard, getting angry and making noise.

The Elders gave the opinion that they should draw nearer, and close the distance between them for appearance sake. They invited the workers to *Kiddush* on the Sabbath, or in the hours after noon to a elaborate meal. They are seated and conversing in a friendly manner made up of acrimonious smiles, forgiving manners and pats on the shoulder. But the answers, by indication, with new words that pieced like needles: ---

Proletarian exploitation, blood and sweat.... sits all day and discusses issues with a bent back.... the atmosphere is oppressive, blood shouts from the work...

What do these gentiles want, not to work?

These were the first buds of the awakening of class-based ideas that have been rooted in reality, without them being felt. In days that followed there burst among them, like wild thorns, washed and spread to the outside of the area of work, and the work emitted sparks of arsenic. Their target were the young Zionists, of their age, or the elderly who had beards and side locks. Jews that aim their way in the streets high above, the place where the workers, led by one of them to spit on the [charity] boxes of R' Meir Baal Haness or to take a 'stand' on behalf of some 'Rebbe', with large red handkerchiefs protruding from the pockets of their long *kapotes* and black velvet hats. The people ended up sticking their heads out of a window, leaning on the sills, with detectives looking at them with irritation and get angry: —

Who needs them?

These are parasites who eat but do nothing ... stealing from God....

On Sabbath days, at twilight in the streets of the city, they allude to the young people who are the children of *balebatim* and speak Russian, who take satisfaction in their clothing, and protesting in their beautiful exterior:

Children of your fathers... 'little Zionists'... and say to others to go to Palestine while they remain here, who will get a large dowry and create businesses... let them try to hold a needle or a hammer in their hands.

Their opposition to Zionism was not the result of an ideological understanding, for somewhere in the shadows, Zionist concepts were evident in each one going back to their days in '*Heder*' and '*Talmud Torah*' and the father's house — rather their opposition was personal, against the Zionist subjects of the time, and from here — opposition even to the essence of the concept. In this way of seeing the world as all human and with a vision of the brilliant future, they thought to receive compensation of elevation of their opponents, similar to their fathers of previous generations who were reluctant to return to the environment by means of seeing the world through to saying of '*thou hast chosen us*' and a vision of comfort to the future that is yet to come.

From the side of the Zionist ranks they did not try to make an effort to straighten out the differences, and if they had tried it is doubtful that they would have succeeded. Zionism was still in a very narrow conception. Nevertheless, the Zionists remained in touch with specific centers, and these read the explanation and the effort between the wide avenues, however this did not come to any general project. There were sittings, the gathering of friends, encounters, speeches in these limited groups as a result of repeating sentences of the *Tana"kh* and the sayings of *Khaza"l*, and the appearances of Zionist advocates to arouse heart to undertake projects, but all of these were unable to raise the fixed cadres from their narrowness [of thought].

Moshe Kaczynsky was among the Zionist workers in this chapter [of development]. He was fluent in Russian culture and Hebrew, and he came from a pedigree family that was well off. [He] was one of the centers of Zionist projects in that place and was the leader of the center. His house was the meeting place for the committee of the Zionist groups and as a sitting place for the young, and gatherings for discussions. He loved to have conversations with ardor and loyalty, when helped with the sentences from the *Tana"kh* and history, and not exactly — a sense of reality that can penetrate the hear of others, and to persuade them of the correctness of what he said. Now the conversations went over to the street, with strolls along with a group of familiar young people. The stormy nature of the conversations in Russian aroused fear among the residents in the houses of the streets that the strollers passed through. Jews opened their windows, and listened, and then shut them out of severity and anger, and ended with: ---

'Zionists...'

Nahum Greenberg, a thin man, quiet by nature, a peaceful but indifferent face, bearing a yellowish beard

that was yellowish and rounded, with tiny blue eyes out of which a sacred grief peered out, a man of the people and at peace with his surroundings, and a dedicated Zionist. Beside his store in the marketplace, during the hours when there were no buyers, men would stop to hear the news of the day from newspapers, about the state of the Jews and that of Zionism in his quiet, moderate explanation, that left an impression on all of his listeners. He never tried to go up on the platform and take his word(s) along. It is possible that suffering from the ire of the masses or possibly he was afraid of making too many appearances, he was a close friend of Micah Joseph Berdiczewski in his time. He printed a number of his speeches in newspapers, and in collected Hebrew writings. Among them are, in '*The Great Synagogue*' (1888) '*To the Question of the Rabbis*' (Previous Rabbis and ones that are current). He also published a booklet in Yiddish, named '*On Zionism and its Essence*'.

Among the Zionist workers in the city in those days was — Yitzhak Baratz, the father of Abraham Baratz, a member of '*HaBima*'. He was an alert Jew, with smiling penetrating eyes that look out from a face covered by a small round beard. His speaking was drenched in parables and sayings. As an officer of one of large manufacturing stores in the city, he would come in contact with ranks of working men, those who grabbed 'the thread and needle' who were among the steady listeners to what he was saying. There were those who got into polemics with him, posing difficult questions and their explanations and purposes. Others there were: Moshe Friedhand, Levi Hochman, Alter Mohilever, Yeshayahu Zhirdinowsky, Joseph Maniss and others, their projects were limited to specific cadres only.

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Several of the young workers founded a school for the youngsters of the wide avenues that did not have their own means, with national Zionism as their objective. This was a common phenomenon in rural areas during the first days of Zionism, it was an honest undertaking with the objective of capturing the young generation and the hearts of the parents. In this school, as was the case with other schools of its type, the language of instruction was Russian, however a number of hours were dedicated to Hebrew studies, chapters of history and an education in national Zionism, and they designated times to reading and explaining Yiddish in regards to cultural and national values. With their effort, a library was also founded providing Hebrew, Russian and Yiddish, which because they lacked a formal permission, did not have a permanent place and moved from one place to another. The Podolia authorities took a suspicious attitude to a public library, and despite the efforts and guarantees offered, the [formal] permission was not given, but despite this its function was recognized in the ranks of the young Zionists. Some days [later], a Zionist Synagogue was established, that functioned as a platform for free Zionism, for which there was an essential need, because of the opposition of the *Gabbaim* in most of the Synagogues, objecting to Zionist propaganda. When a Zionist authority came to the city, the young people would hurriedly run from one *Gabbai* to the next to ask for permission, which mostly did not succeed, and it was not only once that things got to outbursts and scandals until the guarantee of the local authorities was obtained.

The ranks of the workers in the city did not participate in all of this. From their side, there was a form of hesitant suspicion, stubbornness for no reason. Once, at a meeting of the local council, a proposal was put forth to add to the budget, support funds from the monies in the '*korovka*' to the school of the Zionist aimed at the children of the wide areas of poverty — the members of the council objected to this, as did the workers, and once again for no reason. There was a sense of fear, as if they were getting ready for

the Zionists to rule over them, and their thinking was not calm because of all the innovations even though they were for their own good. The young Zionists took on the yoke of the budget, as a swallow patiently gathers stalks of straw, a single feather, a tree cyst or a clod of earth, here and there, for putting together a nest. They gathered up donations, raised new sources of funds, circled the entry to inns among the guest-agents, arranged for festive events and theater quality presentations in partnership with itinerant bands, both Ukrainian and Jewish. They placed bowls at weddings, and engagement parties that occasionally ended with rioting from one side of the in-laws or from the side of an important guest who opposes Zionism.

This project of cultural Zionism that started with considerable difficulties, caused positive results afterward — the envy of children connected to study. The parents were compelled to give up under the pressure of the children. It was in this way, that the learning how to read and write in Russian and Hebrew was accomplished in '*Heders*'. In time, a general First School was founded for young girls by one teacher who was from Kovno, from the family of Abraham Mapu, following the syllabus of a real ordinary public school. After this, a school was founded by local teachers. In the end, lessons in Russian and arithmetic were implemented for the '*Talmud Torahs*', and the same for the students of the Yeshiva, despite the brisk opposition of the *Gabbaim* and business people.

## 22. Carelessness

One against the other: – Development on one side, and rigidity from the other side.

The entire city remained rigid — in its appearance, especially in its external architectural appearance. From a distance the marketplace looks like a circle of stores made from boards, and look faded and worn, one stuck on another, an act of *Shaatnez* : – a manufacturing store right next to a store of tar, a food market next to a bookstore, a pharmacy neighboring egg store, a bakery in a cellar with a restaurant above it, butcher shops, counters and stands for fruit and fish. Old and old-fashioned houses that have seen better days, opposite and running the length of the row, with large connecting gates to the second side, a remnant of those days when farmers and villagers from afar used to station their horses and wagons in the large dark stable. Of those that have been transformed into stores and residences and some made into inns of small cells for the length of the overpass, all of the houses are shingled, tall, with stairs to the roof, and small windows.

Beside the house-in-the-wall with two stories that belongs to Wolf-Ozer which also has a long corridor that has an array of stained glass windows that stands arrogantly tall and with conceit, the marketplace stretches out. There is a location there for horses and wagons. Obese merchants, standing on the counters to make sales of earthenware bowls, cornbread, braided and round, and Ukrainian sausage. Farmers, dressed in short fur coats that are fat, sell pig's meat on their wagons whose wings reach upward, and the horses gently chew grains from ears of corn out of a full sack. Wagons to convey freight hitched to horses, engender a deepening of negative talk. The wagon drivers, in their rickety vehicles, bring carried merchandise to the station, they park in the marketplace during the break between train arrivals. Jewish merchants and storekeepers, whose jackets are stained with oil and tar, are stunned and amazed by the sweat on their '*kakat*' hats. Shaggy-haired girls are collecting

excrement in rags and bags with which to plaster the floor, tired children dressed in torn clothing, collect tree parts for kindling. Goats, cows, dogs and pigs from the neighborhood gentiles, stroll from the butcher shop to the counter, to the wagons, sticking their heads in every place and enjoying the chaos.

From the plaza of the market, and above, there are rows of houses, one up against the other, for the length of the street up to the Christian neighborhood at the splitting of the roads, where one takes you to the village of Trostyniec, and the second to the village of Witovka. Houses made of cement and bricks covered by shingled roofs and surrounded by low fences made up of small trees that are perpendicular and round, and windows and doors painted red. They converge and are pressed together under counters of a new building with stone foundations, and tar roofs, whose structure ends at 'Khzirhiv'. There are also a few houses, that stick out into the streets, which have long corridors with glass windows and bird's nests under their ceilings, [there are] double windows that on their inside sills there stand jars, and beside them piles of cotton wool, and diagonal chains made of colored paper, hung behind them. These are houses of legacy from the generation of calmness and security, whose heirs are nourished by the memories of profitable business from the nobility, those who married into wealthy families, wedding celebrations that went on for days, and the *Nachas* of sons and grooms who are near each other at their tables.

And there are also [planned] streets, that split the main road, and in them are houses of cement, clay, that are pushed [together] which hold onto other houses and appear like they are being pulled backwards. And there are also multi-storied buildings, with creaky wooden stairs that have a railing all around them, a place of rest for the goats frightened by every sound of a footfall, and look, and leaving behind black droppings. And in the side streets that were narrow and contaminated – a constant quarrel between neighbors about garbage and the property lines, which one is trying to enlarge while the other is trying to shrink. Constant trouble and rebellions that pass as a legacy from fathers to sons, informing and rebellions and complaints in court in front of the '*Pristav*' in contrast with — *Dayanim* and 'Men' until they arrive at a compromise.

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On the eve of the Sabbath with the coming of the darkness, everything vanishes. The men, the wagons, the farmers. The market counters, the stores and the plaza all stand alone, neglected, orphaned. On the ground are excrement of horses, shells, carton boxes and bones. Dogs swoop onto the spoils in a cruel manner, amid loud barking. One can hear the clink of keys and the screeching of doors and shutters. Jews return from the baths with excited faces, with measured steps and under the house are the contaminated bricks that were spread out, inside the sleeve of a shirt that looks like long blister.

A person is standing in his Sabbath trousers and a sweater covering his *Tzitziss*, polishing his shoes outside and the sleeves of his shirt rustle in the movement. Women, with coifs on their heads, sweating internally, are sitting outside, resting from the strain of the work and exertion of the preparation of the Sabbath needs, while seized to participate in conversation with her neighbors. Children in their Sabbath wear, polished shoes, and shining faces, walk slowly and carefully while holding a bottle of wine for *Kiddush*. The bright Sabbath candles flicker in the sunset.

The melodies of *Kabalat-Shabbat* and the keening festive voices of the worshipers. A surprised gentile hurries home, whips his horses out of angry impatience and the wheels of his wagon echos the noise of the street as he passes through.

The coming of morning disperses the darkness of night in the middle of a curious stillness, a shutter opens, a door scrapes [open] on its axis, a woman wrapped in a garment holds a nightshirt in her hand so she will not see, she calls out to the ‘*Shabbes Goy*’ who is strolling with his wife peacefully, in the silence of the street, holding in their hands sacks of bread slices that they get from the Jews as a ‘franchise.’ The lady gentile enters nowhere to milk the cow, to remove the candlesticks from the table and to honor the house. A Jew in house shoes scrape along the stones of the road, returning from his morning ablution in the *Mikvah* before prayers. Men graced by peace go to the Synagogue, their prayer shawls under their jackets and a *yarmulka* whose edge can be seen under his hat. After them come women wearing Sabbath dresses, acting as the ‘*Shabbes-Goy’eh*’ or a girl bring along the prayer book, ‘*Korban Mincha*’ with a white handkerchief wrapped around it. The newspaper agent exits the *Bet HaMedrash* during the [Torah] reading going to the bridge, to meet the wagon driver, the only ‘*Goy*’ to travel on the Sabbath in his rickety buggy that looks like a bathtub, in order to receive the newspapers that the ‘*Shabbes Goy*’ distributes to subscribers.

During the afternoon meal the sound of singing bursts out of the open windows. A lad carrying bowls and pans that are full, from the house of a nearby neighbor – the warm food for the Sabbath. Jews covered with the joy of the Sabbath return in the midst of a loud conversation from ‘*Kiddush*.’ Men wearing yarmulkas but without jackets sit with members of their families on the rail of their house and crack open seeds for their personal pleasure.

The rest of the afternoon. The pleasure of a ‘nap on the Sabbath afternoon’. The streets are empty. The rays if the sun are spread out on the sides of the houses that are still, and among the trees with diagonal streams of light, Men are hurrying to the *Mincha* prayer service. Youngsters with large, grown side locks with volumes of the *Gemara* go to the house of discussion, and they walk lightly, but in conversation with one another. The street becomes filled with people taking a stroll. Noise, bustling and the mixing of voices [can be heard]. A young man in a long coat and having long side locks crosses the street quickly, with wondering eyes and a slight reddishness in his perplexed face. Jews with beards, handkerchiefs wound around their necks, are strolling at the side in measured steps and with an attitude of thinking, and after them [come] women dressed in their Sabbath dresses. Children are dragged after them, while they hold onto to the trail of their dresses. In the fading light of the late afternoon sun, with the appearance of the first three stars, as an indication that the souls of sinners are drawing back – after the rest of the Sabbath – to their suffering in *Gehenna*. They spread out and hurry home like a flock of sheep, being seized by the traditional invisible stress in confronting the ordinary days of the week.

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The issues of the city and the community, elections, behavior, conduct for sacred days and ordinary days, are centralized in the local council, who were selected by the community. Leading the council, are a group of elected officials and a secretary. In reality, all of the eyes are focused on the Head of the

council alone, a Russian-speaking Jew and knows how to interact with the authorities and the congregation. Two servants of the congregation who are doing service, done according to the rules of 'franchise' stand in his presence ready to serve him. They wear long gray jackets with round copper buttons on their chests with the word 'Sutski' on them. A new officer of the police makes them affix the signs of the police, and these paupers would circulate in the town, wearing their bizarre dress: one of them was a tall and thin old man and in the season of rain and snow would put on the hat of a policeman wearing a sable coat whose edges are tucked into his belt. In time, these servants would retire or die and others, not elected, were appointed to take their places, and their obligations were turned over to gentile policemen. By and large, the members of the council would decide and sign off on the unimportant protocols, and at times not even looking at them. The Head of the council would explain [[them]], and then give out the pages from hand-to hand and the members would sign them. In general, they were not aroused, they did not like them. Gentiles – called to them. And not everyone wanted to be a 'gentile' and expose himself to the suspicions of the community.

Matters of the city were edited and accepted: – *Dayanim*, ritual slaughterers, taxes, the *Great Synagogue*, *Priziv* (military draft) and seniority. Occasionally matters pertaining to *Talmud Torah*, the *Hekdesh*, and the cemetery. Occasionally also the orders of the authorities, the annual visit of the inspectors on the important businesses. The arguments are mostly regarding seniority at the locations of prayer and synagogues. The place of prayer was transformed into a battle scene, and occasionally these issues reached a point that triggered a visit from the 'Pristav' (City Officer). The Head of the council, who was considered to be part of the authorities, was compelled to take a line of caution not to assault one side or another. And there could be an individual on one of the sides who resigns his position and 'erects' a new Synagogue in order to anger his opponents. One side goes from house to house signing up people. Others resent this, and announce an excommunication' on what he is doing. They gather together and talk about the 'corpse' in the marketplace and the street. They then go to the Head of the council to consult and to take measures. In the meanwhile this was put off amidst complaints and shouting and became a 'franchise matter.' Sometimes the poor man rebels, his poverty suffocating him from every corner of his house, and he does not remove the water from the bathhouse: Teachers from the *Talmud Torah* come with complaints. At the conclusion of this matter there are charitable people who collect donations for their benefit in order to silence them. Occasionally, the 'ram of the city' rebels that is to say — the owner of the ram, who is one of the appointees of the congregation come and complain about the burden placed on the congregation. And to seize the ram and hold his dues and they do not pay him. And at times the 'koret-gentile' does: the cemetery, comes with a complaint about his salary which constitutes one of the items in the council's budget.

There is one word, the legacy of generations, and it is called 'khazakah' (a franchise), which is the basis of the earnings of many, and has a tight connection to the many, with a different connotation, — 'encroachment'. 'Khazakah' has an old meaning, which retains its meaning and does not lose its important place that it has inherited during many generations – even after the Jewish settlements have gone a long way as evident in its progress – it continues to prevail in Jewish cities and towns. By its very nature, this concept is not entirely negative. The first real Rabbi, that was nominated by the rule of the monarch – was an elderly Jew with many medals, and in the past was the Principal of a high school in Balta, was separated and kept apart from the congregation, and was seen as encroaching on the role of the *Dayanim* that, in any event continued to exist despite pressure. The real Rabbi was

hung, somewhat with the geniality of the local council for a fact, and in the geniality of the Sitting Head of the council, and the [good] hearts of individuals. On the day of the Gnostics, he would wear a faded black sigil<sup>43</sup>, attach the medals on his chest, and give a speech in the *Great Synagogue*, in Russian, about the Czar and his family, may their honor be elevated, and he would finish with the saying 'Let us pray for the peace of the kingdom'. Which he would translate into Russian [as] ---- Let us pray for the sustenance of the servants of the community, and the observant congregation...

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The *Dayanim* were in the city for years. Apart from the sitting Rabbi, who was the single one in his city, there were, in general, servants of the congregation, in pairs: two *Dayanim*, two Head ritual slaughterers, two grave diggers, two group *Shamashim*, and two assistants. In time, the number of *Shokhtim* increased. With the help of 'peripheral people' and signatures, the sons and grooms were also nominated to these positions, but even afterwards, there were only two Head *Shokhtim*: R' Sholom Yossi, and R' Levi. After the death of the *Dayan*, the Teacher and *Tzaddik*, R' Raphael, R' Shmeryl, ordained in nearby Zigovka, a pupil of R' Simcha Bik of Mogilev, was chosen to occupy the rabbinical chair in the city. He was a tall thin Jew squinting in one eye, always wearing trousers with white underpants tucked into white socks, and a black, long *kapote*, without a slit in the back – so that he will not be obligated to wear *tzitzit* – and a large red handkerchief sticking out of the rear pocket of the *kapote*. He was a sharp scholar who also was profound, at a distance from the world and questions about life. A few of the men who were not in favor with this appointment grumbled in secret. In time, the people signed for and sat a second *Dayan*, R' Nahum Friedhand, a scion of the city, from a highly pedigreed Torah family.

In time, the sides compromised with each other. The dispute was forgotten. What remained was a light manifestation that was prevalent in narrow circles that quarreled among themselves: the first was 'a student' but not 'wise' and the second was 'wise' but not a 'student.' Wealthy people and businessmen centered themselves around R' Nachman. He served them as an arbitrator in matters of commerce taking place among them. His pleasant beard, his penetrating black eyes, and his speech that was subject to a light suspicion out of respect for the public at large, and depreciation of his own honor – gave him worthiness and importance. Surrounding R' Shmeryl were the people of the simple masses, workers, storekeepers, and ordinary Jews. He managed to make a living from his 'weekly salary' which was meager, and given in the middle of the month, and often pressured him [financially], and from the sale of yeast and income from the notes he gave out for slaughter, which the business people of the city turn over their sales to *Dayanim* at a fixed profit. It was in the home of R' Shmeryl that the sale of the notes and its costs was centered, and he benefitted from a large percentage in part.

In the house one could hear the complaints about the important *Balebatim* and the wealthy people that followed R' Nahum. And it is possible that R' Shmeryl himself cast an angry eye about this, but was never expressed. He distanced himself from the issues of the people, kept to himself and completely devoted himself to 'The Tent of the Torah.' He was laconic in his speech, especially in regards to conversations about ordinary matters, and in sleeping and eating as well, The hunger for bread for him

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<sup>43</sup>

An inscribed or painted symbol considered to have magical power.

and his large family, was something that caused him to become a model miser, one who was strict and angry. His one good eye brought about a bit of haughtiness, while the second appeared to be frozen in trying to convey a negative ruling. Once again, jokes spread among the community at his expense, resurrecting the old saying that he is a ‘pupil’ but not a ‘scholar’, and there were those that permitted themselves to tell jokes even in front of him: —

‘*Rebbe*’ one of the clowns, from among the joking crowd, in the city would ask: ‘What is the law regarding the blowing of the *Shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah* if it falls on the Sabbath?’

‘It is forbidden’! — the Rabbi answered seriously.

But how is it that, on festive Holidays, Jews are in the habit of smoking for the sake of pleasure, what, then, is the law regarding smoking on *Rosh Hashanah* that comes out on the Sabbath?’

‘God forbid! It is forbidden!’ — the Rabbi answered emotionally.

This was a statement that was almost childish, and a complete lack of sense and humility in the existence of the world, led to the people of the city to disapprove of him, and they hesitated to approach him on matters of religion and law, what is forbidden and what is permitted, Kosher or *Trayf*<sup>44</sup>, issues that compel real actions, of a great deal of [financial] loss. There were those who feared his strictness and his simplicity. Because of this, women were sent to him with questions requiring him to reference the Torah, because in this area they were thought that his tendencies toward ‘leniency’ for their sake.

The laws pertaining to purity of the family and the relations according to the laws of Israel rule in all force and all strictness of the law in all families. As to the *mitzvah* of ablution and purity, the daughters of Israel performed under special circumstances, in the general bathhouse, toward the evening of the day, as they negotiated the side streets with the ‘rebel’ at their head so as not to encounter the curious eyes of men. Various faults they encountered, or faults they caused an increase of questions for a wise man, and R’ Shmeryl found no fruitful solace. He sits with rebellious eyes, because he is not the creature to peer at inferences and shortcuts. On occasion he would depend on the *Rebbetzin*<sup>45</sup>, and in instances that were complex, which require a broad and specific explanation.

The incident R’ Shmeryl endured from his oldest daughter pained him greatly. A beautiful and healthy young lady, fell in love with a local young man, the son of an elementary school *Melamed*, who himself was also a *Melamed* and Teacher in one of the towns. She even tried to run away to a nearby town, the temporary place of study for him. This was a heavy blow, which landed on him and bewildered him with a tangle of oppressive thoughts.

Beside his table in front of an open copy of *Hoshen Mishpat*, he recoiled intermittently from the weight

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<sup>44</sup> Any food item considered unfit for consumption by an observant Jew.

<sup>45</sup> The Rabbi’s Wife

of the oppression, having been uprooted from his place, and he takes his large handkerchief out of his back pocket and lays it on the book, as a sign, and paces the length of the room as he talks to himself:

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Master of the Entire World! Whores... Can it be possible?...

His associates could not see his sorrow, City people also mixed in. They sent emissaries to the young man, they went to his parents cajoled him with reconciliations and threats, until he will give up...

'From now R' Shmeryl made himself less accessible. It appears that he failed in his own eyes. He weakened and fell ill. The key to his house didn't move, and only would on the footpath of the Synagogue, a canopy and blessings, they remained open before him. He took up the education of his youngest son, who could take his place when his time [on earth] had come.

The *Dayan* R' Nahum died without leaving an heir. R' Shmeryl allocated his servant to his son. This was in the years 1911-1912. Opinions became divided. The people of the Skver Kloyz were not interested in an heir, and they thought that the city is worth having a Rabbi who was broad-minded and influential — and there were conversations and different factions. In time, they found a worthy Rabbi in the nearby city of Teplik. Others opposed this, and people signed up and sent a Rabbinical-Letter to the son-in-law of the Rabbi of Haysin, R' Meir, a perfect young man who was easy to love. R' David son of R' Shmeryl remained at his post. The working people and ordinary Jews supported him on the basis of his franchise and an heir. There was an unending dispute. Regarding the episode of proposing a third *Dayan*, born in this city, ordained and genial, a previous merchant, R' Joseph Alberton.

This took place while there already was a war going on, on the threshold of revolution, and the absence of everything continued to grow. There were only two *Dayanim* left in the city. During the rule of the Bolsheviks, R' Joseph *Dayan* went over to the town of Ovodovka, a small congregation that remained after the pogroms, that hoped that it will continue to exist and have a return to what it used to be. R' David *Dayan* remained in place. With the strengthening of religious pursuit by the Bolshevik authorities, he left the chair of the Rabbinate. According to what we heard, he became a gravedigger, wandering among the dead and the living, a pauper thought of as a dead man.

Bershad stood out among all the cities of the surroundings in terms of its pedigree and importance. The people of the city were known to be people who spoke the truth and were modest. It is possible that this was a legacy of the tradition of R' Raphael, and are shown in the nicknames of the city and its surroundings: — 'Bershad Modesty.' The rest of the cities and towns of the surroundings had nicknames. Of the ones that conveyed simplicity and clarity are— rough and rude: — 'The Compassion of Khaczevto' (simple and big like the compassion of a farmer), ;The Rams of Trostinec ( they jump with their heads like rams without manners) 'The strong of Ovodovka', 'The Crazies of Cycelnyk' '(The Thieves of Turnovka)' '(The Dumb People of Uman)'.

It is possible that the source of these nicknames, that shows elements of the ridiculous or the weak in the lives of the Jews who were residents of these towns, or professions, by belittling their honor, —

stretched from the period of rule by the ‘Nobility’ and the Polish landowners which set the character and profession of these Jews. And maybe there was a Jewish wag that was taken up with joking out of an assessment of that prickly braid. In any event, the nickname of the city and its residents reflected their spiritual essence and also nobility of the soul. A characteristic existence indicate traits of individuals whose origin may be attributed to others, that conveyed meanings long forgotten. Nevertheless, from the purity of the methods, there is the glory of the spirit, and they are worth mentioning:

Batya, Hananiah’s daughter was a wealthy but weak woman, and dedicated to the issues of *Tzedakah*, and her whole life was dedicated to helping those who were suffering, and the needy. For all her life, even when she grew old, she stood as a guardian of those in need of her help. In the fall and before Passover, with the melting of the snows and the fragile mud which reached the knees, she would go out to her ‘holy work’ in stockings, because it was not possible to cross through the mud in shoes or the trenches in the side streets of the poverty of those waiting for her help. There were others, workers, and simple folk, women and men, possessing good intentions, such as Simcha-Yekk’l Tallisnik’s and others, who would appear as angels of good will from on high during periods of trouble, in the darkness of trouble, in the secrecy of ‘anonymous giving.’

