# DAYS AND YEARS

## by

## Immanuel Velikovsky

# Foreword

*Days and Years* is Immanuel Velikovsky’s autobiography down to 1939, when he was forty-four years old. That was the year he and his family came to the United States. He was then just on the threshold of the far-reaching discoveries that were to change the course of his life.

Certainly there will be no shortage of biographical materials from the last forty years of Velikovsky’s life, a period that was so rich in research, writing, correspondence, lecturing, and controversy. But Velikovsky did not continue his own life story past the year 1939. We have his working title—*Off the Mooring—*for the post-1939 portion of his autobiography, but this was never written. Velikovsky was always greatly interested in finding just the right titles for his books, and *Off the Mooring* would have been a particularly apt title for the story of his bold and unfettered voyages of discovery. Perhaps some future biographer of Velikovsky may still use that title.

Though *Days and Years* stops at 1939, the years that followed are covered in part by some of Velikovsky’s other books and writings. Thus *Stargazers and Gravediggers* covers the period from 1939 to 1955. The emphasis is upon the story of Velikovsky’s research and writing and of the criticisms and other reactions that his work provoked. Nevertheless, there is much personal detail in that story, as there is also in *Before the Day Breaks,* Velikovsky’s account of his relationship with Albert Einstein. Both *Stargazers and Gravediggers* and *Before the Day Breaks* may be considered semi-autobiographical, though neither book was intended by Velikovsky as autobiography.

— Lynn E. Rose

# Preface

In writing these autobiographical pages I am guided by two aims. Should my work and activity ever merit preoccupation with my person, I want to protect myself from guesses, inaccuracies and inventions, which all too frequently are the fate of biographies; and I wish to give to my children and to my fellow men an account of a life spent. I call it *kheshbon ha nefesh,* a Hebrew expression which has no exact translation, and at closest would be “searching of the soul” of a man who went ways all of his own.

# Vitebsk

The ancient city of Vitebsk strides the Western Dvina. This large stream rises in the Valdai Hills, in that watershed from which also the Volga flows east, and the Dneper south. Not far from Vitebsk the Dvina makes a bend and majestically continues to the northwest. It empties its water into the Baltic Sea in the Gulf of Riga. In Tzarist times it used to carry barges and steamboats with the produce of the region to Riga and from there to the overseas markets.

Vitebsk was the capital of the Vitebsk Gubernia, one of the districts into which Tzarist Russia was divided. The town had about sixty or seventy thousand people, a substantial part of them being Jews: Vitebsk was in the “pale”—or inside the “line of permitted settlement.” It was not famous for its learning like a few smaller localities in Western Russia, renowned for their *yeshivot* or for the great authorities in Jewish studies residing in them and thus attracting the needle of the intellectual compass. But neither was Vitebsk among the cities in the “pale” which acquired an unsavory reputation. Not far away was the town of Liubavitchi, the seat of the famous dynasty of Hassidic *zadiks* (righteous men). Yet I believe the Jewry of Vitebsk was not Hassidic in the main. Its people were plain and kind, of a pleasant disposition, a little given to dreams and melodies. This quality is shown in the compositions of Marc Chagall, born in Vitebsk, who even in his old age, long away from his birthplace, continued to depict in many of his paintings Vitebsk and its Jews. Chagall and I never met, unless I chanced to come across him, a lad seven years older than myself, in the time we both resided in that city; but I left it much earlier than he, at the age of six and a half, never to visit it again; yet I could fill many pages with my memories of Vitebsk.

The city buildings were severe, rows of windows usually being the only ornament on their naked facades; the hamlet shacks of the neighboring villages carried heavy straw roofs over their log sidings. The hills, the little gardens, the green shutters, all had a pastel, dreamy quality; and clouds had golden rims, and cows in the countryside had bells, and birds were inquisitive and trusting, or so they appeared to me.

One thoroughfare, Smolenskaya, crossed a small confluent of the Dvina, the Viluika, and led to the main square with a *sobor* (cathedral) and court house; from the square the fashionable Zamkovaya Street turned past the city garden and crossed the bridge over the Western Dvina with a broad view in both directions. Should one pursue the route beyond the bridge, one would pass streets of single-story houses and arrive at the railroad station; and continuing farther one would come to a large field that once or twice a year served as a parade ground. Above were forested hills with narrow paths amid pine trees—the place is called Sosoniki and it is just outside the town limits. From these hills one could count in the distance, between the town and the slopes, the number of freight cars in the train that occasionally and slowly crept along the plain.

There in Sosoniki on a late spring day, in a rented cottage, my mother gave birth to her third son. It was May 29, 1895 according to the Julian calendar; in Western Europe and the Americas it was June 10. The late spring of 1895 was unseasonably cool, and my parents-to-be contemplated a temporary return to town quarters, when the labor pains made my mother lie down. In those days birth-giving was a home affair, not a cause to go to a hospital. But there was progress in that not a midwife but a doctor would attend. I believe it was about two o’clock in the afternoon when I came into the world.

I was never shown that cottage, and on rare visits to the hills I do not remember having noticed any buildings there; neither was I, at these occasions, interested in such information. Sosoniki was for me the happy wide field, a few times filled with people and resounding with brass music; the forested hills had paths crossed by knotted roots of pine trees, to which the place owed its name *(sosna* = pine).

On the day I was born, or possibly on one of the following days, my father went on a walk in the forested hills and thought of a name for me. His first son was called Daniel, and Samuel in memory of one of his forefathers. The second son was called Alexander and Lev, the latter in memory of a great-grandfather. Daniel was two years older than Alexander and he, in his turn, was sixteen months older than myself; I, however, was not followed by a brother or sister, and remained the youngest.

My first name—I have no middle name—was chosen by my father, as he told me, on that solitary walk in the forested hills. He selected it from a verse of the seventh chapter of Isaiah; there was no Immanuel among our ancestors known to him. But he was visited by a thought, almost a wish cast before destiny, that I would be predestined to a great task in connection with the tragic history of our nation. One has to visualize the time, and also the personality of my father, a dedicated Jew with a vision of the national renaissance. It was a tragic time, of utter despair and of utter hope. When I was a child of six or seven my father would show me the chapter in the prophet Isaiah where the name Immanuel is found; more than once he spoke to me of the faith he put in me.

The events around the time of my birth were as if symbolic of the trends my life would take. In those days Theodor Herzl started his diary in a hotel room in Paris, having been assigned as a foreign correspondent to the trial of Dreyfuss. Until that spring Herzl, like so many of the Hungarian and Austrian Jews, felt alienated from the Jewish people. Then, while covering the Dreyfuss trial, Herzl experienced in the courtroom something akin to a transfiguration. He began to feel his bonds with his ancient nation, with its judges and prophets, and with the eighty generations of exiles, unbroken by persecution. It was then that he conceived his “mighty dream” and on June 10th, the day of my birth, he wrote in his diary: “I am taking up again the torn thread of the tradition of our people. I am leading it to the Promised Land. Do not think this is a fantasy. I am not an architect of castles in the air. I am building a real house.” In Paris he also wrote the first pages of his political manifesto, *The Jewish State.*

In 1895 Freud, having two years earlier published with Breuer the first paper on psychoanalysis, began to write his *Interpretation of Dreams.*

In 1895 a new era in science was started by Roentgen with the discovery of X-rays, followed by the detection of radioactivity by Becquerel and of radium by the Curies. The old mechanistic philosophy of the world saw the daybreak of a new understanding of the universe.

Configurations of planets at the time of birth are claimed by astrologers as being decisive for the destiny of the newborn child. In astrology I never believed (I think I can explain its origin); I would rather assume that events on earth at the time of a person’s birth may in some way direct his life. One is under the influence of the spirit of the time. The dream of Herzl, the intuitions of Freud, and the rays of Roentgen in 1895 were the earthly constellations which marked the direction in which I was to wander—ideas, like men, need time to grow and to find their place in the world.

Long before the advent of Herzl, my father dedicated himself to the idea of a national renaissance for the Jewish people. Simon-Yehiel was the elder son of Jacob Meir and Sarah Velikovsky,[1](http://www.varchive.org/dy/vitebsk.htm" \l "1)

until their end residents of Mstislav, a small ancient town south of Vitebsk, renowned among the Jews. This town must have been founded in very early, possibly pagan, times. In the first half of the 19th century there occurred in Mstislav the so-called “rebellion of the Jews.” An interested reader will find details of it in the writings of Simon Dubnow, the renowned Jewish historian, himself a native of Mstislav.