An old baker took on the *mitzvah* of breaking the thirst of the poor who return to the door, and the poor scoundrels during the hot days of the sun, when he brings them cold water to restore their tired souls. He would shuttle back and forth carrying pails in his weak trembling hands from the well, when his legs are ready to give out from exhaustion, and he shaded his eyes, infected and nearly blind to cross over in a blue cardboard that sticks out from under the middle of his hat. He would stand the pail in the marketplace plaza, and when people approached to take a drink a slight smile would spread across his wrinkled face and his shaggy white beard, out of the pleasure of having performed a *mitzvah*.

In the year 1905, during the pogrom, the large store of Moshe Feldman, one of the elders of the city and its wealthy class, was assaulted. This occurred on a Friday in the afternoon, in the month of December. The combustible matter that was in the store was taken out and ignited, spreading [the fire] and surrounded his house and the buildings around it. With the coming of darkness, close to the hour of ‘*Kabalat Shabbat*’, when his store and house were still surrounded by fire, he went over to one of the closets that faces out for the house, he took out a *kapote* for *Shabbat*, and entered the home of one of his neighbors. He changed his attire, and went to the *Bet HaMedrash*, silently and peacefully, to the *Kabalat Shabbat* prayer. After prayers, he entered a neighbor’s house to bless the wine, then went out and looked at the conflagration with eyes running with tears.

One of the scions of the city, who after his wedding moved to Teplik, turned to the Head of the local council with a very fundamental request, and it was that he should attempt to reach the his betrothed of the past from whom he parted for 16-17 years back, secretly, through a side room, at the home of his father-in-law, the Rabbi of Teplik suffered remorse about the embarrassment that he perpetrated years ago on the young lady, and was thrown like the the hold of a slingshot with the suffering of compassion regarding this matter. The ceremony of forgiveness took place in the presence of the Rabbi, and it was a frightening and trembling picture. Adult men, who had families and children, man and woman standing like they were chastised, with a lowered head, one against the other, humbly

apologizing and regretting the insult from years ago, by asking for forgiveness and compassion.

During the period when the Bolsheviks were in the Ukraine, a time when the eye of the secret police was open to every movement that was being made for a religious *Mitzvah*, a son was born to Yitzhak Rygorodsky, a resident of the city. The father of the newborn, a doctor of the authorities, could not, you understand, circumcise his son. However, his grandfather endangered his life to execute this sacred *Mitzvah*: he traveled to Kiev, transferred the infant to one of the suburbs of the city, and initiated him into the covenant of our Patriarch Abraham.

And there was an incident with one of the apostates, born in the city, from a well-known family, that converted to Christianity a number of years before this, and demonstrated and emphasized his Christianity at every opportunity. In the period of the pogroms of 1919-1920, the farmers of the surroundings organized themselves to protect the men of the city who were Jews from the uncivilized sectors [of the community]. The community during that period, exerted a great deal of energy, desperately and actively applied themselves with complete commitment. During the days of the pogroms, the apostate went about like a shadow. The uncivilized sectors that burst through from time to time, dropped killed people in the city and its surroundings, and gave no surcease. The voice of Jewish blood in his veins called for the help of his brethren, but could not sunder the spiritual qualities. And it, the useless appendage, rescued the city from a bloody slaughter, that was the intent of the known oppressor – Waliniec.

## 23. The Kishinev Pogrom

The sales season in the stores, that year before Passover, was poor. The winter was hard and there was anticipation for the Passover season. The storekeepers went from being idle by their stores, with their hands inside their sleeves: There was limited things for the working people to do: People returned from the fairs oppressed, ‘an accident should fall on them’ – was the complaint along the row of stores. — The gentiles acted, as if in concert, not to buy this year. They wander around with a whip in hand, looking into the stores with curiosity with eyes of lust, they approach, touch and feel the merchandise and then return to where they came from. During *Hol HaMoed* in the first days after the holiday, salespeople circulated in the marketplace, burdened with worry, with their hats drawn down, grumbling and grumpy: –

- Is it worth making the trip to Yermoliniec to Balta, since the merchandise here, lies like a stone if it has no one to turn it over?
- One told the other secretly, and from mouth-to-mouth, the news spread in the entire city: – A pogrom was carried out in Kishinev.
- How?

It was difficult to believe, and they thought it was just a rumor. They waited for the newspapers, and while trembling, tensely read the real news about the outburst of drunk hooligans on the third day of

Passover, and the assault on the police station. A detachment of soldiers was sent to quiet down the spirits. We found out about incidents of murder and plunder, destruction and wrecking in a number of cities and towns in the surroundings: Kalusz, Perlica, Ongani which was on the Romainian border, Benadry, Dovosry, and the same with villages that were settled by Jews. Detailed letters were received, relatives arrived fleeing these events, shaken and we learned of the details: – the hooligans smashed windows, broke up and burned furniture and pianos: they ripped up pillows and blankets that they scattered, smashing filled the airspace in the streets of the city, and spread out like snowflakes onto the roads and paths. Filled with feathers, the hooligans murdered their victims with great cruelty, they murdered their stomachs and filled them with feathers, they hammered nails into their heads, and other deeds such as this.

Who were these hooligans?

It was thought that this was conceived by the newspapers to invent governments and censorship. They wrote in cryptic words and used the following wording to cover up the ‘hooligans.’ meaning — men that are not from the settlement, wandering flower- sellers, uncultured, undisciplined, which the local officials cannot impose control on them. The Jews in the towns read, were taken aback, and pulled with their shoulders. There was something here that was not understood that aroused curiosity: — Was this created by those people that organize pogroms whom the police are unable to control?

The newspapers conveyed additions that were fragmentary and suggestive. Tensely, they read between the lines, between the white marks left by the censors. The presence of ‘Protection’ became known — that the people of the working class, butchers and workers, organized cadres of the working class attacked the hooligans, but the police and the army disrupted this. And here, the world’s reaction arrived, among the Jews of Europe and America; a cry of destruction was heard from the leading authors, of both Russian and Jewish, the liberal newspapers demanded a trial to get justice. Even the local people were aroused. The Zionists called for a gathering in the Zionist Synagogue. They heard details, conclusions, and a commission was established. The Intelligentsia and the important *Balebatim* went out to raise money. Wagons were sent with bread, flour and linen went out to raise money, working people and storekeepers gathered up clothing, and bedding from the villages in the fields in Serbia, for those impacted by the hooligans.

The pogroms were not forgotten even after they stopped. The spilled blood remained in the memory for a long time, and the heartache remained even if it was the same. In the towns far from the places that were assaulted, life returned to normal slowly. People occupied themselves with their daily livelihoods, and the train brought people every day and took away others. The relatives who fled returned to their places. The newspaper conveyed news of the judgements levied on the hooligans, which was waiting to grow longer, they called out by name, famous lawyers, Jews and Russians, who were invited to present the financial demands of the Jews and their interests. In an acceptable fashion — the names of the Russian lawyers that were standing to defend the hooligans. From time-to-time, between conversations about business and work, in the *Bet HaMedrash* and in the street, the issue of Kishinev was pushed aside. It was noted on the pages of the English correspondent — that the hand of the minister was in the planning for the pogroms... they chattered in detail and in minute detail of their explanations and plans. Duplicity of the government, the police, hooligans that were brought in from

other places. The designation of 'Hooligan' was still clouded and unclear, a subject for discussions about its essence, and place in the Russian cohort in relation to pogroms. A refugee from the group, who returned from Kishinev uninvited [had this to say]: —

I saw a hooligan. I saw him on Alexandrovski Street beside 'Traktir Moskva' the steady place of the hooligans. A short 'Katzap' with a round belly, red eyes, even a stretched out red (?), with a yellowish beard, wearing a 'podyovka' (vest) and a blue hat. A man like other men — just a hooligan... this was one of the wild ones that participated in the pogrom — my relative explained to me.

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In the city, the death of Dr. Herzl became known. The Zionist Synagogue ran a memorial assembly with many participants. One of the speeches unfolds a portion of his life, his personal sacrifice on the altar of the redemption of the Nation, and the suffering of his soul, and his disappointments until his warm heart burst... many of the audience shed tears. The feeling of being orphaned grabbed the entire audience.

Zionism strengthened, and even some members of the work force joined it, they were considering donating to *Keren Kayemet* and participating in Zionist meetings. However the newly-joined Zionists got along with difficulty, and a number of them stopped. The young ones matured and left the city, but no new ones came.

The central worry of the city folk was the Russo-Japanese War (1905), despite the fact that it had little influence on the city. Only one or two of the local young men that served in the army were sent to the Far East. They wrote long letters, full of Russian words and let everyone know that they, and their units were sent to the Far East. The letters did not arouse any worries, but despite this, nevertheless, the tension rose and grew stronger once the news arrived about the defeat of the Russian army — near Tsushima, Mukden, and Port Arthur, and there were those who were pleased:

A repayment for Kishinev...

In that same year the issue of the draft arose in all its intensity. The head of the council was laden with concerns and work. The authorities demanded a doubling of the amount of soldiers, and there was a resistant relationship from the committee for the draft. There was opposition from the retarded, those carrying papers certifying their illness, deserters and those that disappeared. During the gray winter evenings, the recruits that were taken for the army rebelled, going to the houses of the discharged ones, and the deserters, demanding money. At fairs, one saw gentiles wearing leather hats of Siberia, broad-faced, red-nosed, and having blue eyes, turbid and with fluttering content. The people in the marketplace accosted them with questions, and from them they received heated replies:

— We spilled blood ...

The Jews pulled back to the sides, out of fear, and scattered.

The new *Pristav* (City Officer) intermittently invited a few of the *Balebatim*, lessors of mills and

business people in the city. He discussed issues of the city with them, sitting in the darkness, in filth and mud. Incidentally, this was a hint about the young feverish men, apprentices to the working men, among which there were also the sons of *Balebatim*.

They discussed afterwards as to what was the nature of the new City Officer? If he is a good 'gentile,' why the order to put up lanterns in the city, and cleaning up after the fair?

They gathered in the local council, conversed and spoke and then decided, as was the custom, for a second gathering, and perhaps it will be accepted. They sent the head of the council to negotiate, and the *Pristav* held to his position, and strongly, in accordance with the real order of the authorities of the province. They gathered a second time, and all of the *Balebatim*, innkeepers and taverns to permanently set up a lantern on a stand at the entrance to their premises. At the advice of the sitting Head, the kindling of the lanterns was turned over to a contractor. The contractor, a clever Jew who had previously been a glazier, for a lack of work, and was close to the *Pristav*, received this appointment. Towards evening he would run with a lit torch from lantern to lantern, carrying a ladder on his shoulder, accompanied by a policeman. More difficult was the order to clean the streets in front of the houses and past the marketplace. And most of the group could not abide by this. Women and girls, tired *Balebatim*, with their shirts stuck to their skin and the only thing on them was a *Tallit Kattan*, went out with brooms swept and scraped. The dust went up like a pillar from the earth and with a nearby dark cloud covered the entire area. The 'Uradnik' appeared (the Policeman) and forcefully took out a few of the men from the house, according to the protocol, and fined them. Once again they gathered in the local council, and again they found a way out: To turn over the issue of cleaning to the 'Uradnik' himself.

Every Tuesday, after the fair there was a 'kippur' (nikippur) the presentation of the 'Uradnik', in a tight police uniform with a sword attached to his thigh, as he wanders the streets of the city, oversees the workers – the farmers of the surroundings, elderly lady gentiles, little boys and girls that were drafted according to orders. And in his hoarse voice he would shout in order to stress to the group itself: —

— za-meh-tai.... (sweep!)

Children ran after him with brooms.

The following day, he would repeat everything from the beginning. Cows and pigs are digging into the piles of garbage. Again the ground is covered with the droppings of horses and cows, the covers of seeds of watermelons and cucumbers. Housewives pour out tubs of waste water on the piles and throw them into the garbage. And the *kippur* of the policeman enters and collects the tax for the cleanup, passes by and shouts, as he holds the handle of his sword in his right hand: -

za-meh-tai....

## 24. The Year 1905

On that same morning it was clouded and raining. Rain fell at night, that stopped and started up as they

would, and turned the ground to a light, sticky mud. A damp, bone-piercing autumn fog covered the ground, the buildings the trees, and brought a spirit of weariness and sadness onto the soul. Beside the pharmacy, men stood and read from the newspaper the manifest (the Czar's word) of October 17. The group grew wider and larger, until it broke into two separate groups

From time-to-time, the people standing pushed into one another and were shoved to the side when a wagon passed by, and shards of sticky mud splashed from between its wheels. The people were not impressed by the reading of the 'manifest' and the constitution. A sense of fright was hanging in the air, grew stronger with news about strikes and patriotic demonstrations.

Would it only be that all turns out for the good!

Weak and indistinct weak news about the pogroms infiltrated into the city. It was told that there was a surge of hatred towards the Jews, and that it continues to grow stronger. Strange people are circulating in the cities and villages, who snort and incite. One person told of seeing that he saw them in the villages: drunk, swollen eyes, and emitting sparks of hatred. Workers that had gone out to the villages returned to where they came from. People returned from the fairs with bad news on their mouths: The gentiles are neither responding or buying, they are refugees saying half-words and it is impossible to get to the end of what they have in mind. From time-to-time frightening things reach us. With darkness the movement ceases, the marketplace is empty, the stores are closed. Shutters and windows are also closed. People are closing themselves up in their houses at night, and they toss and turn on their beds at night, and are frightened of every rustle and blown leaf.

In the morning they hurry to the marketplace, circulate among the stores to hear news. When they see a 'gentile' that they knew passing by in his wagon, they stop him, approach him and ask [questions]. The latter glances sideways at the breathless Jews waiting for an answer, he hesitates a bit, like someone who wishes to say something, and is also regrettable, he angrily applies his whip to his horses and disappears... some moderate farmer is standing in the marketplace, and the Jews surround his wagon, and take out stalks of straw and chew on them out of a need to disperse the angst in their souls; hesitatingly, they ask him, about this and that. The latter lowers his eyes, and cuts scars on the ground with the whip in his hand, or looks for something in his wagon, adjusts the feeding bags that is on the heads of the horses, and sweeps his nose from side to side: –

(The Holy Gods only know), and they quarrel and quarrel and groan like pigs...

– But what are you people saying?  
– God only knows... what do I know? I wasn't...

They interpreted answers like this as a sign of bad news, and they went and spread it through the entire city. The rustle of the trees in the yards of the small and low wooden houses in the outskirts of the city, they were startled during the nights, as if they had uncovered secret conversations.

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This incident took place in the month of December, on Friday, before Christmas. From the early

morning, the 'gentiles' streamed into the city. Why have we postponed — the Jews said — instead of arranging the fair on Tuesday, as usual, they postponed it to Friday. The fair continued to grow, and loaded wagons with the closeness of the riders, whose legs hung out between the spokes of the wagon. Among them are guys dressed in hats and their eyes are sleepy, and strange. A noise is carried through the air like a waterfall coming down a slope, or like the noise of a mill. Faces, with hungry eyes circulate beside the stores, stalls and shutters.

Suddenly, something moved on the marketplace plaza. A diverse collection of new white coats and furs, and tattered, faded coats, coats of fur over colored shirts and sheepskin hats, turned backwards — [they] moved ahead. These people emerged with a host of people and others, equipped and armed with pickaxes and wagon spokes, like a terrible animal with a spine, crawling and moving in the direction of the bridge. Somewhere a flame leapt up, tongues of fire burst through in the middle of nearby columns of smoke, the ring of breaking windows and the noise of doors and shutters, the voices of people, hoarse and wailing. Doors scraping on their hinges, surrounded by shutters and noise. Men carrying packages, trunks and merchandise were pushed aside and ran aimlessly as if they had lost their minds. A panic arose with the first fires, and the noise of wagon spokes broke through, and the sound of horses hooves on the stones of the road. 'Gentiles,' owners of homes and fields, people of standing, in the village or city, fled. The villagers stood their horses and wagons in neighborhoods that were outside of the city, returning afterwards and joined in the sabotage. They broke through windows and doors and went into the inside of the houses, plundered, abused, and then fled.

There was no loss of human life, 20-30 stores were plundered, where then set afire and burned down. And a number of houses were broken into and vandalized. The police — the '*Pristav*' his second in command, and police, were not seen for this entire time. With nightfall, a lady emissary was sent to the '*Pristav*'. A number of policemen showed up, who looked after order around the houses and stores that were burned. On the following morning a unit of soldiers showed up — about twenty men, who then spread out across the city, they conducted searches both at Jews and gentiles, traveled to the nearby villages and then returned.

The city epitomized mourning. Black scorched pillars, stood out from the discarded wreckage, and in several days a total smoke came forth and went up.

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Bitterness ruled in the hearts of the young, the air was electrified and laden with feelings of anger and revenge. The blood call from the Jewish Pale of Settlement was mixed with the surges of terror, the imprisoned and the searched for across the entire breadth of Russia. Blood touched blood, and the reaction approached a task that foresaw an array of decrees against the Jews in the branches of commerce, and manufacture, culture and schools with the clear intent to wreck the community life of the Jewish community, and to bring it to a state of internal demoralization, and to transform the masses into a dust of subjugated individuals that are comfortable with objectives.

Like most of the Jews in the Pale of Settlement, the Jews of the city avoided harm, in the troubles of Israel in a manner so obvious and sensitive. Being closed off both economically and culturally in the

crowded areas, and separated as if they were removed from the public, of the troubles of Israel, and placed in the area of closed boundaries that were crowded. Feeling for the troubles of Israel in an international circle only reached them from afar, like an aura from far away, out of tradition, and the ignorance of the past. The frightening dates of the destruction of the nation, were etched into the memory of the nation, , the suffering in exile, decrees and pursuits, everyone carried them in their heart like the shadow of a nightmare from the nadir of the suffering of the nation, from even faraway generations. However shadows are not real, and will also not elicit sighing and tears.

The sighing that burst from piles of prayers and threnodies, from the hearts of those who listened to the explications of the Shd"r from the Yeshiva of Kovno in the great *Bet HaMedrash* when he described the agonies of digging graves of the bad people who commit suicide .

And there arose the bitter and terrifying reality, out of the suffering of the individual and the general population at no difference. A pogrom like a fire or a flood, which makes no distinction between one Jew and another, or between different types of blood, or between the individual and the community –

Along its path it attacks every person of Israel. This poisonous mystery that worked its way through all of the streets of Russia, struck the storekeeper, the rich contractor, merchandise houses, workplaces, students in the universities as well as the students in trade schools and those that worked in workshops and factories. The cooperation in the villages with the initiative of the authorities and those who supported them, an objective was established with the intent to dispossess the Jewish merchant and storekeeper from his position. These were stores of men with a fist, and the wealthy ones of the village that were supported by '*The Union of the Russian Nation*' and the '*Angel Michael*' (these were actual reactionary unions in Czarist Russia). They took to the idea, that every Jew is possessed by a cheater or a sapper, who assassinates non-Jews. There is no difference between one Jew and another: merchants, storekeepers, lawyers and even doctors, are full of intrigues of deceit and hatred, and they have only one objective – to squeeze out the blood of the poor farmer, with their assaults and deceit.

There were those who said: this method that engaged the Russian police force of that same period, is similar to the battle of a housewife against flies, who makes every effort to make them flee or die. This was the way the war of the Russian government was waged against the Jews, they stood in the face of making a choice: emigrate from the land or die of hunger. Because of this, many were appended to the stream of emigration, they streamed to relatives in America, whose gates were wide open to any emigrant. The pogroms and the reaction that came in its wake aroused the emotions in the hearts of family members that left for America previously, and it was these who did a great deal to accelerate and extract their relatives from the distress [they faced] and bring them over (the family members). Many of the Jews in the area and the nearby villages just simply emigrated, going to wherever the wind would blow them, and not only to America.

In specific sectors, there were spirits of the objective to give their children a general education in a gymnasium, which will bestow upon them special privileges of citizenship, and to use this to get them out of the distress caused by the decrees issued on the Jews who lived mostly as a people bereft of *Haskalah*. This education was called 'klassen' (classes – with an inference to the classes in a gymnasium).

With the boundaries of exclusion levied on the Jews in high schools, and higher, efforts grew stronger, and changed into the essence of the lives of fathers and sons, having to objective that every effort is worthwhile and equivalent. Regardless of their standing, the youth turned with intensity toward learning. The rich and the wealthy took steps in order to overcome these difficulties, and they found for themselves means and paths to reach teachers, to a principal, they admitted 'gentiles' at their expense to national gymnasiums, in order to gain the privilege by their hands to get a place for their sons in the '*Numerus Clausus*', and there were those who entered their children temporarily to an ordinary high school, until a place will become available to them in the national gymnasium. The middle class encountered severe difficulties in educating their sons who were aiming to get into one of the (eight-string) schools with dedication and personal sacrifice. They stuck to their studies for months and years, becoming ascetic in the face of tortures, with shaggy hair and assaults, they would arrive for examinations like doctors that were raised from their graves. The proctors related to them sternly, and the full extent of the law. They were tested a step at a time and a level at a time: four classes, [then] six classes, and to the last, the final examinations. Even this last test didn't come easily, they were tested several times until they received their diplomas. The lucky ones that did receive diplomas were thwarted by the wall of '*Numerus Clausus*' when they came to the university, the percentage of this group going into medicine was especially small. In the capitol cities – [Saint] Petersburg and Moscow, where the percentage [of Jews] was larger, they encountered formal difficulties, regarding the privileges that the rest of the gymnasium-educated Jews had. Receiving the title of 'Lawyer' was bounded for Jews, and the same was so for engineering, leadership or government jobs in which there was almost no putting down a foot for Jews. The youths were bent by poverty and from a lot of work. It was difficult for them to give up on their dreams and accept the verdict of disappointment. And they were not inoculated against this possibility. They struggled with their fate in the hopes of a miracle that would save them and take them out of the mire. Of these, some became teachers (conditional status) with the acceptance to prepare for the tests with positive results, or should become ordinary teachers, to teach and prepare their students with no attachment to tests and their results. Others went along the line of least resistance, gave up on all of this and registered to become dentists, pharmacists, veterinarians – the subjects that you will master will not be as difficult as academic subjects. From them that were selected to be actual Rabbis ('*Rabbis on behalf of*') in villages or became grooms depending on the table of rich in-laws, and to see that those who remained became 'permanent students' – that is what they were called – in blue hats of students that hadn't left them with a permanent bitterness in their hearts against everybody, and themselves.

Of those who were worthy of being noted and were from the city, that not one of them did not try to attain his objective by changing his religion, like many others, who bought their academic world by betrayal of the root of their upbringing.

## 28. The Banks

Among the merchants and storekeepers they spoke of the need for a 'Peoples Bank' for credit — like the community banks that were set up in the Jewish villages for the middle class that struggles for its existence.

Bershad was never a city of the rich. There are only two or three rich men, they are the only ones that

have a pedigree and a little bit of money, businessmen who live in the houses as a legacy from their ancestors, [the houses] have broad beams and ‘electric lights’ that spin in the middle of the ceiling, and old furniture that came from a declining noble. Or — Individual storekeepers that make a living, who had peripheral businesses in a partnership. However, the majority made a living with difficulty, like the grain merchants, who visit the fairs, working people, people that ran workshops, and there also were working people that circulate through the villages all week, owners of restaurants and food markets, speculators engage in conversation, Jews without steady work, who have a difficult time supporting themselves, and live in an oppressed state all week. On the Sabbath, they permitted themselves to eat a minuscule piece of meat. For the children, they would prepare back on Friday morning a large pot of compote with beans or a — *tzimmes* — to remove the *challahs* that they relished eating and were in their mouths, and other Sabbath food that have gone up in value. The Sabbath was recognized by the cleanliness of the house, with a colored tablecloth on the table with copper candlesticks, or silver ones that were inherited, and a white covering on the beds. A big oil lamp hangs on a fixture in the ceiling and is held up by a network of thin metal wires tied in the shape of a ‘violin’, and casts a dim light on the table, and long shadows dance around. Poverty emanates from every niche, however they put on the face of wealthy people, guests to a group with the *Gabbai* of the Synagogue. ‘*Kiddush*’ is prepared and go to eat ‘a bit of something’ elsewhere, and they behave like *Balebatim* looking like them regarding everything.

At a set time the ranks felt a turn for the worse in the area of economics. New people opened factories and offices, which attracted people of means to them. The area of trade broadened, and grew past the accepted boundary. The marketing of necessities (e.g. food) went over without an intermediary from nobles to the merchant, to the agent of an office by means of the direction of sales to wholesale channels, by means of financial combinations, credit and riots. The grain trade in which many partook got concentrated now in the hands of people of means and the wholesale merchants who converse, speculators, peddlers that circulate about the villages, the sellers and buyers without means — had their sources of earnings punctured. The remaining branches of the practical world went this way as well: — Store keeping, domestic manufacture. The newly announced opportunities were given to people of substantial means, from an economic standpoint, because there was pressure [on most] due to the lack of means. As luck would have it for these wholesalers, they also these were constrained in their means, and lacked returning customers, and goods given out on credit were returned to their hands, thus, in the fullness of time that the [resident] wholesale merchants became obligated to [the newly arrived] wholesalers, because of security given, and other obligations and in fact they turned into agents who sold merchandise on behalf of others.

Also, grain merchants, speculators and people engaged in discussion who had gone down and dwindled, became storekeepers, as a form of protection against unemployment, so that money would always be found in the stores. They also were helped out by the [newly arrived] wholesalers, who were more interested in return, and allocated merchandise to them for distribution. In this manner, new stores were opened on every street and every corner. Rooms were turned into stores, and competition grew for the financially able merchants, who fought with each other over every buyer, by the competition, they distributed merchandise on credit, the privilege of individuals, [which was] transformed into the privilege of the many.

According to reliable estimates, the number of stores during this period was very large: — 300 grocery stores, 50-60 combined haberdashery and grocery stores, 100 haberdasheries, about 200 textile stores to which there were a large number of stalls for haberdashery *and* textiles added during fairs: — Stores which sold bread, butcher stores, and stores for sweets and sugar lumps, restaurants and wine-houses. Most of the stores were formally registered under the name of the wife or daughter or in the name of the investing merchant, out of caution in case of an instance of bankruptcy, and because of the special connection by the authorities, so that they would not imprison a woman.

In this vortex of economic survival there was aroused among those who had the capacity, moved over to the area of manufacture, which also included old factories and the erection of new ones for the manufacture of oils, macaroons, candles, soap and lumps of sugar. Also beer factories were erected, tanning and leather stores, and also an electricity station, printing facilities, a large and comprehensive flour mill, which has a long history, since the train brought over its output to internal Russian areas — the Caucasus, Lithuania and Poland. On one side, several places for making a living opened, and on the second side the number of people grew, as always, outside of the economic life. These people struggled for their existence literally on the basis of their last energies: they borrowed money, paid high interest rates, unpaid loans that were picked up by those who were successful, they sought loans, relaxation of terms for paying a debt in arrears, through mutual help and mutual need.

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News reached us about the establishment of partnered institutions for mutual credit, and it became like the issue of rescue support. It was told that several units of this nature already existed, who breathed life into the economy. They were able to rescue things from bankruptcy: —

— A new trouble, my father, may he rest in peace, relayed the details of what happened to R' Yaakov Yossi Halperin from Berdichev, one of the richest men of his generation, who was turned into an impoverished pauper because of interest.

— And does one pay interest to a ‘business owner’?

— A co-signed loan contains all that you need to know. If you have a co-signed loan and you are a partner, and if you are a partner, you have the privilege of getting credit, in all places that have a bank, they will accept applications for a loan.

They placed the responsibility on one that traveled to Odessa, to gather and bring back detailed information. They decided to meet after the Sabbath on Saturday night. On the following day, a few individuals went to the stores with a sheet of paper rolled up as a tube to sign up *Balebatim* and merchants ‘*who wish to open a mutual credit bank, for the use of the many.*’ The request was sent to the certification office, and after a few days a reply was received from there. A squat man appeared, with mustache, speaking fluent Russian, who was sent from the central office to be the manager of the bank to be established.

At the same time, a branch of the ‘*Bank for Russian Merchandising & Production*’ one of the largest banks, most of whose branches are centered in the cities of the Pale of Settlement and its towns.