My father was born in February on *shushan-Purim* of 1859. He had a sister older than himself, a brother Feivel younger by about five years, a younger sister, the mother of Moshe Halevi, and another brother, Israel. Their mother Sara, a little woman whom I remember on her visit one summer, probably in 1898, was a daughter of Jacob Hotimsker. Jacob Hotimsker was thought by the population of the region to be a holy man. He was the Dayan (religious judge) in Mstislav. He was all prayer and all humility. In the time when my father was a child the children of Mstislav believed that this holy man could make himself invisible, and other similar stories were told about him. I possess his portrait: a kind face, inquisitive eyes, light brown curly locks. On his deathbed this Rabbi Jacob blessed all his progeny that none of them would ever need to serve in the Tzarist army—and his blessing held good for almost forty years, until the Nazi invasion of Russia when a cousin of mine—a daughter of my elder brother—fell on the battlefield, and probably many more of the descendants of Rabbi Jacob served and fell. My great-grandfather, who died in about 1903 or 1904, must have been born about 1820, and the terror of military service in the army of Nicholas I incited Rabbi Jacob to select this theme for his benediction. Jewish boys were abducted into the service by “catchers” at the age of 13 or 14 to stay in the service for 25 years and then on military settlements for the rest of their lives, without being able to study rabbinical law or give their children such an education, a main purpose in the life of traditional Jewry. I was about eight years old when Rabbi Jacob died; by then we were already living in Moscow. For days my father did not open the letter informing him of his grandfather’s death, and he wept when he read the news; never had I heard my father weep so bitterly. The whole town closed the stores and joined in the funeral procession.

I also possess pictures of my paternal grandparents. My grandfather Jacob Velikovsky looks handsome with an open face and regular features and a black beard into which the first silver strands had started to spin themselves. I never visited Mstislav, and do not know whether I ever saw him, unless he was one of the elderly men—all of whom could claim to be called “grandfather"—who visited us in Vitebsk, and who played with my hair, lovingly pulling it.

Of my grandfather, Jacob Velikovsky, my father told me that he never tore off a flower or a blade of grass, and never killed a fly. My cousin Moshe Halevi, who grew up in Mstislav, knew him well.[2](http://www.varchive.org/dy/vitebsk.htm" \l "2)

He told me that our grandfather would go alone with his horse-driven cart to the forest, and there would sound the shofar, the ram’s horn, in different intonations and rhythms. I would not know whether he was practicing there the art of blowing the horn for the High Holidays, or whether he was spending his solitude in the forest in communion with God, as my cousin would insist. From my father I know that on the Sabbath Jacob Velikovsky would speak only in Hebrew; and since in those days Hebrew was not yet a spoken language, he experienced difficulties, but would not give up.

Jacob was a small merchant like his ancestors, many generations back. From the time of the Crusades, from the time of the Roman Empire many of the Jews were artisans, merchants, and rabbis; and often the rabbinical profession was exercised simultaneously with the manual or mercantile.

Jacob Velikovsky was also eager to do something for the poor of the town. In winter the needy used to suffer from the cold, being unable to buy firewood by the cart. He would buy several carts of wood and let the needy have the small quantities they could afford. My grandmother Sara would go outside in the dark of the pre-dawn winter mornings, on the knock of the “customers” at the door, to dispense the bundles of wood. She was small in stature, very tidy, and a kind person like her father, Jacob Hotimsker. But unselfish acts call for retribution—and to the great heartache of my grandparents, rumors reached them of allegations that they were profiting from this endeavor.

I never saw my maternal grandparents. They lived in Lodz. My mother was the eldest of ten children—four daughters and six sons. Nahum Grodenski came to Lodz from Grodno where my mother was born. A merchant with a Western European outlook, he traveled abroad and was highly respected. It was the pride of my mother that she was a daughter of Nahum Grodenski. I heard also from others that his word in business transactions was valued more than any written document. He liked my father as his own son and helped him in the beginning of his career.

As a boy my father studied in the *kheder* (preparatory school) together with Simon Dubnow, the future renowned historian of the Jewish people. Like the children of the generation before him and after him, my father found candies fallen “from heaven” on the table in front of him the first day at the *kheder* and he, like other children, believed that an angel had tossed them down.