Factory owners and ‘Big’ Merchants were users of the Russian Bank, although not in a large way. These were members of ‘*Mutual Credit Union*’. The Russian Bank developed and broadened its clientele, and the *Union* delayed its expansion into banking areas, and was weak in the area of its products and also in its management. The banks were also not very helpful in the improvement of the state of its operation, or its existence. Despite this, during the initial period, these credit facilities helped to pay off specific loans, and the expansion of the businesses, however they did not reach their goals. The big businesses expanded, by expansion and appropriate mergers, and the small ones dwindled away. In time, a common banking office was opened by one of the wealthy men of the city, R’ Meir Heilperin, and it had a branch in Berdichev, the center of wholesale mercantile commerce. The competition among banks brought relief to the businesses, but these difficulties did not disappear, but only added a new burden of payments under condition of short intervals. The small storekeepers and the retail merchants. Expenses and profits of about 30-40 thousand rubles a year: what then can remain for this group to need for its existence?

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A banking ‘momentum’ arose also between workers, divided by specific categories: If the storekeepers suffered from the interest of the ‘business owners’ and monied people, sometimes to the point of having to pledge their means as security, they were obligated to pay not only interest, but also a ‘business charge’ and depended on the good will of the wholesaler for putting raw material in place at the proper season. What stands out mostly is the difference between wealthy workers and poor ones, and the degree of exploitation of the latter was more severe than that of the former, to the extent that there was a lack of opportunity to get rooted in a line of work and draw sustenance from it. Essentially, they were driven to take temporary work, or became apprentices and assistants whose compensation was very minimal and considerably meager.

Banks for small amount of loans for working people existed in the cities of Lithuania and Poland — mutual funds and cooperatives and savings and loan [institutions] that had warehouses of merchandise both raw and processed. The union of Yk”A was the organizer and provided oversight on the network of these institutions. In Podolia there was a small number of them. The authorities related to the workers and their processes as if it were a ‘nest of rebellion’ and only the nearby town of Sovolravka succeeded in getting permission for a savings and loan. The existing workers and people who represented them, tried their luck, they traveled and obtained information, direction and advice. They sent a request to the Yk”A group and a request to the authorities, and they sent a cohort to Kaminiec, but the reply was negative. And so once again they turned to local authorities, they traveled to the regional [capitol] city, to Kaminiec, and to Venezia, the places where the overseer for small credit were, as comrades they formed a union – ‘*Segulah*’(*Virtue*) to counter the bad perception of the authorities – a few of the officers of the authorities who were in their place, farmers, and laborers ‘gentiles’, and they submitted new requests. After some time the intermediaries were invited to the ‘*Pristav*’ (the officer of the city), and they were asked to provide a number of additional details, and they were asked to provide several additional details. And again, they were asked to provide details to the ‘*Ispravnik*’ (An officer of the regional police), after making an effort and after emotional interviews, it was accepted, and in the end permission was granted. Asher Krasner, the shoemaker, who was one of the activists and intermediaries, ran into the street, waving the permit [granted] – we have it! And on the Sabbath, he invited the members of the union to ‘*Kiddush*’.

The savings and loan unit provided an important mission in the area of labor, both in its improvement and stabilization. Many of the small stores, the more recently joined merchants, and independent craftsmen, joined the bank in accessing credit, and monthly payments and paid interest biweekly at a low rate. The bank premises also served as a cultural center for working people, regarding cooperative and economic issues, and with its help, joint unions to serve the needy were established.

After some time, during the days of the War and the time of want, when merchandise ran short and most of the stores were closed down, the unions, to serve the needy, were the only source by which merchandise could be obtained, and not in small measure, in according to the permissions granted, to support the economy of the city.

## 26. Rising and Falling

The fate of the people in the city was like the fate of grasses that grew in the field, straightening out and growing from the rays of the sun, and among them, there were those that got trampled and withered. There were those who stubbornly strove for indirect channels – and succeeded. The same was true for working people who saved, gathered together and went up. They abandoned the trades of their fathers and became merchants, *balebatim* in the main streets. They bought the assets of those who failed, improved and repaired them. They raised multi-storey buildings with stores and large viewing windows, spreading electric light that cast a shadow on the small ones and demeaned them further than was true. Here and there, buildings were erected, high scaffolding and pilings and ‘Stars of David’ stuck at their tops, — skeletons of new buildings, under which ruined houses were hidden, having deep walls and rotten roofs that are asking to be torn down.

The train brought new people from the big cities, who came to seek sources of income in the small towns. There [newcomers] linked up with the ‘nobility’, existing factory owners, wealthy farmers, and put up new projects, they opened branches of stores that were in the large cities, and settled down permanently. In the city, there was an atmosphere of impulse that found expression in movement, in dress, and the way of life in the home and in the street. The houses were given a festive and permanent appearance, the rooms were filled with modern furniture, artistic paintings, padded tables and chairs, muslin window shades that fluttered wildly, in the evenings on those windows that were open and lit, out of which came the sound of piano-playing, the sound of gramophones playing, and a plethora of guests. A telephone network was constructed for the city, a theater, a movie theater, and carriage service.

In the houses of those who failed, the new troubles of life engendered a great deal of sorrow and suffering. Emotional complications were faced with emotional complications of shame, and natural suffering for ones who have failed. Sons and daughters suffered stress and want, and the economic state of the failure of a family, forced them to relinquish their honorable position in which their honorable relationships in which work was considered a disgrace, and secretly went out to seek work to sustain their lives. In their inner being they continued to observe the tradition of family connection,

and they dreamt dreams of a good future of self status that properly belonged to them. However, in the end they switched to become storekeepers, and minor merchants that traveled to fairs, and they accustomed themselves to the surroundings, they lived in accordance with its ways, and only attached to their family pedigree. Those that left the home of their parents, streamed to the big cities, far from the suffering of father and mother, and the weeping of the first born daughter, and they went in to be servers in the stores, or as workers in the factories. For the holidays, they would come home dressed in clean and pressed clothing, and the aura of the big city emanated from them. In order to cause contented spirit for their fathers, they would go with them to pray in the Synagogue during holidays, and this was the way the fathers lived for the moment of illusion of 'your sons being like olive seedlings around your table', sons that discharge the obligation of honoring parents according to the *Halakhah*. But at the same time, in the hearts of the sons, that hour engendered a concern for the absence of stability and the very difficult working conditions in the foreign land.

It was more difficult for the daughters to get used to travails of fitting in. These [young ladies] sat at home in their pedigree and chastity, and envy and shame ate them up. [Ths was so] for the ones who studied and had to stop their studies in the middle for the lack of means, those that picked up available professions such as: dentistry, midwifery, work in massaging, oral technology. They returned with *bona fide* certificates in hand, rented rooms, put out signs and sat waiting for the work [to come]. There were others [among them] who had skills that were similar to the ones in nearby villages, that came here. They thought that their opportunities would be better here, and competition became more intense.— a struggle for a wretched existence that had neither success or substance, they silently sat alone, eating sorrow and many dreams of good luck that were distant. In the house, mothers would worry for their daughters out of heartbreak, at night.

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The new people that settled in the city, those that had community traditions raised questions of help and charity in the heart of the community. The number of those in need of help grew: failures, victims of the overseers watchfulness. Men of the city and villages, knocked on the gates of business people but were not answered. They resented it and asked for improvements, the democratic structure of the monied institutions served as an example of the improvements [required]. There were those who demanded well-ordered elections according the current practice for those who worked according to the *Halakhah* and charity. The management to the worker and to hold general assemblies. They also approached the central institutions with their demands for organization by officers selected on the good base of friendship they had in the community. These demands grew stronger with the coming of the '*Duma*' (the Russian Parliament) — and also the central Zionists of Kishinev came from time to time in response to such demands. In the newspapers: '*Razvest*' and '*Der Frynd*', written items appeared as a demand for order in the life of the community in a systematic way, without *Gabbaim* who would rule by force.

The demands grew stronger as the elections approached for the official Rabbi's duties. The old Rabbi 'Keeper of the Medals' had grown very much older, and with the death of the Chairman of the local council, they turned here and there. There were those that wanted an accepted businessman to be

accepted by the community as the 'Formal Rabbi', a person who will be responsive to the demands of the community both specifically and in general. Others demanded a Torah scholar, a person who will respond to the demands of the community both specific and general. Others demanded not only a Torah scholar, but also fluent in the general *Haskalah* so that he will center in his hand religious issues and those that were secular both internal and external together. There were others who argued: there is no reason to change – let there be a real Rabbi on one side, and the *Dayanim* on the other.

The people could not free themselves from the issue of the elections. With all the expectations for the life of the group to be ordered, the tradition remained as before from the period of the 'New Parness' '*Gabbai Hevra Kadisha*'. Those working the election aroused the youth with promises, and the latter followed them without any analysis, leaving their specific issues [behind] and committed themselves to the election. Even for elections to the financial institutions, at the annual general assemblies, there was a quarrelsome spirit, despite government oversight and the official standard framework. The struggle at the elections was a struggle of the soul, and it drew to itself the enchantment of lust and ambition. The Jewish community heads, in the center of the country did not educate the masses for this area because of a lack of honest contact with the masses in the towns of the field, and a lack of news on the social construct taking place in them, or the connection of contempt for 'provincial business'. And with all the demands for a community life, that would be organized, at the end, everything remained just as it was, and the boundaries between the 'peaks' and the management of the community newcomers and their institutions were not changed. Both participated in the jumble, reflecting on the bizarre curiosities, in speeches, in proposals and essentially to the order of election gatherings.

In the general assembly, at one time, the Chairman requested that one of the speakers should speak to the issue at hand, and if not — he will strip from him the permission to speak.

The latter jumped up in anger:

What belongs here? Do I have the right to speak? Yes or No? And if so, then I have the permission to speak as I want to.

Despite all this, the communal development of the city proceeded in small steps, while there was constant struggle in the business routine. In time, the city was represented at country commissions that were exclusively Jewish. At the Council meeting of Jewish cooperation in [St.] Petersburg in the year 1911, in Kiev and Odessa in the years 1912, 1913, in Zionist Councils and also in one of the Congresses. The local community founded schools, a classic gymnasium, a theater group of adherents, and an orchestra. As for the 'fire-fighters' young people volunteered as well as workers and trades people with the fullness of their will and capability. The '*Pristav*' (An officer of the authorities) dressed them in uniforms at the union's expense. But they were embarrassed to go through the streets in their uniforms, in case they ran into anyone that might recognize them, and they even were ashamed to be seen by strangers. Mutual aid societies were establish, and the cooperative and municipal institutions collected sums twice a year to support themselves.

As a result there remained differences between old and new. Occasionally the people grumbled secretly – why do we have these public gatherings at the institutions? Why do so many people need to know

on whom you rely for support? We are Jews., who are accustomed to ‘anonymous giving’, in order not to embarrass anyone who lacks means. By us, we would hurry between *Mincha* and *Maariv*, in order to collect donations for the needy without revealing any names. *A Righteous Woman* dressed with her Sabbath headdress on her head would visit the homes of women who had means and request donations for a pregnant woman ready to give birth, without revealing her identity. But the ‘Old Order’ was damaged beyond repair, and in the twilight of the period of transfer, the two boundaries served the jumble, and even so, the tradition of ‘anonymous giving’ remained [in force].

From time-to-time student teachers would be cast into the city, wearing blue hats that were crushed. And jackets with glistening buttons. They were picked up by the young men of the area, whose eyes are oriented to a university, young women with a trade, and ordinary intelligent people. These people brought with them choice ideas and items for the soul from the Russian literature, as well as demands for social justice and honesty. There were those who came for specific training — ‘*Bund*’, ‘*Poalei Tzion*’, ‘*Tze’Irei Tzion*’. They inundated the spirits with questions about the Jews of Russia, what was the status of the working Jew and the Jewish nation, and they conversed with demands for cultural and political autonomy, and to direct the stream of Jewish emigration to the Yiddish literature and language. There were stormy discussions in the evenings, they lifted their voices in the silent streets, between the old stores, in side streets of ‘*Yerushalayim’keh*’ and ‘*Dolnia*’ that were in the city, in the streets of trades people and workers, sitting at night in the house of the ‘Widow’ engaging in soft conversation about work, workers, blood, sweat and struggle.

Looming on the horizon were also groups and circles without any specific sense of direction. It was an ebullient communal resource. Fighting broke out among the Zionist unions, instigated by the pressure of the economic and political conditions, from which were founded ‘*Tze’Irei Tzion*’ ‘*Poalei Tzion*’ and the ‘Territorialists’, the very movement that hovered in the darkness of the situation, like a vision of temporary refuge. Others went about as ‘Hidden’, whose time had not yet come to reveal themselves, however due to emotion there was pain bottled up in their souls.

The newspapers conveyed news about the disgrace of the situation. In conversations similar to the questions of the Jews, the Jewish tragedy was revealed in all its abysmal depth. Officers of the ‘*Soyuz*’ — the union of the Russian Nation — and ‘Archangel Michael’ produced anti-Semitic arguments, the government stifled freedom of will, and the thought of the individual and the masses. In the end — A blood libel was brought against [Mendele] Beilis and a decision handed down. They allowed themselves to be deceived, a little at a time, and the hope for a solution to the contradictions in the way of a compromise, between the national conscience and the government, got more difficult. In the heart, a silent arousal was recognized that the oppressive office continues to rot. A noteworthy sigh is — the decision in the Beilis case. The cheek of the giant Russian tree was dry, and it exists on the strength of its heritage, and in the end, it must collapse and fall.

*A. Greenberg, Beilis’ attorney writes in his memoirs — from the beginning one felt that the judgement against Beilis is not aimed just at the Jews, but rather it is a judgement against Russia itself.*

## 24. War – 1914

The War of 1914 broke out.

The summer days were hot. Women traveled to Odessa to bathe in Limassol and use the summer residences in its vicinity, and even out of the country. The people of 'Yerushalayim'keh' and 'the Dolina' enjoyed the light wind of the evening that came from over the fields, they went out and sat on the porches of the house, breathed in the air out of pleasure and to release from their situation. The air was heavy, and carried the odor of war.

With dawn, the populace was aroused to the bizarre sound of hustle and bustle. One heard the noise of the wheels of wagons, horses galloped and the air carried the residue of wild voices. Men quickly seized a jacket, put their feet into the house shoes and went out.

Is this war?

In the plaza of the marketplace, on the street of the nobles, beside the Catholic Church, there stood rows upon rows of densely packed wagons, in which there were the youth of the village, drunken-eyed with [red] drunken eyes and Isolated Crystals from isolated entertainment, strapped in with colored belts whose ends stick out from their jackets. The latter either sat or stood and jumped into the wagon at a gallop. The authorities of the village — the 'Starszyna' the *Starosta* and the policemen in woolen coats and new leather hats and turn signs on their chests, stood beside them robust and erect, and they wiped the sweat on their foreheads with their hands, and threatened the youth with shouts and blows, even using staves. From the side streets of the city, men streamed, along with women and children, and the elderly shaded their eyes and looked to the distance beyond the wagons, One of the ushers oriented them to face the way, and he drove them on with his stave. The July sun is seething and emerged during the early morning hours, and went behind clouds and once again emerged and shone on the houses with the brightness of a show of lights and bells.

From time-to-time wagons arrived, with wild singing accompanying by a melodic phrase at the end. A young gentile girl with a diapered baby, stood beside the wagon, wiping away the tears with the edges of the kerchief on her head, then one of the gentiles straightens up, puts his hand on the shaft and jumps off the wagon while the sound of his singing is not over, he then seizes the hand of an elderly mother bends over and gives her a kiss, while her second hand makes the sign of a crucifix His hoarse voice mixes in with other voices during the song. An old gentile wearing a woolen hat and a mustache in the style of 'Taras Bulba' takes a small crucifix wrapped in a large handkerchief, ties it onto the throat of the youth, who is carrying a linen suitcase on his shoulder. The young man bows, kisses the old man on the hand, and the old man hugs the youth and kisses him on the head. To the side, Jewish youths from the villages are standing, surrounded by people they knew, women, both old and young, wiping their noses in a handkerchief, silently weeping with contorted faces, and their lips muttering a silent prayer accompanied by tears.

That same morning the stores did not open. People stood as if frozen, and the look in their eyes was by far full of worry. It was secretly told, about the order of a general draft of all men up to the age of fifty, including men with a 'red certificate'. One said that according to reports, [the draft] will also

include holders of blue certificates (a drafted soldier who has already served), at nightfall they came from the train station, related the news, with exaggerated additions, that as if out of a lust to enlarge the confusion. On the following day, people went their way through side streets, secretly, to the banks, with their hats drawn over their eyes, so as not to be recognized, and there they ran into others that had come earlier. They stood and waited until the doors were opened. The line continued to grow, it continued to get longer. The first ones got the full amount of their money and went off, however on the morrow, the later arrivals received a payout of only part, a third, or a quarter, along with rejections. Meanwhile, the inventory in the stores was emptied. The merchandise were put down in cellars and vanished, and one could sense the lack of store [bought] necessities.

The war was integrated, and woven into, the fabric of normal life, public affairs, along with the defense of the motherland. Movement increased with the arrival of the train, people are coming and going – suppliers and secondary suppliers, people who conversed and speculators, they linked up with banks, and with local factories, to respond to the invitation to supply the needs of the army, as well as factory managers who were freed from the draft, others came and did as they did. They were shocked and traveled off to the big cities, and as workers and inspectors, they entered the factories making products for the army. They would come out in long boots that reached up to the knees, wearing Swedish leather jackets and leather hats, loaded with ready good oil, with the discharge cards in their pockets.

The war intensified, and it swallowed people and lives. Occasionally, draft orders came out and most of the draftees were young, young boys from students [on], trades people and workers. The rumors about the antics of the Chief General, Nikolai Nikolayevich in the publishing cities of Lithuania and Poland, about the expulsion and imprisonment, and the main body of Jewish masses who for no reason, were also removed from the places where they lived. Like dark still shadows the act of assembling Jews appeared in the center and at the periphery: there were reports of Jewish soldiers surrendering into captivity and revealing to the enemy the secrets of the war, Jews in (*lybtzudaks*) miniature *tzitzit*, were taking geographic maps over to the headquarters of the Germans for their use, which they hid in their curled side locks, they smuggled out gold and jewelry. The antics of the middle ages were renewed: they picked up soldiers at the front and in the city, in the field of battle and the barracks. They spread false rumors and lies about the Jews living in the villages.

In the *Duma* (the Russian Parliament) one heard inciting speeches, and in newspapers published writings of venom and poison. In every place, they informed against the Jews as if they were traitors to the motherland.

Is there not a spark of compassion for the Jewish nation, is there no consideration for all of its victims, and the blood of its sons? Was it for nothing that blood was spilled to fertilize the ground? And the odor of bad grapes, and the stench of old urine and the eternal hostility towards Israel?

Desertions spread like an infectious disease: Young men did not present themselves, and were not drafted. A very strong and uncompromising feeling impelled them to utilize every means not to go into the army. The city was transformed into an inn for deserters. From the cities and towns and nearby settlements these partners in fate, sorrow, loneliness and danger caused [them] to be pulled to it (i.e.

the city). Alert and tense, they wandered about in the streets, with ears cocked and a steady fear in their eyes. 'Rabbits' they were called, and like rabbits they jumped from place to place, from house to house in fear of the authorities following their footsteps, like hunters stealing after their prey, as if they knew where they were, and where they hid, and therefore 'finished' them off by means of giving them a fixed 'present'. The enlightened Jewish community related to these deserters with disgust. They covered them with the blame of not being traditional, being fearful, and an unwillingness to go to battle. However the reality and the facts fell off the faces of the accused, and they nullified all the accusations. Was the number of Jewish deserters this large in those lands where the Jews had obtained equal rights? Even the number of Jewish deserters in Russia had decreased significantly. In the absence of any basis regarding the accusations, they were refuted by the many Jewish donors in the *Land of Israel* during The First World War.

But then, another thought takes hold, a negative one, that used to accompany revelations of a decided category to the point of vanishing from reality. There are not senses in the strong emotions of family members that are nearest, of all the facts that come to bounding category at the devil's place. The good people of the world were unable, using their spiritual energy to see the Jewish soul fluttering in the air, the soul of the young Jew, for to the extent that it is ground underfoot, it awakens in him emotions of a parallel reaction. These emotions are not bestowed at a cultural level, and not always are they positive and efficient, they burst out in volcanic emotions of nature to the point that they shed all traces of compassion, even towards themselves.

On its face, it was the outburst of youth, that one of the 'seniors' could dispose of with a roar. But in reality, it was a quiet attack, that with in it, actually, contains a form of revenge of one type against another. There is nothing in it any form of revenge in the rotten regime, with its dedicated patriotic offices, those who have control and standing, and among them are the members of 'Soyuz' threatening Jewish deserters, traitors of the motherland — since they themselves attempt such treason with their own hands?

Hard days arrived. With defeat, the hatred grew stronger. False accusations and those who perpetrate them against Jews dodge them, and there were investigations and imprisonments. Mental weakness overtook the 'patriots' and they were contained. The people of the local authorities were investigated and found guilty. The grown ups refrained from touching minors out of a sense of mutual responsibility. In the meantime, the location of the quarreling was wrecked, the barbed wire fence of the place of refuge was penetrated — but the youth was not deterred. It stubbornly continued along its way and even with a lack of compassion for themselves. However, it did not deter injuries to the body — the extraction of teeth, damaging the ears, fractures and muscle strain. Many of the young appeared before the draft committee for examination, and they had bodily defects: a broken nose, a fracture — inflicted if only to avoid the draft. The soul of the youth darkened, like a forest that has no end.

Was this because of justification? Jewish tradition and its laws are completely against inflicting a defect to a human body, or to wound the body itself, but the thinking of the people was otherwise. It was as if from the beginning they indicated that there was no sin against tradition or the law. This was also the opinion of the Rabbis who stood for the observance of the Torah and *Halakhah*, in the nearby towns, at the borders with Serbia and Podolia, 'the houses of those with bodily defects' received the

youth not as sinners, but as victims of the police, on whom the law of 'redemption of the captured' was ruled, they understood them, and justified their deeds. The simple Jews, honest, forgave deep in their hearts with brotherly feelings.

## 28. In the Snare of the War

The days – were days of war. Every day people are running at an accelerated pace – suppliers, military men, storekeepers, and they converse. They buy and sell, carry and send.

From time-to-time irritated people show up. They told about the entanglement in the supply offices, about the relationship to the interest in the Jews in the 'center of the unions'. Jews are circulating in the long corridors, the officers cast sharp looks at them, infused with anger and enmity. They do not give the Jews permission to come and go and try to refrain from having any contact with them.

The honest ones among them advise not to be pressured... The only Jews that remained were the seniors, the people with connections, and they too were abused. The searches and arrests, among the merchants and property owners, grew in Odessa and Kiev. Those that 'served' in protection were released. Groups clung to one another, all the Children of Israel are suspect like a single chain of troublemakers.

In the city, the concerns continue to rise about organized supply of the needs of the stores. The population grew and reached about thirty thousand people. Many people from the nearby villages and towns went over to the city, for security reasons. In the street, there is talk of insufficient foodstuffs. They make fun at the expense of the newly arrived merchants: *Melamdim*, tradespeople, officers and servers, and ordinary Jews that buy everything without examination, and even unseen but rather on the basis of hearsay or word-of-mouth only. They buy goods and take them down into cellars and hide them from the eyes of the card players, who do not honestly participate, but stand to the side and guess at the prices. And here, this game was secure, and the price spacing was certain. The condition of the villages is spoken about in the city, and on the fleeing of the Jews from them. Soldiers in leather hats circulate, and ordinary gentiles dressed in army uniforms, sit in the taverns, drunk, striking themselves on the heart and finish with 'trepidation':—

— We have spilled blood....

In a few villages conferences are announced. They scream and make noise in hoarse wildness: – 'We have to expel the Jews, to take away the mill from the bastard Jews, who sell out the Czar and the motherland.'

— *This is our work!*

At night, there are those who surround a Jewish house in the village, and invite the *Starosta* on the pretext of conducting a search to uncover deserters. They break windows and doors, they take everything that comes to hand. In the morning, the Jews hide the 'honor' [that was bestowed on them]

pillows, blankets and the remaining needs of the house, and they go off to the city.

Jews, that returned from the train station tell what they heard: In [St.] Petersburg there is tension among the masses. In centers – complete chaos. Soldiers are fleeing. All the stations are filled with those who wear leather hats (soldiers) and are sitting, or lying sprawled in stations, halls, smoking from the hearth and spitting. One almost cannot recognize the *Zhmarinka* and *Kuztin*, — the station at the crossroads — which ordinarily would have crowds of people and much movement on the roads and in the restaurants. The soldiers seized everything. Plundering, abusing furniture and vessels, they take off the padding from the benches and the seats in the halls and salons. Civilians are not permitted to enter. Jews are thrown out of the train cars through the windows. They wrecked the palace of the Prince Sangoshko near Kuztin, they took out all the books and anything worthwhile that was venerable from the home for the disabled, and threw them outside. They did the same thing in Venezia, in the palace of the *Graf Lubomirsky*.

Pandemonium and confusion reign in every place. One of them spread the news that Rasputin had been murdered.

What? Is this good or bad for us?

Who is Rasputin? A marketplace man asked.

The Czarina Alexandra Feodorovna, is his concubine... you get it? And accordingly he is the second king...'

At nightfall, with the arrival of the train, they were told of the murder of Rasputin in detail, and about the plots in the yard – the basis for his murder. The Czarina is a niece of Wilhelm, and together with Rasputin leaned toward a separate peace with Germany. Nikolai could not oppose this, but this Josipov, from the Czar's family, stood for the honor of the motherland and the [Royal] family, which Rasputin had desecrated, and so he invited him to a ball, and shot him like a dog...

From one issue to the next, they went to pragmatism. What did the train bring? What [is happening] in Odessa? How did this come about? Does it have a name? A Jew 'seized' words broken by the chatter of horns and is lost in thought. A pimp standing in the group is pushed aside, and whispers things in the ear of his friend and this is how bargaining is connected. How much?...How?...When?... and when the matter is concluded they disperse, and nothing happened.

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In the city club the local intelligentsia would enter in the evenings. Officers and others so designated were free, and ordinary nobles of important standing. Yelizabeta Petrovna, the owner of the buffet, a fat lady, round as a barrel, honors the guests with small glasses of cognac, which her son brought her from the front. Hearts open up and the tongue parts from its prison... A conversation ensues about the issues of the day: the war, the fronts, Rasputin, Josipov, who has many comrades among the wealthy Jews and military contractors, the fact of revenge came up, and on his inclination for a separate peace.

A self-evident item was — if there is a peace there are no profits. The gentile sit with tiny eyes, and give off snide remarks, and an incidental smile on the conversations by the Jews about supply. Was Mayasoyadov a victim of the antics of the Jewish suppliers? And how many like these, fell into the trap that the Jews had hidden from them? The conversation turns to the matter of the local Jews: sub-suppliers, and talking about manufacturers. They call out names, reveal secrets and humorous facts about these ‘Jews’, their vanity and clothing, their broken Russian that they spoke. The women also participate while knitting, they talk about the past: —

How have the ‘Sarah’kehs and Chaya’kehs of them grown fat? Which diamonds and pearls are they wearing in the last time? The dresses? Brats in military uniforms having rank and sporting mustaches, stand and emit cigarette smoke into the hearth. It has been a while since years were snatched from them in a military airplane full of reports and maps.

*‘Petya, are there no Jews in the air force?’*

‘It’s not important! They know how to take care of themselves. They infiltrate places like these, places that any of our people would never go... this is not within the ambit of a secret, they have penetrated the head German military! Who is it that reveals our army secrets and its plans? And who is guilty of our defeat? Us?’

*‘Nichevo’! ( Not so!) Give us only a little bit of rest on the fronts. There will be a reckoning...*

Another one adds, and unrolls ‘something that was’ that he heard from the mouth of an officer regarding Jewish advisers in all of the ranks of the German army. A priest in black garb explains using a scholarly means to explain the nature of the ‘eternal Jew’ ...

When a member of the club comes in, Jewish, an officer of the ‘*Pozivsoyuz*’, the conversation ceases. A few mumble a bit, others blush, get up, and bow their heads out of courtesy, moving chairs, inviting them to sit, and begin to talk about the news of the day with real moderation that is suitable. The waiter brings over the cards, and we move over to the order of the evening.

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Having nothing to do, we go early and assemble in the *Bet HaMedrash* for early *Mincha* prayers. Stores are closed, the house is dark. The newspapers come late to the city or don’t arrive at all. Somehow we walk to the *Bet HaMedrash*, seat ourselves at the side of the long table that is near the oven and open up a conversation about the issues of the place, general issues, and the ongoing wreckage and destruction. There is no end to the depth of the destruction that the Russian soldiers inflicted on the cities of Galicia. Even by us, the situation is not any better. In the surroundings, the gentiles are abusing and expelling the Jews. In the villages — there is fear, whoever can, leaves with good will — and those that cannot — are expelled by force, and in shame. In the village of Kuszerniec that is nearby, they expelled everyone. A poor shoemaker burdened with a large family that was in one of the villages, was threatened and forced to flee for his life...

The old *Shokhet* takes out his red handkerchief from the pocket of his *kapote*, and puts it on the open book in front of him as a sign, and sighs: —

This is the battle of Gog and Magog... as is written in our sacred books: — The shards and unclean forces, and evil molesters will gather to destroy the earth... snakes and serpents will swallow the produce of the earth... costs will escalate and people will die of hunger, people will assault one another for no reason and not about anything...

On the face of it — from the crux of the old law— why does this bother you?. They generated the calumny that the Jew merely sits in the village? So what? in following the Messiah, you will attain arrogance in the steps of the Messiah... prices will go up. People on the boundary will wander from city to city, and not be merciful. — the appearance of this generation is like the appearance of a dog...’

They hear, and sigh. One of them tells of an incident that occurred in a nearby village, Vituvka. They (e.g. the gentiles) surrounded the home of a poor Jew, and conducted a search. They found ‘*Samogon*’ (denatured whiskey for the needs of the house, which the farmers were in the habit of drinking during wartime). They got drunk, and initiated a pogrom. They have just brought his dying wife to the hospital.

‘It is only an hour ago that the Jews fleeing from the village arrived — so tells the Jew who had entered the *Bet HaMedrash* — they stand in the marketplace with all they have with their small children, hungry and naked. Oh, have mercy!’....

Ours is the God of vengeance, and the God of vengeance has appeared’ — the *Shokhet* sighed upon rising, to approach the basin to wash his hands.

Beside the pillar, negligently, another person wraps himself in a torn *Tallit* from the *Bet HaMedrash*, the conversations stop amid a loud and threatening voice — ‘*Ashrei yoshvei beitekha*’ (*fortunate are those that dwell in thy house*)

## 29. The Revolution

On that same morning, the air was clear. The February sun came out to warm up the fainting with its light. The snow on the roofs melted, and drop by drop fell to the ground like water being spilled from an open gutter. The cawing of crows on the trees penetrated the air. The thin shroud of frost fell on the stretch of water in the cold of the night. A dull echo comes from the edge of the river, a place where the female gentiles, whose dresses reach down to their knees, are washing their clothing on stones.

On the second floor of the ‘*Spusivsoyuz*’ ( the cooperative for necessities) they stood on the porch and spoke of the revolution in [St.] Petersburg, some in wonder, and some with happy faces, like a man who has seen his hope for the future realized, that he saw from the beginning. They looked for proofs in the newspapers, they looked among other places, they thought thoughts, produced conclusions: apprehensive and wandering at the front. The Head of State, the Czar, travels there and back to here.

Legends follow in connection with the linkage to the plot of the people. The distance is yet far away!

They related a tale about the *Ispravnik* (Officer of the area) that entered the Russian bank accompanied by the Office of the Police, and they came out of there serious and furious. The bank manager who escorted them was pale and confused.

— What is the answer to the issue? What is the *Ispravnik* doing in the bank on such a gloomy morning?

That evening a general assembly took place of one of the credit unions. The ‘*Pristav*’ came to the assembly and the supervisor of national credit. The assembly proceeded as usual, according to the direction of the supervisor, in Russian. Someone asked that it be spoken in Yiddish, but the ‘*Pristav*’ scolded him. The Jews looked at each other and silently winked. The Chairman made a speech about the elections, and the supervisor explained the critical importance of the elections, as the eyes were lifted toward him while paying attention. A Jew selling newspapers was pushed into the hall. Those present turned away for a minute and took a newspaper in their hands jumped up on the platform, waving the newspaper in his hand: ---

— Long live the provisional government !!!

The lines running in the paper had a great deal of detail: – The Czar has fled... his brother, Michael was appointed in his place but he too fled. The *Duma*, and its participation in the revolution, and the announcement of a provisional government under the leadership of the *Duma* president, Rodzhianko were presented. A real manifest [appeared] on the national privileges and citizenship for the entire reach of Russia, making no distinction by ancestry, religion or nationality.

A festive mood prevailed, and the mental state was elevated with no explanation and no meaning [given]. People blessed one another in good humor, Jews, Russians, and Ukrainians. It seems as though everything had been forgotten, as if it had become attached to and refined in the light of the (implied) freedom. A movement began in the *Spusivsoyuz*. Several *Enlightened* Jewish people were invited, as well as Poles and Russians. Everyone sat together and conferred on the work ahead of them. The issues of the villages were also piled on them, teachers, students, the fair-haired all having prominent bright hair and shiny crystals, speaking Ukrainian and everyone was whistling.

Outside, on the plot of the government house, a mass of farmers had assembled from all areas, city people and the ‘*katzapim*’ of the ‘*polifonovka*’, the priests in their robes, along with the orchestra of the church, and the *shamashim*. A cantor, with a temporary choir, the old and *balebatim* with a *Torah* scroll in their hands. The day was sullen. Drops of rain that came down gently, spread out and landed on the faces of passers-by in the street. When the rain stopped, they stood and spoke, the choirs sang songs of prayer and thanksgiving.

Shiya, Shiya – the acute R’ Mordechai’leh whispered, he was a thin man with the face of a monk, old and thin, shaggy and long wavy side locks — Shiya, Shiya – Let us hope that the end will be good... don’t open your mouth to Satan.

‘R’ Mordechai – this must be a joke, an *Enlightened* Jew and one of the important people of the city – ‘R’ Mordechai, God forbid !’ The kingdom of Nikolai the Evil One has fallen. The ‘temporary decrees’ were cancelled along with the Pale of Settlement and pogroms. We are citizens...’

Shiya ! We, the Jews have to carry out mourning, taking off the shoes, and observe a ‘*Shiva*’. Substantial troubles await us. Don’t open your mouth to Satan...’

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According to a decision that was made jointly, with no coercion of the Russian intelligentsia, the Polish, Ukrainian, and Jewish institutions a massive march was organized, to honor the revolution, in the presence of the Commissar, an officer of the provisional government. The march had many participants, business people of the village, priests and their adjutants, clergy, officers of the government, dressed in ordinary clothing that was put onto them in a peculiar way.

The church bells rang out a message of news, and flags and decorations were raised in Russian and Ukrainian. The demonstrators came out with happy faces dressed in holiday finery. Jews wearing *kapotes* and silk hats, with Sabbath suits, the village people in shined boots, dressed in Ukrainian coats and embroidered shirts, and wearing green belts. The orchestra played the ‘*Marseillaise*’ and they strode in rhythm with the music, they stopped and made speeches. Shouts of ‘*Hurrah*’ pierced the spring air.

The emotion that the revolution awakened in the Jews, and where they lived, was questionable in the eyes of many. One of these, was Joseph Aharonovicz, who conveyed his doubts in his essay, ‘*Liberated Judaism*’, [saying] that the participation of the Jews in a revolution of this kind was like [participating in] an alien dance. It is possible that his opinion about the revolution was correct in light of the ongoing events in general, but not at its beginning. The attitude that surrounded the Jewish community was natural and not unfamiliar. The essence of how privileges were granted, and the nullification of discrimination after generations of oppression and demeaning, aroused the reaction that demanded solidarity and identification with the rest of the citizens of the country. It aroused a reaction of responsibility to justify this equality of the fate of a partnered citizenship. With all of the suspicions brought by people of a cold logic, they bolstered themselves to free themselves of them, to belittle them, and to turn themselves over, along with all the citizens to the issues of the revolution. A sense of faith in the justice and spirit of the revolution, flooded the entire community. Not as revolutionaries, but as Jews, and they prayed the eternal prayer: — ‘*All the evil will go up in smoke, because the evil government shall be removed from the land*’. And is this not the eternal aspiration of the Jew in all the places in the *Diaspora*?

During the summer of that same year, an arousal was felt in the midst of the Jewish community, the sense of mutual relationship charmed and aroused [the people] to action. Jewish youth that had deserted and hidden themselves presented themselves to obtain a ‘pardon’ for themselves. Among them were those who falsified physical defects, and they all presented themselves before the military draft commission and went immediately to their divisions. Members of the commission, that were selected, displayed a community-based awakening with fundamental questions about the authority in

place, oversight, security, providing sufficient food for the populace. Announcements were spread among the community on the responsibility to reject speculation and the write [themselves] down in the register. In most locations, the agents of the commission signed the register, and the populace willingly related to them. Days and weeks went by with noise, meetings and discussions, in projects involving confiscation and nationalization. The accountants became a little more relaxed, and controlled themselves, and there was a need for self-control. In these undertakings outbursts were revealed: the Ukrainians suddenly withdrew, and rumors spread on the unrest in the villages. The gentiles that came to the city conveyed hidden and dark expressions. Bad news came from the front, regarding incidents of violence and outrage. In the evenings, people stood behind their windows of the meeting places and listened to the conversations. On the electric light stands, announcements fluttered that were pasted on during the night. People stood in the streets and conversed: —

*'To commit [one's self] or not?'*

There were those that did commit themselves. Well!.... Many of the elected ones also enlisted. But as to merchandise? Can the commission do nothing to supply merchandise?

*'In any regard, it is not appropriate to rush... because afterwards they will not receive [anything]!'*  
The register was sent to the front.

The lack of merchandise and food was felt in the city. The 'Spusivsoyuz' the organizer of the village necessities, the national Ukrainian institution, suddenly discovered an issue in the Jewish community. The members of the organization invited the activists of the Jewish divisions for a discussion of the status. They spoke hesitatingly and indirectly, and from there, to the issue of a lack of necessities for life that continues to intensify. In the cooperative, the sole source of supply immediately without delay, they advised the Jews to open a store for consumers, and promised help with merchandise and direction. At first, the Bund established the consumer store — 'Kultur' — for its members and adherents because of absence from other efforts. Afterwards, the trades people established the consumer store — 'Solidarnost' ('Union') for the broad rank and file. This was a divisional cooperation among the chaos of no supply and poverty, that rose with the help of the Ukrainians.

Shortages became more intense during the winter, clothing wore out and was torn. The malevolent reign of Czar Nicholas II and the improvements made by the revolution, additionally no one signed [the register] during the speeches of Kerensky, everyone being preoccupied with themselves, sunk into day-to-day living, with worry for himself and his family. The feelings of compassion and participation in the sorrow of the masses, when they had [the usual characteristics] to the Jewish community — disappeared from the horizon. People hungered, grew weak and got sick, and nobody paid any attention to them (e.g. the gentile masses), while the suffering, of the embittered life in the area that was poor and crowded, and the heart hardened toward the masses, and one could have feelings for one's self only. People went out to nearby towns and distant villages, to look for a bit of food to eat and goods [to sell]. Gentiles in military uniforms, in the dress of ascetics, wandering soldiers, all came out of the ranks of the war. They neglected the revolution and the 'Svoboda' (Freedom), and spread all over the wide expanse of the Ukraine, by vehicle and foot, wandering from the cities to the villages, from the villages to the towns, in simple dress carrying sacks, and they brought the needs for food to

the city. ‘*Mieszczaniki*’ – (local citizenry) called to them. The farmers of the surroundings also followed their lead, the Jewish merchant farmers. They traveled crammed into contaminated train cars on the roofs and under the benches. The school that had opened in the city stood before a quandary: There was a difference of opinion among the divisions. Zionists, and ‘*Tze’irei Tzion*’ argued for instruction in Hebrew or Yiddish and the ‘*Bund*’ stood like a guarding wall for Yiddish, the source of its ideological life. The ‘*Poalei Tzion*’ members that were invited from Odessa, opposed those with an orientation to Hebrew, and the added question of the future autonomy and organizational complexion: [will it be] secular or religious, and this divided the community. Different programmatic streams, scratched the fabric of the wider community and tossed them into a whirlpool of difference because of the seeds of the revolution and the abandonment of the usual customs. Loud parties, which incite and assurances printed on colored paper were read, inviting people to come and listen to the speeches of renown people.

People heard and went out from the halls loaded with words and ideas that had not yet been implemented with realistic content: autonomy, political or cultural, scholarship and religion. Different ideas interleaved and were moved to engage one another — work, survival, capitalism and proletariat approaches, left over and superfluous Jews — ‘*lumpen proletariat*’. The adherents of socialist divisions who had a distinguished past — S. D. (Social Democrats), S. R. (Revolutionary socialists) and unaffiliated socialists — [all] stood to the side. These looked from on high, and they derided the narrow vision of their Jewish ‘brethren.’ and their narrow ideology, instead of going out to the broad spiritual spaces of Great Russia. Ukrainian divisions, who had a socialist inclination pulled people to them in a simple manner, which was practical, by allocating merchandise to consumer stores by the ‘Cooperative’s Union’ and their vote to select their ally ‘*Poalei Tzion*’ to the central council. All the divisions together ran and contested in the street, in the home in the ranks, and did so with sharpness and stubbornness. It seems that this stubbornness is the thing that is denying the recognition effort, and process, in the array of data streams. and deepening the gap because of the use by speakers, guests and orators. They penetrated quiet houses and instigated anger between fathers and sons, such that, after hearing the speech of the renown agitator, they passed over the span of directions that are relevant to the audience, and engendered sharp conversations, while everyone made the effort to strengthen his standing and to nullify the ideas and concepts of others.

‘Who, if not us, the workers, have provoked the reign of the evil Nikolai II? It is by the power of our calloused hands that we have taken off the shackles and given you freedom, the advocates, and other respected workers along with the proletariat were here to help? —

‘*Stop! ... they are polluting the senses of the working people. We are comrades, we have spilled blood. We are the ones that have done everything at the cost of our blood.*’

‘*And where were you during the war?... now —*’

Comrades, here it is, the counter-revolution itself. It is of the *bourgeoisie!* How would it have acquired all of this without our sweat? Look at its face — its midriff — we have triumphed to rule, the blood is our blood!

A Jew comes from the side, and he calls out to the ranks: 'If, at least, they had given us flour cheaply, bread — to cook potatoes for the Sabbath...

'Comrades! This is a provocation.'

With the appearance of the 'messenger' of the long hair and special jacket, the conversations would have stopped, this one is taking small steps, calmly, accompanied by comrades. He draws near, gives a pat on the shoulder in false friendliness, while saying in a pleasant voice:

'It is nothing 'Tovarich' (friend) the struggle... the important thing is the struggle... it is in the struggle that you will gain your privileges.'

### **30. In the Grip of Ukrainian Hegemony**

A variety of rumors and suppositions were heard throughout the city: —

The temporary government has been canceled. Kerensky stand at the head of the new government, he is also the Comander-in-Chief, and soon a Lawmaking Council will come that covers all of Russia.

And the Socialists and 'Bolsheviks' [say]: Lenin and Trotzky have reached [St.] Petersburg in sealed train cars with the help of the Germans. The revolution is in [St.] Petersburg. Ukraine seceded (from Russia), and created its own direct government — Gruszewski, Winicku, Petlura and a Ukrainian 'Rada' (A Lawmaking Council). There was one Jewish officer — Dr. M. Zilberfarb

Russian Generals — Yindytz, Kolczak, Dinkin as the army Head in Siberia, armed with weapons and modern ammunition, are crossing over Central Russia and the capitol cities, with strong forces to replace the monarchial wreckage.

A war broke out between Russia and Poland, between Russia and the Ukraine, German army units broke into South Russia and parts of the Ukraine.

It was difficult to verify the sources of all the rumors, and the extent to which they were true. There were no newspapers. The links in the populace was disrupted because there was no way to make a living, and news was passed along mouth-to-mouth, summarized, and neither before or after amidst the jumble of the times and events. Even the train did not reach the city for days. The rotted train cars that were damaged and had been affected by the fabric and leather upholstery on their seats, who were filled with only people who were drunk. The latter scattered between the villages and disappeared.

On one morning signs were pasted up on the walls in Ukrainian, which invited the populace to maintain order and to be loyal citizens of the independent rule of the Ukraine, which promises privileges for all of its citizens, not considering religion, origin, or nationality. It was signed by — the Ukrainian *Rada*, the military ruler.

How is this explained?

Surrounding the *Pozivsoyuz* building in the marketplace, wagons arrived that brought businessmen from the surrounding villages. The men had their hair combed straight and smooth, their locks shone from being greased, and going in a circle around their heads ('Gentiles') isolated owners of isolated crystals, in Ukrainian shirts with embroidered small, thin, colored crucifixes. There are also officers and soldiers in military uniforms. Lady Gentiles are wearing shiny doeskin boots, belts that are from home wool, and a white shirt embroidered reaching the midriff, decorated with coral beads and glass-like pearls on their throat, they ring, in keeping with their movement, and colorful braided ribbons in their hair. In the '*Dom Trizvusti*' (the house of those who oppose drinking [whiskey]), meals are organized for guests. The men of the *Pozivsoyuz* (serving consumers), speak up, and the sound of '*nikhai zayei*' (to your health!) burst out of the open windows and go into the air. In the evening, the men of the Ukrainian intelligentsia sit down, dressed in linen coats and shirts, on the wagons, with legs stuck between the various rungs, and they travel off to the villages, the surrounding fields are full of wagons and horses as if it were the day of a fair.

It is not possible to describe the unique lifting of spirits in the local Jewish community upon hearing this news. Also, when the time for the election of the community council came, one can sense the general indifference in the community, because something had changed in between. The complicated political situation caused this, the changing of the guard in the government that doused the previously heated ardor, and replace it with indifference. Also, the political and social nature of the community was not clarified. The organization of the election centered about the individual groups and not with full ardor. The *Bund* related to the gift of the Ukrainian groups hesitantly, even though Russia was not divided [in any sense]. The remaining groups were only half-active, and there was no possibility that they could be aroused and awakened. There was a sense of helplessness and disbelief.

In the meantime news of confusion among the central units infiltrated indirectly, and forced news about the forcefulness of those drafted into the army. The last of the Jews fled the villages who then fled to the cities. This flight was felt even in the city, in crowded housing and a shortage of provisions. Questions and details floated and rose up with regard to the practical purpose of the community that is getting ready to deal with the impending threat of terror which then ensued.

From the outset, the community exhibited questions about the prevailing condition, pressure caused its members to ask questions about defense, security and sustenance. On the agenda were issues regarding support and charity: *Dayanim, Shokhtim*, the bathhouses, schools and the *Talmud Torah* -- community matters according to printed material that were traditional and accepted, that oriented the ease of mind of the commission, whose members proposed to capture all the powers related to defense. This raised the question of the cooperatives that was integral to the community, they had to stand under the scrutiny of the community council. And all of these were part of the foundation of the populace, regardless of differences in standing or division.

The *Hasidim* of the congregation exerted special effort to guard its strength and sustenance and not to get snarled in sharp and complicated questions. They proposed an agenda for temporary work, the Council elections, and division of the work. As to the order of the day, issues came up that aroused the

feelings – the presidency, leadership, appointments, and the divisional ambitions were renewed, along with the relevant discussions. At the height of the meetings and discussions regarding the public form of the community, a deferred question was entered by the people of the *Bund* — in connection with the real functioning language of the congregation.

Hebrew or Yiddish?

This was a bomb that was thrown to the side of the citizen units, and in fact, to the congregation itself. This was a test of the potential power done out of suspicion that the results of the estimate of the future elections, is likely to conclude with nothing done. And therefore, the community itself is not going to be permanent. Will it be able to compel, using this question, and not be dragged along after the observant units? This was sort of a necessary analysis that could not be avoided, because it is bound up in danger.

The question was transferred from the sitting of the community council into the public environment, and this matter exceeded the usual bounds. It appeared that life itself seemed to have lost its worth and became a burden, and so, this question was transformed into a living subject, that trembled and stormed. It seemed that all of the issues of life that had been sidelined and everything centered on this question. Passions caused a division to take place, between merchandising and other businesses, among hearsay and the news. Now they spoke and conversed with this question, and they changed their minds about it, in stinging Rabbinic language. One of the members that had said in humor, with language that fell on language, with a ring of words that are similar in Ukrainian: —

*Yiddish, Yiddish  
Kuda Yiddish  
ZaYiddish nye doh Yiddish*

People rebelled [against this]:

*'And will we also pray in Yiddish, and what about our sacred texts— the Torah, the Prophets, the Talmud and the Medrash?'*

And what is the poor Jew to do, who lacks the means to teach his son all of these ‘wise things’. Simple Jews who work have to teach their children effectively and without wasting time. what use will grow out of an unused language, not in the street and not anywhere.

Others stormed against them, there was angry storming, armed with remarks of opposition — *'The Chronicles, Exile, In Sanctification of the Name... The Jews never abandoned the language of the Tana"kh and the culture.'*

Our culture was not created in Yiddish. Even in Palestine, the dominant language is Yiddish — [said] the refugee who was a member of *'Poalei Tzion.'*

On the evening that had been scheduled for a conference, people crowded into the auditorium, beside

the windows looking out at the street, tensely they stood on the sidewalks and looked inside. They awaited news with fateful trembling, as if they were waiting to hear a [unfavorable] decree. The members of the congregational council sat around the table, along with a number of the dignitaries from the men of the city. The Chairman opened the meeting emotionally, and stood on the difficulty of the question. An atmosphere of tension, and the speeches were analyzed as if they were blocks of an intense hailstorm, remarks were heard, there were outbursts and banging on the table, and a call for order. There were opposing voices that were shouting. The Chairman paused the issue out of hesitation and fear. Finally patience runs out. A number of members strongly demand a vote,

Hebrew... and let the results be what they will be. They voted once, twice. —

The *Bundists* and '*Poalei Tzion*' raised a tumult. One of those present, Dr. Yaakov Shapiro (who died from spotted typhus in a Ukrainian camp, after he was drafted) burst out onto the stage and forcibly began to speak...in Hebrew.

Shouting and groaning [broke out] , the community bursts into fist-fighting: —

.... *Dulyo!*... (Get Down!)

There is yelling, noise and shouting. In the corners of the auditorium the sound of a song bursts out:

—  
Our hope has not yet been lost...  
And around them voices raised in song burst out: ---  
We raise our hands and swear...

## 31. The Various Cohorts

The village Ukrainians who, in the days of Czarist rule were oppressed, roused themselves with the announcement of Ukrainian independence. At the beginning of the revolution they doubted, they did not believe and were frightened. It was difficult for them to grasp what was being whispered. How can all of this come to be without the '*Czar Batyushka*'(our Father and Ruler)? And so, with apprehension they related to the changes that took place in the villages: -- in Byelorussian dress (the Ukrainian type) that they began to protest with, the Ukrainian language, in the *Szkoli* (Schools) and in the '*Tzerkva*' (the Russian Orthodox Church), and in the speeches of the priest at the end of Sunday Services.

Frowning, they conveyed a warning with a nod: —

'*Lyka Buda!* (It will come to an accident)... '

Those that had served in the Czarist army, motivated by vanity, guarded their army uniforms, and on the day of a funeral, they would put on their medals, go to the church and stumble over the Russian words that remained in their memory, stroke their mustaches, and standing in military posture. Among them were those who served in administrative offices, in the post office, they learned expressions and

a way of life that was Russian, and they spoke Russian. Among them, there were also officers from the villages who were members of 'The Union of The Russian Nation' who praised the Czar and his family, the country and the army. They praised and told stories about the royal city, [St.] Petersburg, the Czar's courtyard, officers, barons and generals. Together with the officers they traveled to the city, drank there at his expense, hugged and kissed out of drunkenness and longing. Suddenly everything was turned over, it was a different world, different people. Ukrainian orators conveyed the news, the military and Ukrainian officers in their regalia. These people would cancel, with the emptiness of their mouths, every new way of life and its idioms: —

*'Durnitza' (Nonsense)! Shili (Sagin) (a Puffy Coat)....what are they in contrast to the officers of His Majesty the Czar?*

And again emissaries appeared and spoke of the Motherland, and Independent Ukraine. They invite them to take a seat at the '*Spusivsoyuz*' (the cooperative for necessities), spoke to them in a decent and friendly manner. They called out '*skhud*' (please enter) and they spoke about our '*vlada*' (rule), the administration, which we had created. The people at the '*Spusivsoyuz*' came and opened stores in the villages, they brought oil, salt and tobacco, matches and manufacturing. Soldiers, cavalry, officers, Atamans<sup>46</sup> (a rank in the Ukrainian army), and deputy commanders armed and having ammunition as if they were members of His Majesty the Czar's army, bringing military supplies — wagons loaded with equipment, food and kitchen ovens on wheels and emitting smoke, a man of the village is carrying on a conversation with the officers as one might talk to a friend, the enormous gap that had existed between the army ranks of His Majesty the Czar shrunk. The distance between them had ended. The minds of the farmers relaxed, they punctured the boil and spit out of satisfaction.

*'Tut Szyiss Ja (Is there something here)....'*

Courtyards and mud houses are flooded with frightening, stifling heat, and the odor of cooked cabbage stand in their space, as the doors were opened for the guests. In the large room there is a staff with a pile of pillows, one on top of the other, almost reaching the ceiling, at the table armed Atamans sit, their dress covered with traditional military symbols: Broad black trousers with broad red stripes for their entire length, a long zig-zag down to the knees and wearing high woolen hats, soldiers and the dignitaries of the village, teachers and '*dayakim*' (deputies of the priest). The odor of sourdough is frightening, and fatty homemade sausage and a vessel of whiskey stands in the room. The local people listened intently to what they were saying out loud and to their stories about the Jewish commune that comes and goes. In some place in faraway Russia the cannons of the Jewish commune thunder away, the Byelorussian Orthodox Churches have been altered to be the stables for horses, the communists steal away land from the Byelorussians and turn the land over to the Jews. Impoverished farmers plunder in all the span of the Ukraine and they rebel with the help of alien forces that were aroused to plunder the poverty of the deprived farmers.

On Sunday afternoon, a person in military uniform stand in the empty field that is beside the church, and explains the character of the Jewish commune to the community, in great detail, with evidence

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The rank of *Ataman* is also sometimes called '*Hetman*'

from the words of the eye-witnesses: How the young *zhids* (Jews) shoot into the units of quiet Ukrainians. They have arms, they have money. The farmer of the past lives in lack of everything, and wraps his legs in rotten leggings, buys himself trousers once every ten years, and dulls his eyes in the evenings at the light of wood slivers. And while with them there is: — kerosene lamps, furniture, linens, bed linen and manufactured goods. They jump out of their skin toward the commune in order to dispossess the land from the farmer and to abuse him, as in the days of the '*Panczina*'

Byelorussian brothers — end this abuse! Let us all join together in this war of righteousness [being waged] by the army of independent Ukraine! For justice and righteousness! The Ukraine is ours!

The gentiles hear this and they scratch and itch: —

*'Kiveh nye pravda! (Is this not true?)* True, as God will establish! Where do they get everything? — salt, matches, boots, produce? Here are the words of good people. Not plain people but those who can read and write: — Atamans, teachers, priests — they even spoke in the churches...