When my father reached the age of fourteen or fifteen, he heard the unseen horizon’s call, and felt an urge to seek greater goals. The small business of his parents, probably a little shop, deteriorated; and it happened once that a creditor slapped the face of my father’s elder sister. This episode made a fierce impression on the young man, and he decided to strike out on his own and achieve a position in life through study. Study meant Hebrew study of the Law. In Mstislav there were great talmudists, but no *yeshiva* or academy of learning. My father conceived a plan to go away secretly to the famous center of Jewish learning—the *yeshiva* of Volojin. Very possibly his father would not have opposed his going to a *yeshiva* had he asked; but the reading of a book, I believe by Mendel Moher Seforim, made him emulate the way of leaving the paternal home, and even the letter of parting he wrote partly copying it from that book.

With a friend whom he persuaded to join him Simon departed secretly from Mstislav, leaving a note for his parents in the hands of his younger brother Feivel. Cooking their food in the woods, the two friends caused a forest fire. After one or two days’ march afoot they slept in the house of a woman who knew and revered Jacob Hotimsker. Awakening the next morning, Simon heard the voice of his father: travelers who had seen two boys running out of a burning forest probably directed him. But before starting the pursuit Jacob had asked the advice of the rabbi of the town, who advised him to let Simon study and even wrote a letter of introduction to the leader of the Yeshiva of Mir.

In Mir my father was the *matmid* (the most studious) of the Yeshiva: he spent sixteeen hours daily in learning, sometimes pouring water into his shoes to keep himself from falling asleep. He would not see the sun rise or set, for he would be indoors studying; and alone, late at his folios, he would implore the Creator to redeem His people. At the words of the prayer “keeper of Israel, keep the remnant of Israel” tears would well up in his eyes.

The time came and he was called to Mstislav to present himself to the conscription board, and he remained there, occasionally studying the Gemarrah at the feet of a local merchant-talmudist. He improved his knowledge of the Russian language word by word with the help of a Hebrew-Russian dictionary. The spirit of Haskala, the Jewish movement of literary renaissance and interest in secular subjects, was awakened in him. Simon Dubnow guided him in this, and he, in turn, kindled in Dubnow the national idea, as Dubnow himself wrote, more than fifty years later, in the Hebrew daily, *Haaretz.* The issue carried several other articles dedicated to my father, and Dubnow narrated among other reminiscences, how some Friday afternoon he was reading *The Love of Zion* by the poet Mapu on the steps of my grandfather’s home.

My father felt that his world of ideas was too liberal for traditional rabbinical teachings, and he looked for a chance to find a way in life. His first tries were unsuccessful, and he began to accompany his father on his trips to Smolensk from where Jacob Velikovsky brought goods for the merchants of Mstislav on wagons or sleighs. Once my father remained in Smolensk and took a job in a store doing manual work. Then he arranged with his employer to work selling in the town. During his hours of rest he would try to study at the railway station, but was often asked to leave; when late at night he studied by the light of a candle, the employer in whose house he had a small room would call to him to extinguish the light, which cost money. But on Saturdays my father used to sit on the square in front of the synagogue and read, and he greatly enjoyed the freedom of the Sabbath; he promised himself that he would uphold the holiness of the day of rest—the great social institution established thousands of years ago by the Hebrew lawgiver—in the days when he would no longer be dependent on an employer.

Then he started his own business with the blessing and advice of one Peter Rifkin. This man happened to come to the store and, entering into conversation with my father, was surprised to find a learned youth at manual work. As soon as his business allowed, my father called his brother Feivel to Smolensk and made him a partner; and soon many relatives ate at his table.

One day my father conceived the idea to obtain the agency for Smolensk from the huge concern of Vogan, which traded in tea and many other kinds of merchandise. He wrote to Moscow. Rifkin advised him not to be so ambitious, but soon an invitation came from Moscow to present himself. He waited together with several men of obviously greater wealth. When his turn came and he made a good impression the Director asked him to come the next day and sign the papers. He answered that he was a Jew and would not sign on a Saturday. Here the story could easily have ended, because Vogan’s firm did not as a rule employ Jews. But my father’s straightforwardness gained him even more sympathy: the Director told him to return on Monday. He spent three nights in a hotel near the Kremlin, listening to the quarter hour melancholy beat of the clock on Spassky Gate. Would somebody come to Vogan from Smolensk and ask for the same business in the meantime? He was uncertain until the hour on Monday when he was given the papers to sign. Later he found out that the mother of the Director was Jewish and was buried in a Jewish cemetery. He became the favorite of this man. The Director would call an assistant and tell him to go with my father and open credit for him in one bank or another, and the man would throw his overcoat over his shoulders and go. Many years later, when this assistant became the Director and also the President of the Moscow stock exchange he would stop his *cabriolet* (carriage) driven by a coachman in top hat, when seeing my father on his early walk, and exchange reminiscences.

I have here gone into some sentimental details of my father’s life and career. My father once wrote his autobiography in Hebrew, during our wandering in the Ukraine, in the years of the civil war in Russia. This version having been left in Russia, he wrote it for a second time in Tel Aviv, this time describing also his work for the revival of the Jewish people in its ancient land and other efforts for the sake of this homeless nation.

My father met my mother in the town of Starodub in the northern Ukraine. My father apparently came there for business. My mother was sent there by her father to open a branch of his trading house and with her was her eldest brother Ephim. As I mentioned earlier, my mother was the first of ten children; her mother, Basha, took her out of the gymnasium at an early age in order to help at home with the ever increasing number of brothers and sisters. My mother regretted not having had a good schooling, and made it a goal in her life to give us, her children, the best schooling possible. Yet she could speak several languages fluently and at the age of sixty, on arriving in the land of Israel, took herself a teacher and soon spoke Hebrew and also wrote letters to me in perfect Hebrew.

After two years of engagement my parents were married. For seven or eight years they lived in Smolensk. Their first child was a girl, stillborn, and my mother was rather sick. In the seventh year my elder brother Daniel was born in Smolensk. After that they moved to Vitebsk, where Alexander was born.

My father was a dreamer, chained to his business; but he also had a grasp of economic problems on an international scale. My mother had a practical mind with a very strongly developed feeling of justice; my father told me how my mother once went back to the market to find the vendor who had given her one single kopek (half-cent) too much in change.

I have read that Leo Tolstoy believed that he remembered himself from the age of half a year. I certainly remember myself long before I was three years old, and some of my memories may refer to my being one year old. My earliest memory is dreamlike: in a small orchard or garden I am carried on the arm, I believe, of my father; there was a group of grown-ups, my mother among them, and the group was slowly walking in the orchard, it seems toward the house. How old I could have been I would not know; but many memories before I reached the age of three are very vivid, not dreamlike, and could be described in many details, as if they had taken place only recently.

The house in which we lived was situated at the riverside: the street, one of the main thoroughfares, is here cut by the confluent of the West Dvina, Viluika, spanned by a bridge. A tiny garden was next to our house towards the stream, and a backyard. The house was three stories high, but the first had a low ceiling and was not occupied, but was used for storage and the like; we occupied the second story. The parents’ bedroom had its windows to the Viluika, and in the spring rafts of beams and unattached tree trunks would move from morning till evening toward the Western Dvina and down toward Dvinsk and Riga on the Baltic Sea. The stream was small in the summer but in the spring it overflowed and once our yard was under water and a boat floated in it. Our beds were at the other corner of the house; a picture with horsemen on a mountain path was above my bed. In the winter snow was outside and the sun was bright in the windows; at night I listened to a monotonous sound, and I do not know whether it was a clock or a drip in the sink or the pulse in my arteries. A small and narrow valley lay between the windows and the next house. It led to a road with a mill, and farther to a field; the river made there a bend. In winter on walks there with our uncle Israel, the youngest brother of my father, we would throw stones that would skip along the ice, and in spring along the water’s surface.

The only picture of us three brothers I know is a photograph showing me sitting in a girl’s dress, with black curls, my brother Alexander-Lev, called Lelia, with blond curls, standing in a pose of little Lord Fauntleroy, and Daniel with a short haircut. I remember vividly the hour when my mother took me into the bedroom and changed my girl’s dress to a boy’s outfit; my brothers met me with great joy when I emerged from the parents’ bedroom. I remember also when the hairdresser came to us, placed his bag of instruments on the couch, and clipped my hair, promising that it would be stronger if cut; thus my curls were gone. I was a strong and healthy boy, the only one of us three who was fed on mother’s milk; my brothers were, as the custom then was, fed by wetnurses. I remember playing under the table when parents and guests dined, at the age when such things are done.