All of this is understandable for a disaster, everything was sealed with a positive reality. On one side was the rescue of the Ukraine, the rescue of the nation from the hands of their plunderers, and on the second side — the extraction of the Jewish communists and their annihilation as a sacred matter of the generations of the Ukrainian nation: —

*Nalibika and Kribonus  
And Taras Tarasula  
And Mahili Kliczut Nas  
No Swiata Dilo*

Army officers, priests and teachers, members of the cooperative and officers of the local government, kindled the embers of blood among the masses. With the announcement of Ukrainian independence, in every village and settlement of farmers, in small army companies, for the guarding of order and protection for the authorities, and this initiated the campaign against the Bolsheviks, almost all of these companies changed over, as a matter that was self-understood, to become the underground wings, since their power over the Ukrainians were limited and the armed companies underground had, as it were, had welfare and power that was unlimited. But the western powers linked up with the small underground forces positively, and with sympathy [toward them], and indirectly they also provided money and arms for assistance. Fate worked on behalf of the Ukrainians in that, a part of the young Jews, enlisted on the advice of the central institution, out of solidarity to the Ukrainian army, and linked up with their companies and in this manner they fortunately participated in violence at the time of the collapse of the front. To the outer world, they demonstrated loyalty toward the Jews. In time, inspectors were nominated to eliminate violence towards the Jews. However, in the end, they could not overcome the wild instincts that reigned amid the chaos and void. The companies divided themselves and were transformed into a military force. They largely recruited men from the weaker parts of the group, a person in such a company does not think about objectives, he can serve many masters according to the instant gratification tied into his service. By nature, he lacked discipline and order, working based on the instinctive push and the time of outbreaks when he is prepared to assault

even his comrades in the surroundings, and in the goal he set for himself. In time, they assaulted even the lawful leadership. The directors of these companies and their heads, aroused the [baser] instincts in order to encourage their people and to put a fright into them, and to transform the companies into a fighting military entity.

The ideas of a ‘commune’ and the ‘Jews’ were fused together and became one. In the eyes of these gangs, every Jewish town was transformed into a nest of communists. These companies spread out unconstrained – like a plague. The central authorities opposed the companies helplessly, with no ability to rein them in. In these companies, they saw a task that it was not possible to deny, and out of a desire for self-preservation and this imaginary military force, they threw the Jews into the mouth of the beast in order to save their own lives.

Ukraine was sunk in an abyss of blood, created by its own hand, for the Motherland, and in fact – for the rescue of the authorities. This was the idea of Nikolai of Tzyviec, a past professor of the Kiev Polytechnicum, who joined the Ukrainian movement in the years 1919-1923. In the summer sun of 1920, Petlura recognized this when he met him, and it was confirmed by one of the officers of the companies, a poet and the teacher Savitzli, in his essay ‘*Momento Mori*’ (remember death) — in one of the Ukrainian newspapers, after he went over to the Bolshevik camp.

## 32. Defense

The city was as if it were under siege, no one left it and no one entered.

Outside, the nights were wintry and rainy. Isolated gunshots were heard from the gentile neighborhoods, accompanied by groans, screams and the dull and dark barking of dogs.

Gentiles were circulating around in the city in their tattered military uniforms while drunk, red-faced from too much drinking [of whiskey], their eyelids are lowered and their eyes communicate rebellion and insolence. They go through the rows of stores and peer into them, they touch things, spit, and heaped curses on the Motherland... the following day, the doors were found broken and the stores open and empty.

One day, in the afternoon, a Jewish grain merchant traveled from the city to a nearby village, but did not return. The following day, his body was brought back to the city riddled full of bullet holes, and covered in straw. A day later, a farmer brought a naked corpse of an unknown man, who was fatally wounded, and the body was taken to the *Great Bet HaMikdash*, where it was dealt with in according to the Jewish law. ‘*Mayt Metzuvah*’

People stood around oppressed and worried. A feeling of sadness and mourning descended on the city, on one of the nights frightening screams burst into the air from one of the houses at the outskirts of the city which contained the gentile neighborhoods, people ran to the place from which the noise came, and they found a broken window, a door that had been burst through. There were frightened children who were crying, and the wife was wringing her hands, and the husband walks around in a state of confusion.

Is there no authority in the city? Chaos!...

The gentiles did not come to the city. One of [them] stole out and came to the city, incited and afraid, in a torn sari and an upside-down fur hat, and he stopped his wagon by a barred entrance next to a Jewish man known to him. He entered the house and asked for a bit of water, and the Jews made use of the opportunity to ask him to say something out of his mouth. The gentile controlled his fear and said: –

*'The youth. Those who were on guard [answered] 'God knows what they want...perhaps the Jews are not in favor of Petlura ?....'*

*'And what do the elders of the city say? The owners of the old houses...'  
'The sacred Gods know... there is no truth in the world...'*

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A drop of water was thrown that froze the blood, and it went around from mouth-to mouth: — *the gentiles are sharpening their knives...*

*And what do the men of the community think?'*

*Perhaps it is worth talking to the butchers? ...*

*Maybe they want to invite Miszka Japuniec?*

Miszka Japuniec was familiar to [the residents] of the cities. He was a young man from the suburbs of Molodovniko that is in Odessa, and he was one of the pioneering members of the independent defense forces in the cities and towns. In the past, he did not overlook the assaults of the wild men, in the period of the collapse of the front. He always came in accordance with an invitation, organized the young people of the town, and armed them with weapons for defense.

*'Perhaps is this defense like in other cities?'*

In fact, an underground '*Haganah*' (*Defense Force*) already existed. Already, in the first months of the revolution, and there was a relaxation by the local authorities, a *Haganah* sprung out from it. Young men who had served in the military, the youth and ordinary young people armed themselves with weapons. The organizer was Moshe Dobrowonsky, a young man full of energy and initiative, from that wealthy family, which had procured weapons secretly, from supporters and the youth of the village, who had brought the weapons with them when they returned from the army, [hidden] underneath their jackets, disassembled guns, pistols and bullets. Only a few knew of its existence. The inspectors of the authorities immediately announced that no one was allowed to retain weaponry, and threatened [those who did] with punishment and imprisonment if they violated this order. The comrades of the *Haganah* would arm themselves secretly, in cellars at night, covered by the darkness.

A lively and heated discussion occurred in the community council. They discussed the ongoing worsening of the situation and the rampage of the young people of the village and the farmers. The latter incidents provided proof [of what they were doing], but there were others who concluded the opposite, that this was a war of a minor group versus the masses. *Should one not be apprehensive of such an unequal confrontation to start with? Who will go to the 'Haganah'? Will anyone be killed?*

*'In any event, should we not turn to Miszka Jafuniec?'*

*'Will Miszka Jafuniec fight in the name mentioned?'*

Much hesitation mounted in the community council. No decision was made. The real body [to make this decision] is the neutral community itself. Is it possible that it will want to accept such a responsibility on itself?

The status of the community council was like crossing a river on a raft made of thin wood that is collapsing. It is hard to look at the water in case the feet might get wet, and it is difficult to raise one's head out of fear of loose balance. All of the opinions from the evidence were weighed. The people of the *Haganah* themselves made the decision and reorganized themselves, and took new powers to themselves, untried youth, bold and strong. One of the members of the community supported them in a material way with money the talk was about: — stealing, and assaults. And the military host got organized. The local Ukrainian ranks conveyed their agreement and promised them support.

In those days, days of chaos and confusion, the *Haganah* was an anchor of rescue, and its comrades guarded the city and its assets, and at night, they stationed a guard at the entrances to the city. The continued survival of the *Haganah* threw a fear into the farmers of the villages, and their offspring. Rioting was reduced, and the stealing stopped. From time-to-time, With the consent of The Commissar, the *Haganah* would announce curfews in the city, and her folk stalked the plunderers with a malevolent gaze. The arranged for searches of all wagons entering the city, and those thugs under suspicion, were brought before the commander, Moshe Dobrowonsky, and he would turn them over to the Commissar for a final decision.

At every incident of assault or plunder in the intersections of the roads, members of the *Haganah* would come out led by their gear and accompanied by militia men, asking, researching and demanding, and inviting the elders of the nearby village, threatening the people there with retaliation. The gentiles were alarmed, they would cross themselves and...promise.

City residents were partly relieved, and once again applied themselves to the secular-based life: buying and selling, speculation, and the clandestine conduct of [selling] merchandise: — oil, sacks of *gribniyot* of sugar, skins, leftovers from the manufacturing processes, 'kirinkot' 'karbubantzot' 'gribniyot' and new 'yaktrinot' (money bills of the government from the time of the Czar) they bought and sold, transported at dawn, quietly and hid the material.

When the night wind occasionally would bring a frightening bit of news, they were shaken like babies, opened their eyes in fright but were immediately comforted— 'There is the Haganah in the city.'

### 33. The Elimination of the '*Haganah*'

Among the local Ukrainians a suspicion was aroused regarding the *Haganah*, for there was a kind of armed and undesirable parallel force in it. At the first this appeared to be simple learning: – Groups of Jews contributed and organized themselves for protection purposes. And it was possible that they themselves would make use of their own military potential at a time of need. However, later they stood by their error. A parallel, competing force is created that imposes authority. Is it permissible to 'play' with fire. Who will give us an assurance that this unit will not burst out against us? There were no useful ideas from the nearby villages: Holovsk, Savaran, Bogopol that lowered fright on the villages and even went into alignment with the Ukrainian military forces?

Is it not sensible to stop its existence once and for all?

On a Friday, in the spring of 1928, there surprisingly appeared a company of cavalry. The cavalry entered in row upon row in military form, singing songs accompanied by sharp screams, in order to arouse themselves and to frighten those who heard them. They said that they came from the nearby Gayburun station (about 20-30 km from the city). In the city, nothing was known about the settlement of such a military company in this close an encampment. It was possible that this was a temporary unit that was organized by happenstance by one of the wandering officers, or a mass of local soldiers that had deserted. It was not kept in secret that Ukrainian companies were in contact with wings [of the Ukrainian army] and voluntary regular military companies. Jews went about the marketplace to prepare for the Sabbath, in the stores, and on the counter tops that sold what was permissible and whatever they had to sell. One person came upon a 'find' that a known gentile brought [into the town] and they stood with him to sell the bargain, and afterwards he went off to the bath, which was heated up for the first time since the extended shutdown, women carried bottles containing a little bit of oil, black bread, blocks of candles for the Sabbath, one took care of the bundles of wood for fire, and his companion hurried to the market as if he were being chased, in order to prepare something for the Sabbath. It was a normal movement of the Eve of the Sabbath in a city of Jews.

Suddenly shots were heard. As if coming out of the ground, the shots came one after another. In a minute the stores were closed, and the shutters were lowered, the doors were locked. What was left was quickly taken off the counter tops. Merchandise was packed up and taken home. People ran around frightened. There were no separate hiding places yet at this time. They ran to the gymnasium, the second part of the city, to the bath, to the streets of 'Yerushalayim keh,' crowded, but a far distance from the center of the gunfire, by way of the bridge, the base of the *Haganah*, who, with the first sounds of gunfire they gathered in accordance with the order of their officer on the roof of one of the houses that was nearby.

According to the testimony of the Ukrainians, during the public investigation, it would seem – the *Haganah* began shooting from rifles and submachine guns in the direction of the company of soldiers. During the investigation that took place afterwards the testimony was found to be false, since the members of the *Haganah* did not have a sub-machine gun and they were also not permitted to possess weapons of this sort. The *Haganah* stood on watch, in a condition of readiness, and when the gunfire

became intense, they answered with [their own] fire.

On that same day, approximately 25 men were killed, among them the elderly and the exhausted; the soldiers shot everyone they encountered without discrimination. An awesome and silent suffering bore down on their burden, A poor man, who was walking on the streets was killed, his backpack in his hand. The soldiers also entered the houses, and they shot men sitting at home and their families; they chased after the youth and shot them on the threshold of their houses. Among those killed — Moshe Dobrovonsky, the leader of the *Haganah*, and after they shot him several times, he fell struggling in his own blood, they went up to the roof, the base of the *Haganah*, and abused their bodies and tore them to pieces. After this, they spread out among the principal streets of the city, group following group, bursting into the houses, breaking windows and doors, abusing and plundering. It became known that among them were a few local Ukrainians serving as scouts, and they fired their guns according to their direction. The stopped only after several hours of abuse and plundering, and then vanished, after they had attained their objective — the murder of the Leader of the *Haganah*, and a number of its members.

Nightfall came. The winter sky was reflected in the sunbeams of the sharp setting sun. The shadows of the Sabbath spread silently. The weak light of an small oil menorah spread silently from under the shutters of the closed houses, from a few of which was heard the dull echo of the wailing of relatives of those who were slain.

People remained in their houses shut in, and they did not come out even on the next day. A few of them remained in their temporary places in which they hid themselves, in silent sorrow, and they did not return home. Only a few of the members of the community gathered on the Sabbath morning in the gathering hall in order to take advice, whether to accept the shameful rumor of the Ukrainians to, as a whole, they should make amends with the battalion commander.

There was not much discussion. The community accepted the judgement out of the prevailing silence as if they were mourners during the time of tearing of the clothes. A message was sent out on the afternoon train to the Gyburun station accompanied by a sum of money that was suitable for the redemption of the remaining lives.

The funeral took place on Sunday morning. The entire city accompanied its dead to the cemetery. The neighboring farmers also came to the funeral, along with their wives and children, and it was a dull walk of 25 black stretchers, carried on the shoulders among frightening crying and wailing. The wives wrung their hands, wiped away their tears with their skirts, the farmers crossed themselves. The signing of the scroll ended, and with it, the crying, and the men returned to their houses with lowered heads and complete silence, as if frozen.

A company of cavalry arrive in the city that morning, that was sent by the local Commissar in an attempt to help the community. The officers of the cavalry company demanded a good lunch, gifts and donations. They also attacked the members of the community council who left the row of the escorts in the middle of a presentation and they placed upon the officers a midday feast, which was started up for them in a hurry, in the local club, and they sat with them in feasting like mourners at a happy

gathering. Then the others came in, the secret was revealed. It became clear that this was a company of rabble made up of deserters from the front, the youth of the 'United Russian Nation', and black wings that followed them, camouflaged under the Ukrainian flag, that had just now started an underground movement to reveal the Ukrainian secrets, From time to time, then dropped inciting words, words of hate against the Jews, the revolution and its Jewish leaders.

With considerable effort they succeeded in getting them out of the city.

## 35. The Uprising of the Farmers

This began at the beginning of the summer of 1918 with the invasion of German and Austrian armies into parts of the Ukraine. The Russian front became totally chaotic. The army that crumbled entirely did not show any opposition, and the Germans could, as it were, advance swiftly without running into obstacles. This is the way a large part of the Ukraine was captured. Information was spread about the count of the Ukrainian *Hetmans* done by the Germans, from the Skorofedski family, well-connected people and also wealthy, that produced most of the *Hetmans* of the eighteenth century. The wheels of Ukrainian history were turned backwards to a period two hundred years back. The Leaders of independent Ukraine reacted by organizing huge demonstrations of patriots against these invaders, in that territory that had not been captured by the Germans.

There also were political demonstrations against the outside world. The conduct of these demonstrations was arranged in the traditional style of the Ukrainians from the period of the *Haidamaks* — in front, the members of the priesthood went first accompanied by their holy objects, and the bells of the churches rang out as a sign of welcome.

In the city, a demonstration of this sort had occurred a few days earlier in the city of Bobodowka (16-18 km from the city). The church bells rang out with an advancing sound. At dawn, masses of people streamed from the nearby and faraway villages, and the priest and his supporting staff went toward them with crucifixes and icons. Solitary Jews who found themselves in such villages were slaughtered, and the fate of other Jews who pecked at the peasants on their way. The mass moved and entered the city and its leadership — a past teacher — dressed like an independent farmer, made a speech. He issued a decree of annihilation of these strange invaders, the Germans and the communists. The Jews of the town, comprised of about 500 people, among them many who were sick and exhausted, old people, and the young who were accused of being communists, were forcefully driven to the empty field beside the *Great Bet HaMedrash*. At that location, they were ordered to dig ditches and after the verdict was read to them — to be put to death, they were surrounded and shot with machine guns, and their bodies fell into the already prepared open graves.

The same happened in the city of Trusteiniec (15-16 km from Bershad). A march of gentiles emerged from one of the nearby villages headed by the local priests with flags and crucifixes. The nearby farmers joined in this procession, the factory managers, workers and laborers. In according to the order of the leading office, three hundred Jews were counted and placed on the field next to the factory. They went around in a circle, and they were ordered to dig a pit. After this, they shot them up a great deal,

and when they ran out of bullets, they even threw the living ones into the pit and buried them together with those killed, to the tune of a piano playing the Russian song *Jabluczka* (an apple), that they had wrested from a nearby house.

At some distance were the houses of the senior managers of the factory who looked on all of this through the muslin curtains, on the windows, with equanimity and indifference to the scene before them. There were hands stretched forward in dying convulsions, hands of officers, contractors and suppliers, whose hands were never shaken as a sign of gratitude. They heard the sounds of screaming and wailing that penetrated and terrified the very air. And nobody came out of the doors of the houses to stop these wild beings from doing their tasks and the farmers who earn their bread.

They did not come out. They did not shut up. They did not lose their minds....

A rumor circulated in the city that the gentiles of the surroundings were preparing for an assault. — a friend came, inferred and explained in a warning manner: — ‘Why do you Jews need a German commune?’ others saw movement in the ‘*Pozivsoyuz*’, at night. The village gentiles loaded up their wagons, and were not detained, and left quickly.

On one morning people woke up in a state of agitation. The streets became filled with people, who spoke about the danger that is getting closer without being stopped. A few took off away from the wagons containing the speakers, and headed for the direction of the bridge. They distanced themselves from the city. This took place on a spring day after Passover. The gentle rays lit up the sun-softened plowed fields worked over by the wheels of the wagons and which sparkled in the strong light. Along the dusty paths that were soft, carved out by the rows of slots made by the wheels of the wagons and the steel hooves of the horses, cause the streaming of people from the nearby villages, to familiar gentiles, friends, wiling to pay a full amount of money for a place to hide – even going up on the roof, under a pile of straw in the yard, in sheep pens and the place for housing pigs.

Let them have ‘*Svoboda*’ (freedom) – the gentiles laughed.

The curse of God is on them – so said others, and crossed themselves.

In the doorways bare-headed gentiles stood, tired, and their jackets tossed over their shoulders, gathering produce to support the Jews in their wagons and on their horses going to different places. However, by themselves they were unable to do this, because they had been ordered to leave the village but they appointed one of them to lead the horses for extra monetary compensation. And was there any option? Images of the pillage and plunder of Ovodowka and Trusteiniec stood before their eyes and their choice was only one and clear – to flee, they are to run so long as there still remained the possibility to do so, somehow...

And the Jews fled.

The members of the community council ran about seeking privileges (sic: to remain in place). *Balebatim* attached themselves , and additionally the *balebatim* attached themselves to this group,

(prominent) people of the city and the *Dayanim*. They ran to the ‘*Pozivsoyuz*’, (the cooperative union). A female messenger presented herself before the local priest. One of the members of the community council, Gershon Vinitzky, fell at the feet of the priest, he kissed the edges of his robe and burst out crying: ---

Help us, father...!

Have compassion... for what am I, a sinner, able to do?... Nobody will hear what I will say to them? The masses, whoever draws near putting himself in danger.

On Sunday morning the bells of the church rung out with peals of news. The priests came out dressed in their religious uniforms. Before them, in a jubilant mass, the remainder following carrying crucifixes and icons, and a sacred frying pan that was carried in a confident stride and a mild amount of smoke. The farmers crossed themselves, kissing the hands of the priest after he had made the sign of the cross in the air. The Jews sat in their homes, with their families, their wives and children were all sitting as if in mourning in the shadow of death. From somewhere the noise of a break-in and smashing of doors was heard, and the voices of desperate men.

Fifty men were murdered on that day. One of the Jews attempted to raise the compassion of those they knew, but they were killed on the spot, among them was a uniformed man with a red cross on his sleeve, who had approached a few of the farmers and whom he cared for while they were sick. The corpses that had been cut open, and their intestines spilled outside rolled around the street.

The blood had not yet clotted. People still sat in mourning over their sacrifices [of loved ones], and lo, a new host of cavalry appeared, headed by a *Hetman*, from the vicinity of Yelizabetgorod, all of them wearing traditional Ukrainian dress — knitted shirts and jackets made of black wool, green belts. High hats covered with knitted sheep’s wool, armed with rifles and spears. However, they entered the city quietly, their officer — according to them — ‘had to burn the remains of the monarchy,’ and they participated in acts of malice, but with that, they too spilled blood, a Tatar member of their group shot a young Jew ‘who looked like a monarchist,’ A third one entered a house looking for gold and valuables. They took whatever they laid their hands on, and left, and others did this in various sections of the city. Only after giving them a bribe, did they spare the remaining lives and left the city.

Yet another assault was organized in a village close by, led by a teacher, and it reached the city and attacked its forces. And again: — fear, shutting of houses, sacrifice of life, houses plundered and several bodies of those killed.

## 36. The Austrians

At the beginning of the summer a company of Austrian army troops reached the city. The men in the unit seized houses in the yard of the nobleman and set up their offices there. With their arrival, the Austrians drafted Jews and farmers from the neighborhoods for the purpose of cleaning the streets and the yards. An order was issued to guard the quiet and order in the city, and not to gather in the streets.

The next morning, a second company which in German and Yiddish announced an order to turn over the merchandise and grains. Decrees of this sort were plastered in the villages as well, in German and Ukrainian. After that, units of soldiers went from house to house. They searched for and wrote down instances of grain and living beings. We gave receipts for the damaged inventory, we rented wagons, and brought it all to the train station.

Once again movement began with the '*Pozivsoyuz*', (the cooperative union). Farmers came individually and together, get some advice, and emerged angry. Many served in passive acts of opposition, and [use] the resources of the underground against the invaders. The last ones took things by acceptable means. A curfew was imposed on the city and the village. Anyone who came out of his house after the beginning of the curfew was sent to prison and torture. As to the farmers who exhibited resistance by passive means by neglecting their fields they were forced to work and plant seed for quick cooking. They levied collective fines on the village, ignited the houses of the rebels, the gentiles gave in, and carried their produce on wagons and brought it to the supply committee.

The condition in the city became gradually visible. The work of the wings ceased. A number of the Jews entered in commercial connection with the Austrians as mediators and speculators, others received permission to enter and leave [the city]. Young Jew received permissions to permit them to travel to the big cities. The Jewish young received traveling permits and traveled to the large cities dressed in worn out jackets of the farmers, with hats made of the skin of sheep or military hats or crushed hats, and when they returned the brought manufactured goods, leathers, salted fish, and tobacco. The young people told of the absence of goods and their expense, The Austrians and the Germans cleansed the cities and villages as if with brooms. The hatred towards the Jews continued to intensify. Gentiles from all the settlements, that were distant from the political issues – would release gunfire and sulfur in vain they say – as if it were the Jews who brought [in] the Germans and Austrians, the ones who elevated the *Hetman* to rule and those that had driven out the Ukrainians, the nation's officers. Soldiers camouflaged in uniforms of the *Hetman* soldiers, were running wild in the street, and there were instances when they befell Jews in train cars and threw them out of the windows. There was disorder and plunder in everything.

Jews without work wandered about in the streets with nothing to do, and you could count numbers while standing on one foot: —

Yesterday the Austrians arrested and whipped a youth who had crossed a street after the curfew. Groups of Jews that stood in the marketplace beside a wagon from a village, were taken to the Commanding Officer. They levied a fine of having a little amount of water from a thick vessel. In the oil factory they confiscated the oil they found in the cellar that was sealed up, and there were times they paid what the product was worth. And what will the owner of the factory do now? Someone told that even the whiskey was confiscated and a troop of soldiers stood by them, and this was the third day.

Gentiles are driving their wagons loaded with grain, through the city, to the [train] station, where they tie up the horses. In the marketplace they stop, find the backpacks full of grain, which they clamp up for insulation. The horsemen caress and direct their eyes obliquely towards the Jews, who are standing

in front of the closed stores, and look around. One offers a joke. They laugh, and it seems to the gentiles that they are making fun of them. They wipe off the sweat as they turn their hats of sheepskin around, and fix the harnesses of the horses, they expectorate and continue onwards. At nightfall they return that make noise on the stones of the road which is full of pits and potholes. One of the Jews calls to one of the gentiles, and everyone stops for a moment. They look to their sides, scratch themselves behind the ear, sigh to themselves and continue onward. The Jews stand there to the side as if they had been whipped in the face. It occurred to them that there is a connection between the speed and the whipping of the horses, and the gentiles have some sort of a secret that only they know and are hiding it from everyone else.

On one morning, the Austrians disappeared. Even just yesterday, the *Shamash* of the council ran accompanied by an Austrian soldier, loaded with parcels and orders in German and Yiddish to be pasted on the walls, In the middle of the night, the blare of trumpets could still be heard, and not one person of theirs remained in the morning.

The Jews stood in the marketplace and guessed. They stole into the offices that had been abandoned that were in the nobleman's yard, and they then returned from there and related: — the windows and the door are open, papers is rolling around the entire yard, Others told of having their arms fall into the hands of the village gentiles. They told of the revenge taken by the Austrians against the villagers in these last days: they took out all the ripe produce, and they forced the farmers to scythe the grain before cooking it. They confiscated horses, cattle, sheep and fowl, In a number of villages they set the houses on fire, and the gentiles were seething...

The Jews listened to the Chief of the rebellion and the litany of numbers, and this would remained sealed in their hearts until the future yet to come.

## 36. War or Peace?

This was in the latter days of the summer of 1938. Alert rumors spread around the city about an independent Ukrainian country headed by Petlura, and the annexation of the Galician-Ukrainian units into the regular army in order to rein in the wildness of the soldiers. It was in this was that rumors surrounding the transactions with the Antonota and they also knew how to tell that an agreement of this sort had already been made. A man who came from Odessa saw French soldiers. Even in the local train station officers were seen of this sort in colored hats, that resembled the color of the hats of our children. In the meantime, a sense spread of loss of will, the mass had lost faith in the ruling authority, let what will be – be, and it was felt that without external support, it will not be possible to maintain a stand. During this hour of confusion, a proposal came forward from the local active Ukrainians to renew the work of the community council in the city, because of the closeness of the leader to the Jewish cohort regarding the authorities. People hesitated, what will this provide and what will it add to the community in these troubled times when the force of the authority itself flees? Will it come to pass only because it would fulfill the demands of the independent Ukrainians in order to finalize their desires for independence?

Frightening news was received from nearby towns. The wings had reformed, there were screams of plunder, breakage and murder all around. Once again the matter of security in the city arose. The majority favored the establishment of a community council as a central point of rescue from among the workers council, who fled the city at the time of the assault of several members. Will this come to be solely to end the longing of the people for independence?

Further frightening news was gathered from the towns. The wings continued to grow along with screams of plunder, destruction and murder all around. Once again, the question of the security of the city was posed. The majority favored the establishment of a community council as a central point of rescue, among them were several from the laborers council. They had fled from the city at the time the farmers assaulted them, and they are now regretting the fact that they fled. And were prepared to work in order to save the city and secure it. This was the feeling of all the comrades, and it was first expressed at the first sitting of the council, in which the order of the town was raised along with the issue of collective security.

The proposal of the '*Bund*' was to start anew and set up the *Haganah* by using a general draft. The proposal of the '*Bund*' resembled its own general orientation at this time, consisting of uniting the local armed forces together with the armed revolutionary forces in undivided Russia, this was to guarantee the security of the group, and achieve the goals of the revolution.

'*Poalei Tzion*' separated from the *Haganah*, being armed through local and general conversations: what if our *Haganah* will not finish the job during the first engagement by their superior armed forces? We do not long for a war, just for security. And if security emerges – currently. It is our responsibility to more quickly approach the facts of evil by means that are suitable to this moment, and one of them is: — Integration into existing reality, unity with the police, even if it means making certain concessions, because in our current state, all rules are cancelled, and in our sentiments that is perhaps an admission of the weakness of our people. Although, on the other hand, there is fruitful salvation in them. In their hands we will be able to inherit a loyalty from the Ukrainian companies, information that can be directed to the reduction of danger, and within the range of possibility to rescue the state of the nearby villages.

In days, it became known that the resistance of the Jewish army cohorts, aroused further the Yeshiva of Harada in Kiev that began in 1918 with the participation without means of the general cohorts. The stand of the '*Poalei Tzion*' was negative. And among the remaining reasons was also the fact that the armed divisions are likely to incite wild behavior in large and dangerous dimensions.

However, the location of center in Kiev was not known to the local '*Poalei Tzion*.' Their labeling stemmed from a sense of the situation and reality, from groping in the dark without a path. In the meantime, stormy conversations spread about, along with expressions, like the stones of hail and fire, burning from the mouths of the '*Bund*' members.

Isn't rejecting the offer a demonstration of weakness?

Is this nothing more than an act of psychology of the proposed by the Jews?

Is it possible to believe them?

*'Can the Ethiop change his skin, and the leopard its spots'* – they shouted in the language of the *Holy Writ*. Without getting into the essence of the orientation of this, or another – the '*Poalei Tzion*' argued as follows — were we to be engaged in armed resistance at this time, its end would be a failure, worse than that, we would lose our sense of who we are, not only due to the superior arms they possess, which means we have no capacity to clash with them, but also from the provocative plagiarism they are capable, but also through the Branch protector (?) That certainly is not within the territory of combat. Recent events proved this. Is it permissible for us to be deluded and speculate on the fate of the local Jewish kibbutz?

The *Bundists* did not give in, because it was like this, a fundamental question and of a sharp conversation, more and more. The bodies of the other groups took a hesitant stance and struggled to convince the opposite side. A person would not be able to speculate from the top of his head to compel the decision accordingly? The conversation centered about the difference between '*Poalei Tzion*' and the '*Bund*,' that placed the question almost as an ultimatum that if it were to be deferred the members of the '*Bund*' would leave the council.

The proposal failed. '*Poalei Tzion*' won. The *Bundists* declared their intention to resign. It was in this way that the Head of the Council resigned, the people of the General Zionists, and the presidency went over to the vice-president, a member of '*Poalei Tzion*'.

So which way shall we proceed? What is the common language that we share, in whose strength is able to straighten out the conflicts and to create a faithful neighborly relationship? No one could recuse themselves from the difficulty of the hour. At the outset, everyone knew there was no solution, The sense of fate was that the command would be to follow in this way, regardless of the vast depth that was on its side. The changes were sent by train until the community evaluated the alternatives that supported a new direction and made it more difficult for the life of the local community:

The exit of the '*Bund*' – opponents to an independent Ukraine – from the community council, and the approval of the '*Poalei Tzion*' proposal – the ones with the Ukrainian orientation to establish friendly relations – here one stood, and the appointment of a member of '*Poalei Tzion*' as the head of the community. A person whose standing for the election of the council has in the past been supported by the Ukrainians – is this not an indication for a certain Ukrainian orientation by the community council in its entirety?

How many of the members of the community, business people and those who had connections with the villages, were able to complete this orientation form: Gershon Vinitzky who was selected as the Vice-Chairman, a tall Jewish man, with a good appearance and a well-kept beard, an aggressive man and one who got along with everybody, he abandoned his business and earnings and dedicated himself to the issues of the city and its preservation. He would circulate in the city, stroke his beard while in thought, listen to the repartee of the gentiles and Jews and every opportunity that came to his hand, he dealt with in favor of the issue at hand, to create a sense of peace between Jew and Gentile. Meir Kleinman (who died in the *Land* two years ago), he would knit woolen threads on behalf of the

farmers, a Jew who lived in ‘*Yerushalayim’keh*’, a man of secret nature, imbued with a proletarian attitude, exuding simplicity and correctness to support to all things, not only matters of hesitation and doubt. He leaned on his cane and strode at a quick pace, when his yellow beard would get mussed up because of how he walked, and he did his deliveries with dedication, whether by day or by night, without rest or relaxation. He would invite the farmers into his house, give them whiskey and salted fish – from his inventory, and they did not deny his desire to serve them in this way — and his wife would prepare fried food and set the table as if performing a *mitzvah*. With a glint in his eye intimating equanimity and having the table arranged as if it were an act of *mitzvah*, would hover over his face, and if he could persuade farmers, he would draw them to the side of the Jews. This was also true of other Jews who were members of the community, and also outside of it: — Isaiah Zherdonowsky, Shlomo Nissan Kaotensky, Levi Dider, Zaydeh Ramulinsky — these were dedicated donors unbounded, for purposes of sustaining the city. [A gift of] crowns in places of want, and gifts to appease the children using toys and cheap forms of decoration, in order to capture their allegiance, they would also attempt to capture the trust of the farmers by distributing a variety of goods: matches, salt, oil, and goods from Morocco. There were other incidents of negotiation in conversations and at parties. They would converse with them about what was going on in the city and its surroundings, and along the way, they would convey news about wings that were circulating in the area. The issue was communicated to the community council for action. In the end, the gentiles organized themselves and proposed songs of order (?) If so needed.

Was this because of some defect in trust?

God forbid!

No one shrunk from the level of danger involved and did not delude himself that it was already over. On the contrary, the news that reached them from villages near and far served to intensify their worry. Despite this there was an air of lightening and saving, like the sense of the one who was demanding but had been caught in the straw.

Misfortune embraced the entire area of Podolia, a burning fire, this despite the promises of the Ukrainian government to rein in the wild ones. Already in their first actions there was a sense of the helplessness of the authorities, and the lack of faith in their powers. All of Podolia was flooded with the wings. Floods of blood ran through the Jewish settlements. On the platforms standing as priests, were predatory animals without conscience and idols of God wrapped in nationalist ideology of the rescuing of the Motherland, before whom whole communities trembled: — Makhno, Grigoriev, Mariusa, Zvolotny, Voliniec, Tzli, Trutanko. Among them were also – local wings of thieves, murderers, and both organized and disorganized troublemakers, hidden and open for all to see. The city was not spared from their hands.

From time to time, there were untrue outbursts and provocative inferences and the deeds of weapons stored in the synagogue, occasionally in the deeds of oxen (?) and murder both intentional and unintentional. Accordingly, there were no cruel rampages. It was restrained. The hand of fate was not that cruel, s was the case with other communities.

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During this period (1918-1920) there were 1936 Pogroms in the Ukraine, and in Podolia separately the number reached nearly one thousand.

All those who were armed, to their cadres, [which included] protectors of the Motherland, and freedom fighters, meaning — Cossacks and members of the regular army, unorganized units, and the wings of farmers — saw an obligation for themselves to declare war against the Jews. According to a variety of sources, there were more than 1,300 pogroms against the Jews of the Ukraine, by the uncivilized units as follows:—

Ukrainian Army Divisions	493
Ukrainian Wings and Cossacks	357
‘White <sup>47</sup> , Units	274
Red Army Units	106
Local [military] Wings	106
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	1336

As already said, Bershad did not suffer to the same extent as the remaining cities and towns that were in the area. There were, however, trials and tribulations to the conduct of the pogroms. The wild forces rampaged and spread havoc with the fierceness of murder, but the community council choked them off while they were at war. The means were various, and different: there were conflicts and complications of wings among themselves, to the extent of melees among them — There were means of serious responsibility all tied up in danger. These were the means that were not given to weigh the sense and ideas, derived from the weighing of what took place in the intuition of the moment, of the possibility of survival, as if the one that rescues someone from the conflagration but does not think about the danger, but rather bursts through and then out. There were instances where the actions were done quietly frozen within, out of calm and an imaginary peace.

## 37. The Community

The community was an alert institution and full of life, it was the only authority that was able to capture and centralize within it all of the detailed issues of the community, support and security. In the community house everyone could absorb encouragement and spiritual strength for the entire day. The community council would review every item of news that was spread through the city, confirming it or denying it. In many instances the denial was a source of relief. Frequently, the instances of denial was like a relief. There were times when the community council would deal with matters of compensation, help, and support for wandering individuals and families. The connection with the cooperative groups created the possibility to produce for the Jewish community merchandise and the necessities of life. The absence of these things was felt throughout the city. The local Ukrainian leadership related to the community council as a real institution, authoritative in the eyes of the Jewish

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<sup>47</sup> The White Russians were a right wing assembly of the Russian military and its nobility, which rejected the revolutionary initiative of the ‘Red’ Russians, or *Bolsheviks*. They eventually were overcome and eliminated as a political force.

population, that also had an influence generally on the farmers of the area, and even on the leaders of the Wings and military units.

The community council resided in a rented house, the daughter of one of the rich men whose inheritors sold it out of a need. Now India has turned a corner of the house, the walls and the doors had been stained, the windows had been cracked, the multi-colored drawings that were on the walls were faded, and even the fence that surrounded the building had been partially torn down, and the acacia trees in the garden of the house, that stood with no use, were withered and dried up.

Who had not ascended the stairs of this house? Who did not leave signs of refuse and mud in the winter, and the dust of shoes in the summer – Jews, gentiles, Ukrainians, members of the authorities, business people, leaders of Wings, soldiers, *Hetmans*, *'Sotnikim'*, storekeepers, bakers and clandestine merchants, the Swede of the community took on their merchandise, as did ordinary Jews who came to hear the news. This was also true of the gentiles in the vicinity, the *'Hasidim'* of the community, who were shod with boots, rubbed with oil, wearing hats made of sheep's wool and with green belts to tighten their trousers, as if it were a holiday. The air was heavy. There was much talk and whispering, reprimands of all sorts, complaints and replies; there was the odor of mossy skins, sausage, and smoke from a pipe, mold and mildew from the basements.

From day-to-day, the difficult situation became more and more difficult. People became haggard and impoverished, and their pinched faces were an accurate reflection of the condition. In the streets, men were wearing clothing that was tattered and patched, with one patch on top of another which hung on their ravaged bodies like rags piled on one another.

The head of the Wings used to come into the community house noisily, accompanied by their assistants, as it were, soldiers in ragged clothing and shape-shifters, and those who would burst directly into the settlement halls. When the head of such a wing arrived into the house, the air became dense; complaints and demands were heard; strange grimaces were seen, the shooters of Sitma looked on! Those gathered held their breath: people fled and went into their homes. Others fainted out of fear. In the meantime several tough guys showed up, they shake hands with the members of the community council and to the 'Head' of the Wing. They take seats and ask about the current status, regarding the *'Wysko'* (The Army) and the *'Wlada'* (the Government) they distribute butter to 'our' community council. They then tell about the message to the Ukrainian authorities and their support for the army.

In complicated circumstances, the heads of the Ukrainian organization were invited to demonstrate their mutual relationships. The Head of the Wing began to carry on a dialogue on help for the *'Wysko.'* On occasions, during the dialogue, the soldiers would burst through in one of the streets and one heard screams and wailing. On occasions, frightened Jewish plunderers would come to the community house in tears. However, in general, the group carried on its business quietly despite the burden of fate and horrors. There were those who would have drawn: -- A loophole calls to the thief -- the open, wide hand reaching forward, of the community calls and invitations to the gangs.

At night, by candlelight in the dark, a man and his wife sit and are reviewing their assets remaining for use after the government confiscations and the thievery of the Wings: – a strange collection of

goods, a sack of sugar, a barrel of oil, two or three rolls of woven goods in a hidden place, money bills of all sorts: crowns, coins, *yekaterinkas*. They sit silently, in melancholy, involved in their assets and products they have produced. They count their coins, and set aside sums for the future. What will remain of all these? Upon completion, they go to the community house, listen to the conversations and news in order to divert the facts by themselves.

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The Ukrainian authorities were sunk in details. The violence in the Jewish cities of Podolia intensified. Wings of Cossacks with the addition of the ‘*Usladzim*’ (‘salted fish’ – tubers of hair stretching from the head to the ear), dressed in unique traditional clothing: wide blue trousers – from the waist to the knees – like a woman’s dress, carrying symbols and flags from the Khmelnytsky period, deserted their centers and spread to the cities of the Pale. They spread without ceasing, from the gates and also to Bershad, the area being in a state of decease. Words of explanation that were patriotic did not help. They had only one sacred goal – to abuse and kill under the pretext of supposedly eliminating communism. And was there a Jewish town that was not communistic? The town Ukrainians supported them – providing advice, giving direction, and showing the way, in exchange of part being abused. During this period of time many of the villages resented themselves because of their ‘idleness’, because work could not be found, and it was possible to take advantage of the inactivity. Women used to defend their husbands for their idleness. They were ready to lend a hand to any malicious plot, and moreover especially to accompany their gangs.

Serving the community, there was one teacher, a past army officer, and the first Commissar after the revolution, and among other things, he was the head of one such group – this was his final stop, and after the group had dispersed, he went to serve the community council. And in this role he got drunk in the local club. A brawl broke out, and he fell upon the people present with his pistol in his hand. Others then stood up and shot at him.

This incident came to light on Sunday. The matter became known to his family, in which there were people with a shady past, and gang group leaders, who found an opportunity to instigate the farmers of the village to work – to assault the village and to avenge the blood that was spilled there. The farmers did not hesitate, and volunteered, because this was an opportunity not to be missed. After worship at the church, and the speech of the priest regarding the ‘heinous murder,’ they gathered in a group to avenge the [spilled] blood. A fear ran through the city. The farmers, who were the ‘guardians of the community’ flinched. Would it be possible to confront the entirety of the village?

‘*Garumda!*’ (A huge body) – This answer received a delegation from the community committee that turned to the local priest. The community council received this intuitive flash decision, to give battle to the rioters and their instigators. It became known that one of the army officers, Trotenco, the leader of a familiar gang, was residing in one of the villages in order to reorganize his dispersed group from the start. This was a secular man, who had mystical tendencies, a pious man, that kept crucifixes and icons of the Holy Mother in his pocket. Before his assault on the Jewish town he would kneel and pray. He came, accompanied by one of the local senior priests who had joined this mission, along with a wild mob of bullies from the village.

The same Trotenko traveled to that village, accompanied by one of his aides, who was dressed in an army uniform and was armed, and forcefully notified the leaders of the village, that if they dare to approach the city, his ‘soldiers’ and he will be protecting the city and its residents, and the unruly mob dispersed into the city streets.

And with all of the precautions taken by members of the community, and the guidance of their leaders, they could not control their wild instincts. They burst into a number of houses on side streets, plundered, abused, and assaulted the secretary of the Community Council and demanded: *mekhurka* (tobacco), whiskey, and cast fear on the members of the community council with a deluge of insults and with knives: —

‘*Zarizhim* (We will Slaughter!)

Jews burst into the community council breathlessly: — Barefoot bullies, armed with knives were wandering around the upper streets, breaking into the houses. A girl was wailing with all the bitterness of her heart, another person was wounded, people were running to hide. The leader who took up residence in the house of the leader of the Council, came out accompanied by armed soldiers and local farmers to punish the wild ones. A number were imprisoned and the storm abated. This adventure was mostly responsible, and the danger saved the city from being bathed in blood that this very gang arranged afterwards in other towns in the vicinity.

The Jewish group in the city revealed a stout heart, and assumed its bitter fate in silence. When the bad news arrived from the surroundings they would offer: that this, too, will be for our good, that we were nevertheless victims of severe damage... And thank God that the murderer Waliniec was not in our ambit — with him, even paying a ransom would not be of any help.

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Yet there were still members of this gang wandering through the city and injecting fear into the corpus of the Ukrainians, and surprisingly, here there was armed cavalry appearing, they rode on their horses straight to the house of the head of the community council, entered there, and then left to ride on ahead. People stood at a distance and trembled, and they looked while fear sparkled from their eyes.

What happened?

An inspection unit of General Pavloko, an aide to Petlura, came to the city, and brought a delayed order from the authorities to the Jewish community, to demonstrate its loyalty to the authorities and the army by arranging a low-key reception to the army that will pass through the complete city. — According to the order, the stores and the windows of the houses are to be opened and the people are responsible to stand quietly, or to stroll in an ordinary fashion complacently in order to create an atmosphere of satisfaction. If these conditions are not met, it will cause unwanted consequences for the Jews as an unfriendly and hostile act.

This demonstration was somewhat tragic, sad, and aroused a sense of pity. People opened their rusty shutters with hands trembling out of fear, storekeepers standing beside their stores and looked to their

sides, men and women strolled the length of the street in their tattered clothing, out of an effort to quiet their uneasy spirit, at the hour that the army in its full dignity went through the streets, with their piercing looks, penetrating the surroundings with their remarks.

After this demonstration by the citizenry the officers of the headquarters came to the house of the chairman of the community council in order to make a visit in good manners. They demanded that the whole community should provide the needs of the army – merchandise, clothing and footwear, silver and gold. Could there be a Jewish community that didn't have gold? The head of the community council explained that the community was poor and did not possess the resources to respond to such requests, and the members recalled the 'help' that was given to the passing divisions and brigades that passed through. Nevertheless, the demand remained, and they emphasized the civic duty of the Jews. This was a disguised ploy, an illusion of civic loyalty, that they are nearing the precious imaginary goal. This ploy was repeated and changed from time-to-time depending on the severity of the status and the force of their demands and the needs of the groups. In the end, could the cruel hand of fate reach them, and the outstretched hand will not be able to silence the wild appetite.

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During the days of the late fall, officers of the Galician Ukrainian units showed up, most of these people had a high level of *Enlightenment* – lawyers, engineers, teachers. According to what they said, this was a means of connection of the chief headquarters, who had selected Bershad as their base because of the civic loyalty there. The principal objective of this military unit was involved propaganda to be exchanged between the suspect villages. Part of them would dress in a simple Ukrainian outfit, then travel to the villages to arouse the national Ukrainian spirit that had begun to flag.

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They were careful, and with their arrival in the city, and they connected with the community council who put them up in Jewish homes – to be careful. They also led military drills — had military police, a military commissar and a military court. They practically did not come in contact with the citizens authorities, with the ranks of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, and the workers of the cooperative. Their connections to the community council were quite tight, after one of their officers, a Jew, fell sick with typhus and died. The council of the community took on the task of burying the deceased, and the people of the community, in their hordes paid their final respects [to the deceased]. The Chairman of the community council eulogized him with emotionally-laden words from the porch of the second floor of the hotel in which he had lived. The street was full of people that were crowded together in large measure. The local *Dayan*, R' David Lerner, eulogized him in the *Great Synagogue* beside the open grave.

The din [of the community] was lowered in volume partially. Gangs were not seen. A bit of personal contact with the Jewish community was sufficient to make [the people] forget the sad past, and return the people to the activities of their daily life. There was the opportunity to get drunk, workers returned to their workplaces. The officers of this unit showed both an eagerness and willingness to work in matters of the city and the community, and they also consulted with the community council and its head, who were also connected by bonds of friendship among some of them. Periodically, they would adjudicate administrative issues of the militia and the commissars, to remove obstacles and arguments between themselves and the populace. There were those who adjudicated internal issues, with complaints and troubles regarding the work of provisioning, and necessities. An argument broke out among the groups who handled provisions in connection with the allocation of merchandise from the wholesalers that was beside the savings and loan bank. The manager who was strong and busy with community affairs, was accused of limiting the distribution of products which were not in accordance with the permissions he controlled. The struggle continued for a long time, and the matter was turned over to the community council. Thanks to the efforts of the chairman, the accusation was limited, and the matter ended with a ruling of release only.

The winter was replete with instances of robbery and plunder. The bullying deeds of certain members of local gangs which drew to them a few of the young people of that location out of lust and greed, or for the purpose of carrying out bad deeds, confiscation and robbery. The members of the gangs would take off the clothing of citizens, remove their hats from their heads, and their jackets from their shoulders. On one night, they fell upon a family at the edge of the city, plundered them and killed them.

The city was completely shaken. The family was familiar and well-known. Even in the heart of moderate people, a reactive sense was aroused: – Can this really be? At a time like this? And who is it? Young Jewish men!....

An abomination! This was shouted by all the people of the city. The relatives of the family whose sons were murdered and their neighbors ran to the Galician Community Council, The latter showed interest and alertness. They researched, investigated and discussed [ what they found] in complete confidence. They seized a few of the young men and they [viz: the young men] admitted to what they had done, and they revealed the names of their partners in the act of murdering. Investigations were arranged, and at the court their guilt was proven. The community followed the investigation with deep sorrow, and they received the judgement rendered in shame: three of them were hanged...

With the first buds of spring, this being the spring of the year 1920, the Galicians disappeared and with them, the officers of the headquarters. The pressure of the units of the White [Russians] and the Bolsheviks in Podolia became more intense in the direction of the Dneister [River]. A few of the officers went to the underground, their form became indistinct and their entire appearance conveyed: farmers!.. they were transformed into simple villagers with darkened [faces] and bent backs, weak, unkempt hair and beards, in ragged farmer's jackets. There was something tragic and sad in this gloominess; a calm national indifference in a period of waning and eclipse of the luminaries.

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The holiday of Passover was celebrated modestly, and in fear. Word went around about a new group that intends to come to the city. It was said that the unit of Waliniec was located in a village that was not far away. On the night of the *Seder* everyone remained closed and locked up in their houses, with their shutters let down. The ambience of night brought with it a very strong fear, secretly hidden in the twinkling stars in the sky. Someone opened a creaking door half way, stuck his head out, and fearfully looked at the sky. He quickly closed the door with a silent prayer on his lips: —

*Would that God make this into something good...*

The matter took place in the afternoon. People went about in the street. They stood beside solitary wagons of the farmers that had been taken into the city. The news was deceptive, it appears, and the community that was affected did not pay attention to details, emerging as if they came out of the ground, from the streets and side alleys, ending at the market square. A tall individual with steely eyes and a rigid face, dismounted from his horse, went over to one of the wagons and asked for the community council. A Jew that stood to the side brought him there. The latter then entered, sat down in the chamber, and he invited the head [of the council] to come sit by him, he offered him a cigarette, and with many winks, relayed news in front of his companions.

The news spread with lightning speed — Waliniec is coming! This was one of the sadistic murderers in the vicinity, an agronomy student at the Kiev Institute, and a Russian army officer during the war. After the revolution, he committed himself with all his energy to the Ukrainian movement. An arrogant man and one looking for big things on the independent Ukrainian land, and did not dislike all means to achieve his goal, no matter how bold they might be. He incited the farmers to violent deeds against the nobility in the region of Heissin, his birthplace. After this, he became well-known for deeds of plunder, murder, and instilling fear among the Jews. His name was recalled with horror among the Ukrainian ranks as well because of his resolute and sadistic acts. They chiseled in the village at a distance of 25 km from the city, and ordered his soldiers, after a rampage of bloodletting and murder in which about four hundred men were killed, and to bring the head of the chairman of the community council to him on a silver tray. This was an example of John the Baptist whose head was brought to Salome on a silver tray....

One chapter of his life is connected to the city, while he was still a Russian officer, he fell in love with the wife of a lawyer whose family lived in Heissin. The two of them, the husband and wife, had been born in Bershad. He began visiting their home, and in time, his visits became more frequent, and his demands more outrageous. The husband and wife began to be afraid of him. For this, he murdered the husband in a fit of delirious madness. The wife vanished. He enlarged the spirit of envy and insatiable ire, with [the spilling] of Jewish blood.

His appearance in the city stunned the Jews, the news of his cruelty and harshness brought about trembling and chills. Even the Ukrainian ranks were stunned, and without being asked, they sought ways to avoid the accident that stands ready to come, as a sign. But none of this helped. As to the farmers who entered and tried to talk with him, he paid no attention to them, he pushed them out, and had a number of them removed from his presence. In the community house he sat in a lounge chair, with covered feet, smoking one cigarette after another, and spent the time in light conversation with

a few of his companions and the Head of the local post office, his friend from the gymnasium who came to visit him in order to deflect him from acts of violence. From time to time, he would ask the sitting Head of the community council, not an explanation and not a demand. What the members of the community presented to him was set aside. A condition of stasis occurred, which left no doubt regarding his malevolent intent.

The news of impending death went from one end of the city to the other, a storm of insanity enveloped the youth. One of them, Beryl Mendrik, the son of Chaim David the *shokhet*, a member of a well-connected family known throughout the city (today he is in the *Land*, and his name is Dov Carmeli, in the *Herut* settlement) came to the municipal hall accompanied by several other young people, with the intention of shooting him, but the danger was avoided when the matter became known before it was to be carried out. People who were in the community house at that time retreated to their homes. Only a few of the farmers remained mounted on their horses in standby mode beside the community house. The postmaster managed to get the leader of the council out, and to take him over to the post office and sequester him there, without the intention of returning him immediately, because the malevolence of Waliniec became known, to repeat the doings he applied in his quarry, ordering that they should also bring him the head of the leader of the community council of Bershad...

Evening began to approach that day. Long shadows spread across the extent of the street, on the houses and gardens. The sunset was swallowed by purple evening rays of sunshine. Suddenly, one could hear the ring of the bells of the churches at the edges of the city, they were strong grieving rings at a fast pace following light ringing, light ringing calling for help. From the surroundings and the gentile neighborhoods armed farmers, and their wives, streamed with implements including axes to the community hall, and at their head – Ivan ‘the Apostate’ – strode with large steps. He was a Jew that had converted in the city, years ago. (His parents, who could not remain in the city because of their sorrow and shame, emigrated to America) – tired and sweaty, wearing hats made of sheep’s wool, and he entered the community hall accompanied by several farmers. From the open windows, his hoarse voice burst out:

— *We said that you should not leave... don't tell us fabrications. — We are not looking for your favor. You are not the overseer in this place... if the Jews have to be murdered, we will kill them ourselves, not you.*

— Who are you?

— We are the *Grumada* (the host) and in a while if it's not enough, we will call for you additionally... We will ring you up for help. We will draft all the villages in the area – and who are you?

*Holoracni...* (Barefoot Ones).

Voices burst out of the windows all mixed up and in agitation: —

— *'Ivan is right.' 'Why are we delaying ourselves here with him? — Ivan! We will call for help...*

Silence, bustle, quiet, and again a noisy bustle bursts out...

— *Sons of bitches! We do not recognize you? Robbers!...*

Ivan's voice is heard: '*We are as wise as you... leave this place will the entire group... we are not going to give you lodging in any village...*'

The last rays of the sun lit up the small porch, that was beside the church near the community hall and its five rotting steps, they burst through into the house and on the walls. Ivan rose enraged, and he slowly approached the door, he searched around and around with murderous eyes, went out and mounted his horse to the noise of the crowd that was following him. One at a time, they got on their horses galloping on the bad road in the fading light of sunset, and the farmers go on foot accompanying him on two sides.

Ivan the Apostate remained standing beside the fence of the community hall, stroking his sheep's wool hat.

He, the useless appendage of the Jewish community, save them from the talons of death...

## 38. Taras Bulba

All of that summer, the city was in a nightmare of wandering gangs. Units of the Ukrainians and divisions of 'Whites' were pressured by pressure from the Bolsheviks, and they moved and wandered on the roads that border on the edges of the Dneister, and they would fall upon villages like wolves of the night and quickly plunder with speed. Again there were instances of plunder, murder and 'random' shooting... —

The demands of the community council returned and instilled fear in its members. That was the form of conflict among competing units in the hideouts of the city. The cannon shells flew from the city and [their] fragments hit the houses and wounded people, and instigated damage to property. The Jews took no interest in knowing whose hand was on top. They feared a retreat just as they feared a victory, of one side or another. It was like the *Midrashic* parable about a stone cauldron, that was the case of a cauldron falling on the stone, or the stone on the cauldron, and woe to the cauldron.

In the city there were ranks of intelligent Ukrainians, who volunteered to search for communists and eradicate them. They came, as it were, to excise the bad, and with them were groups of soldiers to stand guard in the event of armed intervention. As it turned out, the soldiers spread out through the city, they plundered, took off rings and watches from their hands, they dragged Jews that had beards and side locks out of the *Bet HaMedrash*, working men out of their houses, and ordinary young people known to be Zionists. The members of the community council ran about, identified the ones seized, and signed off on guarantees. Several, who were not local members took them.

At the end of the summer, with the first shedding of the leaves, it was told that a unit of cavalry had been seen in the suburbs of the city. Afterwards, it was learned that the head of the group was a certain Savi Czili — an historical pseudonym made on the name of one of the leaders of the Khmelnytsky soldiers—a teacher, extreme nationalist, composer of ‘*Mosheykh Bashevets Sofer*’. People did not panic because they knew that the leader was a friend of the Chairman of the Community Council, who had performed a substantial family service for him, and rescued his wife at the time he was a member of the central advisory body. Similar to him, he was in the company of one of the gang leaders., Zabolotny, known in the area for their cruelty, and even he was one of the people who knew the chairman of that time. Both of them met in a friendly manner, and the ‘leader’ and his officers feasted at the house of the chairman. The left the city after a handshake and kisses with the members of the community council, to the satisfaction of the entire local populace.

The arrival of Czili was enveloped in confidentiality, and before he arrived, there was a flurry of activity in the ‘*Zapuzibsoyuz*’ — the center of Ukrainian affairs. — When his arrival in the city became known, the Chairman [of the community council] sent him an invitation to come and sit with the members of the community council with the participation of the leader.

Again, this was not the same pliable and kind man that once had kissed the hand of his comrade that had saved his wife and child. Another man, a stranger, stood at the entrance to the hall with a member of his accompaniment, armed as if they were going off to war, frozen, hissing like a carnivorous animal leaping on its prey. He did not respond to the invitation of the chairman, the crowd that submissively gathered around the sidelines – in order to make a place for him to reach the head of the table. He did not even shake the extended hand of the chairman to convey peace, he stood and talked... about the condition of the country, on the valor of its sons that were killed, about the ungrateful Jews , the city that was full of communists, the preparations of the Jews in anticipation of the Red Army... he demanded the concealed weaponry that had been stored in the warehouse beneath the *Great Bet HaMedrash*... the weaponry prepared for the communists, which had to be produced during the next two hours...

Like a stream, trembling and chills passed through all those gathered in the council hall. The words were known and recognized. [They] were the words to the initiation of a provocation known to lead to blood-letting and murder. [They did this] in other villages, if they did not find the arms, in the place they were initially placed. The chairman tried to correct his error, but that one interrupted him in the middle, strongly and in the tone of an officer, saying as he turned around and went to go out the door:

—

*I know everything... by midnight tonight, you are to turn over the arms that are hidden under the Synagogue. If not, there will not remain a single [building] stone on another in the entire city... the Hall emptied in a minute. The people went off in seven different directions to go home. The entire city was transformed into a mass of shocked silence. The light of the moon shone its pale rays on the darkened houses, a stray cat crossed the road in a frightened run and staring eyes; a dog barked at the moon. The shadow of a person appeared in the side street, looking to the sides, vanished in the blink of an eye and was swallowed up somewhere. One old man, a tailor who was eighty years old, R’ Mikh’l David, his nailed sandals echoing in the silence of the street; he puts his hands over his half-*

blind eyes, he enters the Community Hall quietly as silent as a mourner, sits down beside the Chairman, – who remained sitting in his place at the time that others had left, takes a book out of his pocket under the weak light of the menorah and began to utter the sentences of the *vidui*...

The hours went by like the last hours in the life of one sentenced to death. The clusters of people move very, very slowly. The clock chimes hoarsely, as if a hammer had been taken to the heart, ten... eleven... the final hour has arrived, in another few minutes, the hoarse chimes are repeated – twelve....ears are cocked like earphones, capturing every rustle and every noise in the otherwise still air. A shot is heard... another one... did they start already?... The sound of horses' hooves echoes, the shadow of a man's body stretches and contracts in the direction of the home of the community hall:

The officer asks the chairman of the community council to come to the camp. Shall he go?

Perhaps this is a subterfuge to put one on the road to death?...

Perhaps one should not go?

A hidden tone twitches in thought, and rapid emotions are pushed from the head to the heart, buzzing and shadowing in an abyss of indifference and nothingness, of 'it doesn't matter.' ...

The old tailor gets up, using the edge [of his coat] he wiped the ends of his fingers, making his eyes sparkle, holding the chairman's hand and kissing it and a tear drops on it:

*May God be with you! –*

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They settled down in the center of the camp, sitting on the grass, in a round half-threshing floor, soldiers that had a wild appearance, long hair shaved on the side all around, and a long clump of hair sticks out like a thin braid, that appears like a salted fish — '*Usiliedetz*'. Group after group sat down, conversed with each other, laughed and they played cards: one of them raises his hand, spit out the mucus filtering into the distance. One of them raises a card in his right hand, holds on to it and vigorously throws it while there is wild laughing around him. Several soldiers are sleeping and snoring, one can detect the sound of horses galloping in the stable — a vivid description of a rollover of the camp of the '*Zhaporozchim*' in '*Taras Bulba*'.

The leading officer appeared, the one who had, in the community hall, demanded that the hidden armaments under the floor of the Synagogue be turned over to him. Through long passage ways the chairman of the community council was taken to one of the distant rooms in the palace of the owner of the property that was driven out by the Ukrainians. Here they stand, the officer and the chairman, in bewildered silence. On who was anxious about looking, and the other searching for an appropriate word. Slowly, a conversation begins between them: –

The nation... the people... reactions of anger and jealousy. The sins of the communists, the Motherland in danger. We who had international recognition, pressed by the force of the masses were occasionally

forced to set aside traditional essentials in order to obtain internal solidification for the rescue of the Motherland...

The words are known, ancient. Murders and bloodletting in the name of internal peace, an awful statement out of the pages of Ukrainian history soaked in blood.

At dawn it was learned in the cellars and hiding places about the strange invitation. People stood in a fateful viewing. On the threshold of the house of the community council the chairman was able to turn over ransom money to save the lives of the city Jews, he then collapsed and fell into tears.

The people of the community scattered in the city like scarecrows, returning to their opening...

After a number of weeks passed by, in the Fall of 1920, this officer, the teacher and educator went, and national patriot went over -- to the Bolshevik camp. In a confessional statement – *'miminto mori'* ('remember the death') in one of the Ukrainian journals, the bloodletting against the Jews was admitted during the time of the patriotic attack in Ovodovka when he ordered the Jews to dig their own graves.

## 39. In the Hiding Places

The writers of history know how to tell about the tunnels and hiding places in the Prague ghetto during the time of the Spanish Inquisition (bunkers in the Warsaw ghetto had not even been conceived of yet), Also, there were hiding places like these in the Jewish towns of Podolia. With their development there are several architectural facts that achieve implementation. *'Sekretn'* – they were called this in the local argot: secret buildings, that were not used except during times of need.

Here is a Russian oven in the kitchen. The stove top had an iron cover with holes suitable to take pots. The cover is taken off and one goes into a whitewashed pit under the floor of the kitchen, Upon entry, there stand pots full of water in the cover, and carry on as if they had left everything and then left... or a closet of clothing beside the wall, on the inside at the interior wall there is a camouflaged board. And through the open crack one can enter by crawling to a narrow corridor that bring you to a closed cell between two dull walls. Old clothes that are put on the hangers in the closet, usually torn and ragged, that prevent every attempt to pry and search inside the closet. Or, as example: A cellar whose external doors on the side of the street are open and beneath it is a camouflaged pit which serves as an entry way to a nearby narrow side street, which is full of mud and spilled out mud and water every day of the year.

It was in places like these that people hid during days and nights, and they ran to them day and night, their eyes filled with sleep, panicked and pressured, in loose clothes and hats that they didn't manage to put on as they should, they seize a child or two, whose eyes were squinting from sleep, women with unkempt hair, in open robes and dresses, with their home shoes on bare feet, cracking their fingers randomly, pulling on the sleeves of their husbands, groaning. They are rocking crying infants, with

handkerchiefs stuffed in their mouths to keep them quiet. Elderly muscular people, accept that walking is some sort of a cure, and they wobble like drunkards on entering and are swallowed by the dark maw. Light from a latticed hatch of a crack, as it were, slightly illuminates the darkness in the hiding place. At night, the end of a thin candle is lit, and it is covered by a pot or broken pail which casts long shadows.

They sit tensely, sullen, in a darkened gathering, in gray-green, seething. A person goes to the crack, and leaves a comment.

*'Sha, sha! To where are you climbing... is it your will to be sensed from the outside?...'*

*Sha, voices come as if from Yerushalyim 'keh...'*

*It is as I have always said: – One cannot rely on the gentiles here...*

From the outside come hoarse voices that are loud. A chill passes over each roof. A woman bends over beside a sleeping child and conceals the child at her body, she cracks her fingers, holds the handkerchief around her throat, and wrinkles the child nervously. A call emanates from her chest – Oy!... Several people are moving over books of psalms...

*'This is not a time to recite psalms...'*

Someone spreads his entire body on the ground. He pressed his face on it as if praying, [asking] that the earth swallow him up together with everybody and everything. Mothers grab their children, kiss them and rock them. The lips of the elderly whisper prayers, [there are] groans, tears...

There is the suppressed voice of a child: *'Mother... I want...'*

Don't take them to a corner, it is close to the network... it is possible to hear it on the outside...

Someone grabs the child and smooths his head with his hand: –

*'Outside, gentiles are standing with axes, backpacks and sacks... they put the children into the sacks and kill them with axes...'*

*'Mother'*

Voices, explosions, destruction... in the darkness of the hiding place, the senses are dulled, inside the shut eyes, tears well up, black circles dance and turn into dark blocks. It seems as though the door is being burst from above, they have found the place... Drunkards burst in with a maniacal laugh. Hatchets, axes are raised. They slaughter.... they rape...

*'Oy, Master of the Universe!*

*Sha, what are you sighing about...*

*Nothing has happened...'*

*'Who asked her to come here... she has never been here before...'*

An infant stirs, it purses the lips on its tiny mouth and prepares to cry. A handkerchief is stuffed into its mouth and he calmed down, but again prepares to cry. Everyone is walking around his area, he is rocked, they talk and they implore. The mother gives him a dry breast...

Someone bangs on the door from the outside:—

*'Go on... come out...'*

They get up with a dumb smile and go outside and shake out the dust from their clothing as they walk.

## **40. The Cooperative for 'Aliyah'**

In that heavy ambience, between giving up hope and realizing hope, a tissue of flowers appeared before they began to bud – *'HaTikvah HaNoshana'* – as a Bershad cooperative for *aliyah* to the *Land of Israel*. Like an amulet hidden during childhood, father recites, from the chapters of the *Pentateuch*, under the veneer of reality, and it spread like a flame in the midst of sealed shut reality. The workers were – Joseph Manis, or as he was called *'Yossel'eh Manis'*, Aharon Salkovsky and others. Joseph especially excelled, an agile Jew, quick, at peace with his environment and a committed Zionist. He was the son of a poor family, religious, and two years from his father. while he was still a child and from that time onward, carried the yoke of providing for his family. He married the daughter of a wealthy worker who was also God-fearing, but he did not succeed in his business and emigrated to Argentina. In time, he returned because he could not get used to the way of life there, for freedom in faith and tradition. With the help of several of his friends, he became an agent for market products, and on Sunday he travels to Odessa with satchels and sacks and returns from there on Thursday or Friday, running around from store to store, selling merchandise and receives new orders. He was active in community matters – in *'Linat Tzedek'* in *'Ezrat Aniyim'* as well as other groups such as *'Psalm Reciters'*, *'Eyn Yaakov'*. Zionism was his soul's desire and the vision of his future. During the days of disturbance, in secret hiding, between one group to another, the concepts of an entity for *'A Cooperative for Aliyah'* took form.

A special position in organizing the cooperative was that of Aharon Salkovsky. He was a man of means, serving the sugar factories in the vicinity. His tendencies, and his wide open hands when it came to charity and help, made him dear to everyone. He was the son of a wealthy *Hasidic* family, loyal to the tradition of 'His Father's House,' and he deviated from it only in one instance – Zionism. On this basis arguments would break out between father and son. When the war broke out, he sent his brother in-law Baruch Horowitz to the *Land of Israel*, as a pioneer before the settlement, for the purpose of settling his children in Israeli educational institutions. (Baruch Horowitz and his wife were murdered by Orhiv in Serbia in the year 1918, on their way back to Israel from a visit to his parents). In the cooperative, Salkovsky saw the fulfilment of his vision and he dedicated himself to his work with all his ardor, and spiritual virtues.

Among the activists in cooperative issues, each person according to his capabilities and personality potential, among the first to make *aliyah* along with their families were: Hananiah Zhredinowsky, Aharon Kipperman, Abraham Yanovsky, Abraham Okhodowsky, Simcha Darlinsky, Betzi Feldman, Abraham Szynkrovsky, Mikhl Grossman, Moshe Itkiss and Joel Itkiss. There were also young people along with them, – sons and daughters with their parents or by themselves: — Gella Kulker, Yaakov Skolnik (today in Israel: *Midrashi*), Joseph Bogumolny (today in Israel: Temple Service), Israel and Chaim Kleinman, the sons of the *Dayan R'* Joseph Alberton and his daughters, Moshe Saverinsky, Aharon Bigelman (today in Israel: *Khermoni*), the *Shokhet* and Inspector *R'* Chaim David Mandrik, who made *aliyah* when he reached old age, with his sons and daughters, Cohen, Sasur Trubnik (Itamar Anvi), and Yaakov Reznick. People from the area settlements who joined the cooperative were: – Ovodowsky, Trusteiniec, Tarnovka, Czecelnik, Bohoful. The number of those making *aliyah* reached approximately 300 people. Individuals remained in the city to close down their businesses. Also afterwards, a number of the young people were drawn to the Cooperative: – Joseph Leibowitz, David Bershadsky, Ephraim Altman, Aharon Pismeni and others. There were those who brought along their parents and relatives under extremely difficult circumstances.

This *aliyah* went along a winding path of suffering, at stations of passing and boundary. Not all those standing for *aliyah* stood the test. Those that remained in the transfer stations in Romania and Serbia, among them were those who switched Israel for America, however most of the group bore the burdens of *aliyah* with fortitude and withstood difficult tests of want and suffering. The goal – *The Land of Israel* – was like a pillar of fire that goes before them and lights up the darkness of desperation.

Also, the settlement of those who were privileged to reach the *Land of Israel* was not a bed of roses. The period of their *aliyah* in the years of 1920 - 1921 was, as is known, a period of upheavals in the settlement. The institutions did not prepare a particularly encouraging reception for them. Nevertheless, they bore their fate with silence and their own strength, doing hard work, that drew on their strength and put down roots, a little bit at a time, in *The Land*. The goal that they had set up for themselves at the beginning, with the founding of the cooperative practically vanished from the horizon: there were no joint living together, and no joint performing of work, Everyone worked for himself and his family. Most of those who made *aliyah* remained in Haifa and afterwards went over to Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. They succeeded and established themselves. A large part of the youth went to a Kibbutz, for men or women. Among them were founders of *Eyn-Harod*, *Tel-Joseph*, *Geva*, *Nesher* – continuing the essential parts of the cooperative.

Joseph Maniss died in Haifa in the year 1942, and after him, Aharon Salkovisky died in the same year in Tel-Aviv, seventy good works and creativity in the *Land of Israel*. The daughter of Aharon Salkovisky – Chaya Sharon, born in Bershad, was one of the players in the ‘*Ohel*’ theater which was owned by the *Poalei Eretz Israel*.

Among the young people who made *aliyah* with the cooperative was Yaakov Reznick, (who died in Tel-Aviv in the year 1947) the editor of the satirical newspaper ‘*Sikkot*’ and an aide to ‘*Davar*’, The grandson of the *Dayan R'* Nahum (Friedhand) on his mother’s side, and *R'* Levi *Shokhet* (Reznick) from the family of the *Rebbe* of Chernobyl, while still in *Heder* he excelled in his grasp of things, and in his acuity, and also in business matters, he spent years in the town of the province of Kherson, and

returned to Bershad after he completed six grades in the gymnasium and he was knowledgeable in the *Tana "kh*, grammar, literature, and a member of 'Tze 'Irei Tzion'. During the days of the revolution he participated in Zionist efforts of the youth and was active in the division, and his talk was always accompanied by prickly humor, by tossing bitterness among the businessmen of the city and the populace, with a light smile and eye winks, and it seemed to me that this was part of his nature. Together with all of the members of the cooperative Reznick went through all the steps of *aliyah*, its circuits in the border stations of *The Land*. Here he found his place in cultural work as an assistant and helped in the 'Davar' newspaper, and a whip of a feuilleton with a sharp and alert air, and also in the humorous newspaper 'Sikkot' which he founded, and on which he worked until his last day.

Itamar Anvi (Tomer Trubnik) was an energetic person of hard work and a good sense of organization. He was born in a nearby village, Barzuk. He was educated in the local school and studied Hebrew subjects as provided by the local teachers. Like many others, the family went to the city during the days of the pogroms. As a youth he excelled in his subtle characteristics, his honesty and his subtle characteristics and generosity of spirit, and when he matured, he went to work as an officer in a savings and loan organization, for the last days of its operation. In his work, the young man leaned toward 'Poalei Tzion' and his ardor for the *Land of Israel* was very strong. In these areas, Trubnik showed his dedication and commitment, the jokes that were made about his divisional work did not affect his commitment. He made *aliyah* to *The Land* along with the youth of the cooperative, he worked as a laborer in building and hard work, in silence and affection. And this was the way he excelled in his work for the cooperative of the populace as the manager of the savings and loan unit of the workers in Haifa. He yearned for *The Land* and its buildings, quietly and modestly, and was quietly active in modesty and inner commitment. He died in 1942.

Herschel'eh Horowitz was also among the cooperative youth – an active person, an actor in 'HaBima.' His *aliyah* was circuitous, from Odessa to Moscow and from there, to *The Land of Israel* with 'HaBima'. He was the son of very religious parents who observed traditions, he studied in the 'Heders' and also directly from the common teachers. He was a man of feelings, and of a penetrating look, and a skill to grasp the orientation of people in speech and movement. During the revolution, together with his sister, who was a graduate of a gymnasium, went over to Odessa in order to prepare to make *aliyah* to *The Land of Israel*. The pogrom and the murder of his brethren shook him up to the point of pressure, and because he was registered to make *aliyah* together with his brother in-law Aharon Salkovisky, he went off to Moscow with his sister, where a Jewish cultural center had arisen instead of plundered Odessa, where he endured the suffering of spiritual wandering and of tradition. With the founding of 'HaBima' he tried his luck at acting, and he was taken in as a member of 'HaBima' and in the year 1992 made *aliyah* to *The Land* with all of its members.

Abraham Bertz, who was a Bershad scion also found a place in 'HaBima'. His father, Yitzhak Bertz was one of the heads of Zionism in the city and its activists in the first period, he bequeathed a love of *The Land* and its language to his son. The education he received in 'Heders' broadened the legacy [of his father] into a child-like vision of redemption. At Zionist meetings that took place in his house, or during strolls on the Sabbath with Zionist groups, the strands were pulled that dispersed into a woven vision. After completing his studies in the gymnasium, he was taken in by the legal faculty in Odessa, but the circumstances of the time deprived him of the possibility of continuing his studies, and

together with the stream of young people he was taken to Moscow. Endowed with a light humor, a sense of how to look into the soul of a man, to sweep up the ridiculous and tragic, at the same time he found a vision and inspiration in 'HaBima.' The founders of 'HaBima' evaluated his capabilities, and from that time on, Abraham Bertz obtained an important place in its ranks. He died in the year 1952 from a heart condition.

## 41. From the Mouths of Babes

From the period of the groups, and their officers and heads, their courage and their strength who sensed everything, and spoke of everything, survived. Fragments of that life that were caught and woven into folk rhymes and melodies, children sat and sang: —

*'Makhna is the father  
Mariusia is the mother  
And the uncle is Trotzky'  
Shlogt mit unz kapores*

Or in another style: —

*'Makhna is the father  
And we have great troubles  
Lenin and Trotzky  
Are not needed by us'*

The fear in those days of terror and much bloodletting, became expressed in simple words of the poems of the masses, without any political hints, that were sung by children who circulated about in those days not in a 'Heder' and not with a 'Rebbe' and not with a school and teacher, and not even the observable eyes of parents —

*Ot kumt Waliniec mit die karetn  
Oyf di shtarke pferd  
Un mir Yiddn in 'Sekretn'  
Lign zay alayn in der erd*

On occasion the children remember words or sentences from the songs of the people, and mixed them all together in connections and additions according to the spirit of the times:

*'Ofyn hoykhn barg  
Oyfn grinem groz  
Heint iz dos  
Vos a mol  
Biksen, Koyln  
Shverdn, messer  
Shoyn nit besser*

*Untn Oybn'*

And there was also playing by children in groups. One of them, 'Batka' rides on a stick-horse or a rider from among his friends imitating a horse, wearing a hat of sheep's wool on his head, a wooden sword at his side, ordering and shouting in a drunken uncivilized voice. The remaining children straighten themselves on their 'horses', and burst into a hoarse song following a weird whistling at the time they are bursting out towards the city: —

*Hi na hora, za dalini  
Kozaki tish, tish  
Yak Fabatzish Komunista  
Rizh, Rizh, Rizh*

And the voices of children are heard from the place of the pogroms and the slaughter, up to the border that is on the Dneister — the gathering place of those fleeing the sword who hoped to cross the river and go over to peaceful Serbia, which is attached to Romania. Their plight is no better than those who remained in the villages,— a link in the chain of suffering that stretches from here to there. They also were likely to plunder and the looting of plunderers: to squeeze, and also the bullets of the border guards, the fear of murderers and plunderers. The suffering and torture of these also were expressed in the verses of the peoples poetry.

*Ihn a tzerissener kapote  
Geht der tateh  
Kayt di bord fartracht  
Shtayt a goyeleh tamevateh  
Halt di baytch un lacht:  
  
Terfi nemnono srul.  
Jasna darana stooyet patrol*

The refugee Jews sit and wait at the border, for do they have a choice? The border guards promise, and meanwhile return them to their lives of labor and drudgery. They sit on their goods and give out their troubles and the children rhyme:

*Stoli mi granica farbidatsya  
Kak v Kishinev dabratsya  
Stoop!  
Terfi nemnono, mai milie srul  
Jest darana, gdiyeh niet patrol*

And in the mouths of the people there also were tales and stories that were seemingly chiseled from the source of ancient legends and were refreshed with the dress of the current situation: ----

It is told of R' Moshe Aharon of Dubovo (the father of Micha Joseph Berdiczewski) with the prayer,

‘Av HaRakhamim’ on his lips, which is the last line of the prayer:— ‘*His hand is full of nations, he crushes the head over a large land, he leads the way, he drinks, therefore he lifts up his head...*

And they interpreted his dream as having the meaning of a redemption that is imminent...

And there is the tale of the group that surrounded a village in Podolia on *Yom Kippur*, close to the time of reading the poem about the ‘*ten who were slain by the monarchy*’, in the ‘*Musaf*’ prayer. Suddenly an old man appeared on the roof of the Synagogue, all gray and his beard is white, wearing a ‘*kittl*’ and wrapped in a prayer shawl. The old man stood and gazed with his black penetrating eyes at the members of the group until a few of them fell silent and disappeared, others fell to the ground, twitching as they were sick in their suffering. The murderers were frightened and fled and the village was spared. And yet another story about one of the men of the group from an area around Yekaterinoslav, who had repented, and then fled the camp and converted...

The strands of legend spread and were pulled as far as the cities on the border, in the midst of the congregation of the general public, in the community shelters and the synagogues that were converted into crowded and compressed living places, people were carried over the border on the waves of the Dneister, and were lost between the black rock cliffs with their subjects that were swallowed at night by waves — victims of vicious bullets.

## 42. The Bolsheviks

On one morning a cloud of dust was seen moving over the bridge in the direction of the city. People stood beside their houses, stretched out their necks and shone on their eyes in order to improve their vision. Russian cavalry appeared on the bridge with their faces lifted. After them came foot soldiers, a large, diverse [group of people] in rustic hats and sailor shirts or in depleted sheets, in boots and trimmed furs and one bare foot, clothed in velvet jackets of a woman, with a machine gun on their shoulders. Some of them tied red ribbons in the manes of their horses. and in the loops of the uniforms, and the strange hats. The officers rode at the head of their group, stars on their hats and red stripes on their sleeves. On the road, the sound of nailed boots echoed, and the barefoot legs of the regular army marched. A dusty cannon hitched to four horses dragged over the pointed stones and raised a sound like a gravel frame. They stopped on the square opposite the palace of the nobleman.

Large ones! — A rustle passed over the gathering.

‘Disgusting like all who are so disgusting.’ Just no ‘*basyakehs*’ (barefoot ones).

‘Arms?’ They could have wiped out a complete village...’

‘ This is one with black hair — certainly a Jew. A Jew in all respects...’

A few of the youths approached the soldiers, who asked for ‘*tyutyn*’ (tobacco), have these troops been here to the end? The called them by their names and laughed. The youths ran to bring tobacco,

cigarettes and white bread for the officers.

In the city, a sense of relief was felt. The fear, that had shaken the Jewish populace subsided with every arrival of a group. People came out of their houses, and looked. The curious among them came near the cannon, rubbed it and exchanged glances among themselves with looks that told a lot. They expressed their concerns and received explanations, women brought foodstuffs and served the soldiers, and the adult men gave then a carbonated drink from a nearby store that had opened in honor of the event. The latter kindly thanked them and ate hungrily, they sated themselves and wiped their mouths with a swollen hand, and with the onset of evening they left the city, they said that they went to the nearby villages with the cannon, a few of the youths from the area accompanied them along their way.

This was a night of the standing guard. In the city, they lodged in hideouts.

Until they are prepared for work and organizing their authority in this place, the people prepared themselves with great confidence, to leave the city and to cross over the bridge to the Dneister. This was the thought that materialized in the hearts of many with the entry of the Bolsheviks.

What is the nature of this governance? Can it maintain control? It's army came and vanished, one after another: the soldiers thin and empty, who are carrying a flood of proclamations and orders. Who is to say that some '*Petlura*' would not arrive and intensify his vengeance yet again? And all of the groups are lurking around here...

These thoughts were not verbally expressed, they feared to reveal this decree to avoid revealing the secret of their retreat. What was done, was done in the dark, hidden and definite secrecy. The settlers sat and thought, assessing what they had and what was left, quietly, so that no unwanted eye would see or unwanted ear would hear.

With the entry of the Bolsheviks, the will to live was awakened that had been frozen and bound up till now. It was as if the aspiration and the urge to continue to weave the lifeline [had been awakened]. And lo, the Dneister river is so close...

The surroundings still produced groups. They circled about the cities along the Dneister like black animals set to prey; They fell upon the villages, on refugees that fled to the cities on the border, they plundered and murdered. There were also '*Whites*' that wandered through the surroundings like a pack of hungry wolves. During one of the autumn days when winds were blowing forcefully – the '*Whites*' entered the city. Suddenly officers appeared that were slouchy, curly, and had dandy mustaches, and they were trembling from the cold. One of them, a general — as he presented himself — invited the heads of the city to come to him, and he informed them of the large army that is going successfully to capture Russia, and he demanded – armaments and several hundred fox pelts for the officers to protect against the winter, as well as gold and silver from the Torah scrolls...which was not within the ability of the city. When the messenger of the city heads explained that it is not within the power of the community to respond to this 'modest' demand, the general seized a rifle that was near him, and aimed it at them: —

— *Zastrilyu kak sabbaku!* ... (barked like a dog). Traitors of Russia! Communists! I will take you as hostages.

The heads of the community were frightened and they begged. The general sent a detachment of soldiers to oversee the fulfilment of the order. But this time, the luck of the city prevailed, because the 'Whites' could not tarry for long, it became known that the Bolsheviks are on the move and drawing near, and they are surrounding the city. The 'Whites' plundered, as it were, silver items and things of value, they seized a few coats from the men and fled under cover of the night.

The Bolsheviks were in the city.

Dressed in uniforms with stars in their hats and red stripes on their arms, they ran about house to house. They searched residences, furniture, house fixtures and clothing. A youth with shaggy hair, with a large brush in his hand and a waving pail of glue with a bundle of proclamations. The remnants of the candles of the previous officers from the time of the Austrians and Ukrainians — were torn out of their places and in their place they glued fresh new orders whose large black letters could be seen at a distance.

Full rooms, furniture, bedding, and any resistance — the sentence was death by shooting. As to speculation and the disappearance of goods and food — there was shooting

A person dressed in a leather coat and greenish boots stands on the threshold of the savings and loan bank, around him there are Jews with stretched out necks, wild-mouthed and ears like earrings: —

'We crushed the Dinician hydra, Kluczk and Judiniec. All are at our feet without a breath of life like carcasses. We strangled the snake Petlura, the servant of the counterrevolution. Who else like the Jews felt the lethal poison of the snakes?

'The Bolshevik rule is the rule of working people, workers and farmers. Onward to the imperialistic plots! Let us choke every attempt of counterrevolution whether hidden or out in the open... death to the palaces and peace to the cabins!'

'Long live the revolution! Long live the redeeming Red Army! [As well as] the comrades Lenin, Trotzky and the remaining heroes of the revolution!'

'Hurrah!' The Jews shouted — 'Long Life! Long Life!'

Commissars are again running around accompanied by the local youth and sons of the nearby villages, designating the houses, and entering them, conducting searches, and confiscating. They take the people out and hang a sign. Wagons stop beside every house, and loaded with desired goods and then continue onward. From day to day, the number of offices increases, as well as the social and cultural institutions. Speeches call upon the youth to get organized — apprentices and workers and a bitter-hearted community follow this voice. Various classes of people organized themselves in a '*Komsomol*' or a '*Yavkatziya*' and in a '*Biezbazhnik*' and again, the Commissars went over and confiscated goods

for their institutions and enterprises. Those who had been public activists in the past were drafted to do forced labor, cleaning of houses, women were taken to clean latches, to clean the floors in institutions and other works requiring hard labor. Occasionally they would burst into a Synagogue while prayers were in progress, and they shouted out of the pleasure of shedding a burden:

‘Till when will we have this stale cult! The muttering of the insane... did this rescue you from the ‘*Bands*’ and the groups of Petlura?’

The Jews sighed. They knew quite well that every reaction ended with either arrest or being shot.

So they stood with lowered heads and were silent, filled with emotion, that their world was also spiritual, a concealed world among themselves – was being wrecked. Many fought against a spiritual depression. Without much choice they made the choice to bolster themselves and to accustom themselves to the new circumstances, to the life of a ‘proletarian’ and the search for work, but quickly it became obvious that they are standing in front of a sealed wall, if they are not connected with Petlura. It was necessary to receive ‘repentance’ or to submit to obligatory exile, and at this time – without privileges, out of want and distress.

People blundered about in the widened world, with a tread that had no worth, they thirsted for a bit of grace, for a bit of compassion, since they intuitively felt the loss and the end of what was coming to them.

That same autumn it was rainy. Thorns covered the unworked fields. Trees and houses were enveloped in a darkness, and the dome of the *Great Synagogue* appeared only dimly. With the dawn, strips of light ran on the ground and the wet buildings.

At the entrance to the city, there stood people and groups of the poor under the council house, the wagon of Ivan the Apostate was hitched to three horses which echoed from a distance, came and stopped. The owners of bundles look him over silently on the wagon and it moves again in the direction of the Dneister. Ivan was the one to believe regarding issues of flight. What was decisive. Merchandise passed through his hands, money, and jewelry. He had places where the groups and overseers were. At times he made his way towards Kapandria (?) Out of a sense of security.

He knew how to keep a secret, and carried advice on fleeing, faithfully in his heart.

The city was empty, the streets were desolate. At the market square wild dogs run around, and they attack with lengthy barking. People-full rooms, furniture, bedding, and any resistance –the sentence was death by shooting. People dig through garbage that has piled up, screaming on the telegraph wires and tree branches. Jews pass over the street on the run. They are afraid of the street, in which people are seized to do forced labor. At twilight they sit in the *Bet HaMedrash* in the darkness pale and oppressed, listening to news from refugees, about Kaminka, the gathering place of the refugees from the city and nearby vicinities, about those that left, and those who are planning to leave, but are currently hesitating. Those that left the city without anything, roll about in community buildings in Kaminka and lift their eyes to their relatives in America. Of those that were able to save the refugees

using jewelry and the hair from pigs, there are those who will take merchandise in Romania. The roads are dirty, remnants of the groups lie in ambush along the roads and fall upon the fleeing like preying animals. Even Ivan has stopped his travels, after he was informed upon. An incident occurred to a wealthy family from Uman that had seven souls, whose bodies were found between the rock crevices. Another family from Tarnovka was attacked by the group that plundered them and left them naked, and afterwards other people from the group and lied about them. They remain currently jailed and all efforts [to free them] did not succeed.

On one day they jailed a few foes attempting to flee. Searches were organized of the members of the former community council who were accused of ties with the groups. People who came to the community looking for work were suspect, and they were detained for investigation. People were arrested for utterances they made. A blacksmith was imprisoned on suspicion of '*Kontribulutzia*' and sentenced to death. The father, who was also a blacksmith wanted to prove that his son was innocent with his calloused hands... and the mother walked after her accused son and wailed: — *'If there only was a community, there was a council head, the one who saved us from the hands of Petlura and his minions, he would also save my son'...*

A secret investigation was opened immediately against the council head regarding his ties with Petlura, and he was sentenced to death. Several of the officers from the Ukrainian authorities came secretly and knocked on his door, and they warned him of the imminent danger to himself, and advised him to uproot himself from this place.

And there was an instance when people were aroused in the night to see the light of a big fire from the area of the market, that penetrated between the blinds of the drawn shutters, and an explosive commotion was heard. They jumped out of their beds and went outside and saw: — the stores in the center of the city consumed in flames. There were those of the lower classes who used their time beside the nobles in the cities of Podolia in order to develop wholesale business in the city. In time, it became evident to the Jewish lessors that their repair and improvement in brick walls, windows and doors was meaningful. They took to the new orders of the authorities in order to forget the past. In the morning people stood around and breathed in the rising smoke that goes up from piles of ashes and the remains of the lessor's building, and they quietly wiped away their tears.

In time, the members of the '*Yavsektzia*' came and on the orders of the authorities, confiscated the *Great Synagogue* to be used for a club for the division. The Jews did not go to plead for compassion because they knew that every request implied a death sentence. '*This was a heavy blow — they wrote about this in detailed letters — the hour that we saw the Holy Ark that was distanced from its sacred spot and turned into a restaurant. We cut 'kriya' and sat on the ground like mourners.*'

On *Yom Kippur* people prayed in their ordinary homes. Shouts and crying penetrated the air. They wept for the frightening past and the future that had vanished. The voice of pleading that split the container of inner prayer, was such that cannot be articulated by the lips of man.

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It was apparent that the effort of the authorities, as manifest by its steps, intended to eliminate the

anonymous groups spread through the villages and forests. Its activity came from the west, for were suspect and flared before being extinguished, but it still had the ability to cause a conflagration. To begin with, the effort of the authorities was welcomed, providing material for the fire of rebellion, which ignited the villages to evince the hatred of revenge against the Jews. Even the weakening of the authorities, at the beginning, was the deciding cause that created this atmosphere. Most of the men in charge were Russians, from the northern regions, distant from the rural lives of the Ukrainian village and the poor life of the local farmer. They did not understand what was going on in the villages full of anger, rebellion and terrorist plots. The leaders of the groups stoked the fires of hatred and called for an uprising, to do sabotage and plunder. The fields were not sown, and the harvest was killed off, the living and silent masses were shocked. And the act of acquiring requisitions and confiscations largely fell to the Jewish officers who were businessmen, and when the villagers succumbed to the Jewish commissars, who were collecting, it changed the anger and wrath against the authorities into a strong enmity of the Jews, whom the farmers viewed as the authority itself...

The Ukrainian officers that had been drafted into the country's apparatus, served as a supporting mechanism to enlarge the hatred of the Jews, and instigated violence against them. They were detectives and their agents, officers with connections of the underground that revealed the secrets of the authorities, and their administrative and military subterfuge, in order to make the authorities guilty of the initiative authorized for 'Jewish' processes and the implementation. Their methods were different – sometimes in the open by means of perverted information and slander, and in times from the west, by means of members of the group itself. Once, at the end of autumn, the group assaulted a train in which Jewish officers rode. The murderers took them into a nearby forest, undressed them, plundered their basic documents, inflicted severe torture, and afterwards shot them. There also were assaults made on the roads, on the way to cities and outside of them, addressed to officers and commissars, and just ordinary Jews that went alone, and were not rare. From time to time they engaged in falsified ploys against the military arm of the authorities in order to upset them and to magnify their weakness: The authorities used to receive hidden news that in the nearby forest a group was concealed and, as you understand, they sent the troops from the city to surround the forest. Immediately, the groups would break into the offices, kill the guards, plunder the documents and flee. On occasion a commissar would disappear, who traveled from a small watch, and the soldiers would return barefoot and naked. Most of them were Jews.

It is not necessary to relate that the Bolshevik authorities utilized intense and sharp methods against a rebellious village. And in contrast, during the communist period, there was a clear tendency to appease the villages by compromises and also cancellation [of obligations]. For this reason they acted in a forgiving manner to the heads of the groups and the leaders of the village that were seized. Most of them received a pardon and entered the ranks of the Red Army. There were times that pardons were issued, at the expense of the village, on which they placed the essence of the burden. In the city, they implemented requisitions and confiscations that were left over, in a rather foolish way. According to an order that places no specific boundaries on crazy people, as if the order for confiscations were made by the village counselor after consulting and limitation of the act of confiscation. The poor people acquired parcels of land from the possessions of the nobility and the church. The authorities concerned themselves with employing all of the farmers without exception and not because of ignorance, including tough guys and people who had a questionable past, even though those seeking employment

had to prove their standing connection and privilege to work. The general economic status of most of the people in the city was destroyed and wrecked. However, in the case of workers only, they did not forbid them from continuing at their labors, however this pardon did not have much worth and it was not possible to benefit from it because of the sharp lack of raw materials and difficulties in marketing the produce, because of the poverty of the city residents. The authorities mad endless effort to extract any trace of the identity of the past Jewish affiliation in Synagogue worship, way of living in a traditional Jewish manner, by means of the selection of status and difference between one man and another. The village council lent a hand to partner with the populace, even in religious matters. In general the authorities dedicated a great deal of their attention to work in the village and involved themselves in the trace of clarifying the identities of the poor of the city placing them in places where work [was available] in the city, in nationalized factories. The people of the city could not compete with a village that squeezed out the remainder of their strength and capability, after two bloody years that preceded the Bolshevik authorities.

The winter was difficult and cruel. The cold and the hunger garnered a reputation among the residents of the city. People fell sick and died for lack of food, clothing and fuel. They were compelled to cover the exposed parts of their body with old sacks, rags, and clothing that they sewed from thick paper, — a fact that, in this period, spread in the Jewish villages. Whoever had leftover old furniture in their home – burned it in their oven. Materials to ignite included candles as well, newspapers and old books, that had enough in them to warm them up against the cold. People went to ‘*Kolkhozes*<sup>48</sup>’, to gentiles that they knew, and returned with half a loaf of bread a bit of potato in their pockets, or a bit of cornmeal underneath the edge of their garments. Those who were fortunate enough to still have furniture and household implements, that had not yet been confiscated, they bartered them with villagers who could give them a bit of flour and potatoes: Others, that went to the villages, bought small pieces of swine flesh and sausage, and they would sell this from the inside of closed doors and in this way they achieved a meager sustenance. Even among those who obeyed commandments and tradition, there were among them those who wandered about the marketplace, from house to house, in a black *kapote*, a surviving remnant [of people] that sold the flesh of swine that they had managed to obtain from their gentile neighbors, that took pity on them, in exchange for leftover clothing they had taken off from themselves.

This was the triumph of annihilation. The destruction of a community that had followed tradition for generations. It seemed as if the entire past and its legacy, maintained for generation upon generation was only a temporary event having no worth, like the lives of those adherents themselves. Everything was uprooted, erased, and sunk in the depths of exhaustion...

Out of the darkness of annihilation there suddenly flickered the ember of tradition, and struggled with the present. It was as if the vanished powers had been liberated, as it were, from their prisons and bonds, and again whispered in the air of the city, secrets of the faith and traditions of the past, a desire to merge and be integrated into the *Tractate of Generations*. R’ David the *Dayan*, – or more correctly, whoever happened to be the *Dayan* – was strolling among the graves, melts away the frost in the hearts

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<sup>48</sup> Collective farms (in Russian)

of men with the prayer of ‘*El Moley Rakhamim*<sup>49</sup>’. With emotion, they went to pray in places of worship, in temporary *minyanim*, in ordinary houses, they searched for consolation in an ancient sweet melody, of the chapters of *The Psalms*, in prayer and the sustenance of the commandments demanded by the times. With the stubborn attitude of *Anusim* they observed the festivals of Israel — Passover, *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, and all of the commandments and behaviors that were accepted.

In simple letters from that period the suffering of the soul emerged: — ‘it is possible to quell hunger with charity, a package of food from relatives outside of this land. What cannot be stilled — was the spiritual hunger, the longing for the deeply rooted [traditions] of past generations, that were cruelly uprooted without pity. We are hungry for spiritual sustenance, for consolation, the appearance of the ruins of the Great Synagogue pains the heart with a deep hurt when you pass over their hands.’

‘We have become as shadows’ — writes one individual — we were expropriated from ourselves and our [very] being. Shadows alone do not exist. They are produced by the light of a fading candle or a flickering menorah. We are as if we didn’t exist, like a shadow. We exist and depend on one, whose weak light falls upon us and then the shadow appears.’

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The people of the city were envious of those who fled to the cities on the border, even though they were far from salvation. Weeks and months went by the people in hidden houses and community residences with the hope of being able to cross the border. The eyes of the authorities from both sides of the border were cast upon them. Bloodthirsty Romanian officers, followed the refugees in the night, they abused, plundered and murdered. One officer, in particular became famous for his virtuoso style, where on the Serbian side of the Dneister the sadists attacked the refugees. The echoes of his deeds reached as far as the British Parliament, where a question was raised about the doings of the Romanian authorities in the cities on the border. Even the ones fleeing to the border took advantage of the chaos to plunder their victims on the other side of the river, in the dead of the night, and after they abused and dipped them in the river. The rock cliffs at the edge of the Dneister were silent witnesses to these abusive acts that were done on both sides of the river. From a practical standpoint, it was not possible to complain to the authorities, because the essence of the flight was illegal. The refugees who fled the rioting in the cities on the border whispered, they went around the streets, men and women, the elderly and the very young, with oppressed eyes, the wretched of the world, orphans and widows. A pauper with his staff and jacket, the wealthy with all ten fingers — everything has changed as if someone waved a magic wand to the poverty-stricken with outstretched hands, knocking on the doors, writing letters of pleading to their relatives in America. With effort they managed to get into community buildings, Synagogues and bathhouses, crowded and pushed, they were captured in the net of the refugees who were dishonest and who seized money, Jews and gentiles, and they fell into the hands of many speculators, conversing, who could do ‘a favor’ and business men who need a livelihood.

Those who fled envied those who had remained in their places, and those — who settled on the border.

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<sup>49</sup> The prayer typically recited in memory of a departed individual.

At this time of confusion the 'NEP' appeared like a bolt of lightning in the dark (an acronym for the New Economic Policy). As if someone had waved a magic wand the mood changed: the refugees forgot the border, and those that remained — their troubles. Convoys upon convoys went out to the 'Bread City,' to Tashkent, the Caucasus, to Moscow to the middle of Asia— they bought, sold, and using difficult and unsteady roads in the hopes for a new life. But this period was short, the bolt of lightning changed and disappeared. For example the authorities regretted this illegal creation, and choked it off while it was still in its infancy. Storms struck again, sweeping away the last hope, and once again, people were uprooted and sent to the land of destruction. The number of people dwindled and died of hunger and deprivation. The city was transformed into a wasteland in which death stalked freely, there were no hospitals, no doctors and no medicines. The number of orphans and abandoned children grew — from poverty to hunger, to sickness and cold. People fell like flies in this fierce winter — Jews, Ukrainians and Russians, but increased mostly among the Jews. Contact with relatives outside the country — was sundered. People became still and withdrew into themselves, as if they were bound in iron, and they endured their suffering in silence. The metal screen of the police descended on the city, and brusquely separated the remaining external people with a strong hand, and did this hidden from everyone's view, and it is not known until when....

## 43: The End: The Years 1941-1945

Podolia was captured and was in the hands of the Germans. After the fall of Odessa in October 1941, a Red rope surrounded The Ukraine, on the other side of the Dneister, and was like a valley that belonged to Romania, a partner to Germany in the capture, from now on, the areas was called '*Transnistra*', meaning that it is neither part of a country and had no history, and its meaning is simply 'On the Other Side of the Dnieper'. This is what the Romanians called this parcel of land which they had received from the Germans. Together with the city of Odessa, and the large tunnel, as a compensation for the return of Transylvania to Hungary. In several of the cities, ghettos were founded for Jews: — In Mogilev, Balta Tulczyn, Wafnirka, Zamarinka, Jampol, Shrugrod, and *Bershad*. About 300,000 Jews were exiled to these ghettos from Serbia and Bukovina, in addition to the 300-400 thousand that lived in this parcel during the rule of the Soviets. Only 50 thousand of these remained alive, or according to a different count — 70 thousand. Bershad had one of the most important ghettos in the *Transnistra*, Exiled people from Serbia and Bukovina were sent there. This was the largest ghetto in size in this area. The exiled called it — The Serbian cemetery.

The invasion left behind itself traces of blood and fire. The Germans and Romanians pitilessly killed Jews, Ukrainians and Russians. They murdered them upon entry, and in their positions on guard and on the borders. It was with a victory cheer, and they spread out afterward in the city and its surroundings taking blood in revenge. They ignited houses which went up in flames, along with mobile assets, they dragged the elderly and women to do exhausting heavy labor, they tortured and abused their victims. There is evidence that with their entry into the city, about ten thousand people were killed, Jews and Ukrainians. The Jews that remained alive were driven to the ghetto that had been established at the lower end of the city of Dolino beside the river, and on one of the streets that goes from there to the upper part of the city — *Yerushalayim keh*', a neighborhood of narrow streets and alleys that are curved and bent. Into this parcel of land which was surrounded by high walls, barbed wire fences and barricades, the entire local Jewish population was shoved into as well as those exiled

from Serbia and Bukovina.

At the amusement of fate, the city was returned to its original state 300 years prior, beside the river. It was almost in the exact spot where the troops of Krybonis and Khmelnytsky in Jewish blood three hundred years ago, the Romanian troops stood in their feral destiny to continue their work.

According to the official order of November 11, 1941, much leeway was given to the Romanian police chief to regulate the housing in the ghetto. People took up residence in shabby clay houses, that were covered in filth, in mossy cellars and collapsed warehouses. And the 'sword' of the authorities devoured the hungry and filthy refugee remnants. Factory agents and military appointees, and the citizenry that came with the army, leaped upon their victims to squeeze out their last drop of blood. They searched diligently and surrounded the ghetto in the nights, took out people and expelled them to the other side of the Bug [River], to a German vicinity, in place of the venal actions of the S.S., who wiped them out in a gruesome manner, as they had done in Europe in every city. In the winter of 1941-1942 a new stream of exiles and the overcrowding grew even larger. The authorities were quick to drive the additional Jews to imprisonment in the ghetto. The condition of housing became threatening, and the overcrowding had turned into a calamity. The local Jews were compassionate towards these exiles. And the ancient emotion of the Jews came to life in all places and at all times – the feeling of the common fate of all Jews. The local populace shared their overcrowded residences with the exiles, and the meager things that they were able to obtain. However with the growth of the stream of exiles, and its renewal from time to time, the ghetto became overcrowded by accommodating all of them. Many were left with no roof over their heads, in one room, in a stable, or a dwelling where 10-15 people lived, and many went over to the small streets under the counters. Illness increased and became more intense: typhus, paralysis of the chin and the lips, caused by hunger and exhaustion, paralysis of their fingers and legs. Dangerous diseases spread among the women who sold themselves to the soldiers and lower officers of the authorities for a loaf of bread. One worry enveloped all of them: – a slice of bread to suppress hunger...

We will deal with the Angel of Death who spread disease and death on the territory of the ghetto: — the ill from typhus were taken there hot from fever, whose hands and feet were frozen. There were no doctors. The elderly could not bear much and were the first prepared for the valley of ghosts (e.g. death). The death rate reached approximately 50-70%, and the death of children and babies reached 80% and higher.

*'This was an extermination which was the deliberate fault and prepared by the Romanian authorities,'* wrote Dr. A. Kessler, who was in the ghetto at that time. The spotted typhus took the place of gas chambers, and in the first winter of 1941-1942 took most of the casualties. Wagons of death returned to the houses morning after morning, they gathered and drove the bodies into the pits. Many grave pits were filled with a host of bodies, the dead of spotted typhus, of intestinal disease and the dead from freezing and hunger, and with them they threw in lethargic people, and those who were dying. The authorities took away the means of protection from the populace, left them without water, without soap and without medicines. The purpose was readily evident – to eradicate and wipe out (the Jews).

Similar testimony is given by D. Shechter Miassy and others, eye-witnesses from the exiles in Serbia

and Bukovina. Dr. Kessler estimated the number of dead in the pits to be thirty thousand – 3 pits in which each and every one were stacked with thousands of bodies. And there were those who said the number was even higher than this. During the winter, the pits were covered with snow and frost, and the corpses froze. However, with the arrival of spring and the melting of the snow, piles of the dead were uncovered, and the ghetto became filled with the stink of death, and its residents fell like flies.

Witnesses relate: —

The residents of the ghetto did not frequent the streets and narrow alleys because they feared the illness and the plagues and the guards who stood by the barbed wire fences. They sat in their hiding places alone and in dread, and they dreamed of the past. How intense was the desire to clarify parts of this life? When they encountered local people they poured out their hearts and became tied to them with feelings of nearness and mutual affection.

Imbedded in themselves like mourners, the local populace used to go to prayers on Sabbath days and holidays as if there was no danger connected with this.

The old Synagogues that were in the area of the ghetto were taken up by the exiles. A house was found that was dedicated to prayer, but only a few were drawn to it to pour out their words before their Creator. The wells had been stopped up and destroyed. The rest of the clergy were in the ghetto as needed: — *A Mohel, Shokhet, Hazzan*, and a gravedigger.

In the years of 1942-1943 permission was granted to the Jews of Bucharest to send money and packages of food and dress to individuals that were among the exiles in Transnistria. Money was transferred by the authorities, and disbursed to the recipients, and there were instances when it was necessary to change them. Because of financial matters a contact was established with the authorities. The local people and the exiles were able to make a living from this, secretly and quietly. During the nights, the local people would slither to the area of the farmers, smuggling and selling. The farmers were compassionate to the exiles, and extended help to those expelled that went from place to place. When they passed through the villages, they were supplied, but concealed from the eye of the guard – a loaf of bread, potatoes, and they supported the people of the ghetto in their struggle. An administrative officer of the authorities used to transfer people from place to place. There were also working groups of laborers, skilled people and underground workers who according to the rules of the ghetto received cards for food in exchanges for their work. It was in this way that the possibility of entering the workforce was arranged for young unskilled youths, who were pushed into the ranks of the skilled workers and received food cards in return for their labor. The Romanian authorities did not differentiate social sectors of the populace in order to separate them in any way after the creation of the means to transfer monies by the sending of various forms of money, from which they profited as well. In the German ghettos, they were careful to segregate sections of the populace one from another, by a social selection [process], and the introduction of envy and competition. This was not the case for the Romanians, because they knew that their situation here was temporary, and they attempted to use those opportunities for their own private advantage. And therefore, there were occasions that the upset the residence of the ghetto. They arranged searches in the houses, arrested people, cruelly tortured them, and afterwards they would release them in exchange for the help that they had received.

After the inspection of the Jewish community inspectors in Transnistria, a bit of life stirred in the community activities behind the walls of the ghetto. A commission was established made up of local people and exiles, and among the workers were: Feldman, Kholodovsky, and the *Shokhet* Abraham Berkowitz. It is not known if these [people] were heads of the neighborhoods and groups that were designated by the authorities according to the order of November 11, 1941, as temporary officials opposite the authorities, or was this a new community commission. A soup kitchen was created, in a former pharmacy, the only brick building in the extent of the ghetto, a hospital entity and the sanitary condition in it was: — ‘dismal rooms full of urine and feces. The ill lay there and roll around on hiding places, on the floor, on the window sills, wrapped in rags and covered with flies and remnants of food, dirt, and filth.’ The doctors were compelled to also handle healthy people, and to wage war with the lice that transmit the diseases. It was forbidden to burn clothing, since there were no others. There were also no disinfection apparatuses, because of the shortage of trees. The doctors had to take off clothing with their fingers... in the meantime, disease spread without cease, and death proceeded to reap its booty.

Another institution was created within the walls of the ghetto — an orphanage. Three such institutions were created with the help of the Jewish-Romanian community commission for the area of Transnistria: In Mogilev, Bershad and Balta. The number of orphans in these three locations reached 5,000.

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One day in the year 1944, a whisper passed between the walls of the ghetto: — something was going on. The Jews felt there was a change coming, but didn’t know what it was. The guards became more rigorous. In the nights, shots were heard nearby, and there were breaks into the ghetto accompanied by deeds of violence and murder. People returned from work beaten and wounded. The ration cards were canceled. Those that were seized were exiled to other locations. In the inner part of the ghetto one felt a secret stirring. People moved about at night like shadows, young boys, as skinny as skeletons, hid beside the walls, slithering on all fours, crossing the river by swimming, and vanished. One of the local people, Moshe Tallit, was the living spirit among the youth. He was the son of a poor family, working people. His grandfather and father were righteous workers, honest and upright. His grandfather, a member of ‘*Magidei Tehilim*<sup>50</sup>’ in the *kloyz* of the *Shamashim*, was a man of the common folk, observant of the *mitzvot*, who even in his work at the groat factory could not part with the *yarmulke* on his head, nor his broad ‘*tallit-kattan*.’ His grandson was just like him, a spiritual person with an alert heart. With the appearance of the sparks in the partisan movement among the farmers, he was buffeted by a windstorm of his primeval spirit and joined their ranks. When the darkness of night had passed, he would secretly come to the ghetto to arouse the young people to obtain souls for the forest. The authorities searched, following like wild animals, broke into lit houses, arrested people, relatives, and neighbors. Those were imprisoned and disappeared, and the echo of shooting from the distance brought the news of their death.

On one day a rumor spread, that a freight train loaded with arms, equipment and wheat which was weighed down, exploded. The villages of the surroundings were immediately surrounded. Houses were

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<sup>50</sup> ‘Reciters of the Psalms’ as an addition to the prayer service.

put to the torch and many farmers were shot. Also, there were casualties among the soldiers. In the sugar factory, the workers rose up against the soldiers who had come to take the inventory of sugar. A number of the workers were hung and even here, the soldiers suffered losses.

On one night, the city was surrounded, implying the arrival of Moshe Tallit.

At the second end of the ghetto they mourned the dead. Around her body which was covered in linen with two sooty covers, brimming menorahs of oil were lit, there were seated women who were sobbing, the *Hevra Kadisha* – the valley institution – dealt with obtaining permission to effect burial. At dawn, the body was taken out, escorted by guards, to the cemetery. After the prayer, they lowered her into the grave for the care of the one who buried her... in the meantime, the *Hevra Kadisha* disappeared, the police went off, and it was then that Moshe Tallit, the imagined corpse got up, and disappeared.

With cruel fury they fell upon the ghetto. They took out about two hundred and fifty men to be killed. On the next day, after the Sabbath — about three hundred additional people, weak elderly people, children and women, among them Abraham Berkowitz, one of the activists of the ghetto, who gave his last slice of bread, to the public, in the hungering ghetto. The gates of the ghetto were closed and no one entered or left. The wives of the farmers, who brought foodstuffs to be sold, were chased out with raging violence. The air was laden with the vengeance of blood. People stood out of fright. They sat and lodged in their hideouts and waited for death. On the other side of the barbed wire a farmer was secretly throwing pieces of bread and potatoes that he had taken surreptitiously from under his jacket (over the fence) — and then disappeared, and people like shadows, hungry skeletons, jumped on the slices of bread on all fours, like animals, and seized what was there.

On one morning, early on March 6, 1945 one saw the corpses of people hung and moving on the wooden telegraph poles. A dark cloud hovered in the air and from the inside of the houses of the city, and from the houses for the length and breadth [of the city], thick columns of smoke emerged, black, with tongues of fire that protruded from the surroundings. The smell of fuel and human flesh filled the air...

The barbed wire fences collapsed. The ghetto was shaken, and the people came out.

The city of Bershad no longer existed...

**F I N I S**