Growing up somewhat, I would stand in the drawing room, which had a balcony, and watch the passing clouds, and pray, probably to the glory of God, in my own words. Early I started to learn Hebrew: a *melamed* (teacher) used to come to us; he would put the book before me—sometimes it was upside down—and I would read the syllables. On High Holidays we used to visit the synagogue; my father had his seat at the East Wall, next to the holy enclosure with the rolls of the Torah. The synagogue was situated in a large garden on the quay of the South Dvina.

Standing on the mountain pathway, I liked to watch the steamboats with turning waterwheels moving towards the sea on the broad stream; and in the winter I remember walking on the ice of this great river, accompanied by an employee of my father.

During the summers we used to live in a cottage on a hill some distance from Vitebsk. Beyond was a field with rye, farther a forest, in which there were heaps built by ants; we would watch the ants become agitated when a broken treebranch was stuck into a heap. In the forest we collected berries. We tried to persuade a squirrel to come down to eat nuts placed on a kerchief. We played in the grass when it was harvested, behind a nearby mill on a lawn surrounded by bushes and trees. Next to the mill there was a road and on the other side of it a pond dammed by the mill; reeds grew there, and we brought home shells with their occupants still inside. A narrow rivulet ran down from the dam, and once my brother Lelia, who was my permanent playmate, and I were caught by the sudden swelling of this rivulet. The road led to a larger road and there I loved to follow the carriages uphill and down. Farther there was a hill with a church on top and many ravens flying around and making noise.

Once my brother Alexander and I, probably age 5 and 4, went to a large Christmas tree party, arranged by some institution. I would not know how I made the causative conclusion, being yet more than twenty years ahead of my medical degree, but I thought that the very sweet and tasty almond milk which both of us enjoyed and of which second helpings were offered from unwashed glasses, brought measles to my brother—he became ill soon after that evening. The apartment was divided by a locked door, my brother being transferred to the half where also my parents’ bedroom was, my mother taking care of him, and I was placed under the surveillance of a governess in the other part of the house. But recovering from measles—then a quite undesirable sickness to contract in view of the many complications that the doctors of that time were unable to cope with—my brother contracted scarlet fever. Again, entirely on my own, I arrived at the conclusion that the doctor visiting him daily brought to him the germs of the new disease. My mother, afraid of letting me live in the same apartment divided by a locked door, had me move to an apartment a floor higher. But at last Alexander recovered.

In 1900 or the beginning of 1901 my father left Vitebsk for Moscow. My mother soon followed with Daniel; we were left with a “bonne” (Freulein) and partly with uncle Israel. He was a bachelor, liked horses, and kept them when my parents were in Vitebsk. The very move to Vitebsk was preparatory to establishing a home in Moscow: only after paying for a number of years the dues of the first guild merchant, could my father as a Jew make his domicile in Moscow, generally out of bounds for Jews.

That summer (1901) part of Vitebsk burned and we watched the reddened sky from our summer home. From Daniel came letters telling us of the capital and the many gates in its walls. Meanwhile we, Lelia and I, began to learn to read Russian and German; our teacher was the “Freulein,” Meta Redlich, the daughter of a miller in Nevel, not far from Vitebsk. We had had governesses previously, but her we called our “beloved Freulein.” Meta Redlich was seventeen years old when she came to us and we became very attached to her.

In the fall of 1901, on a walk in the hills of Sosoniki, we saw from afar a horseless carriage, the first automobile any one of us had ever seen.

**References**

1. Since in many cases the place of origin of a person was used to form his surname, Velikovsky—so one of my reader-correspondents, also from Russia, suggested—could mean the origin of an ancestor from one of the geographical places that contain *veliky,* as Veliky Volochek or Veliky Luki, not far from Mstislav.
2. Moshe Halevi was a member of the Hebrew Theater Habima in Moscow and later founded the Ohel Theater in Israel.
3. **Moscow**
4. One day in October or November, 1901, Alexander and I were dressed in our warm clothes, and winter boots were put on our feet for our travel to Moscow. We were driven, accompanied by the “beloved Freulein,” in a horse-drawn carriage over the bridge on the Western Dvina to the railway station. We took our places in the second class compartment in the train that left in the early afternoon that October or November day. There was an exchange of harsh words between our Freulein and two gentlemen who insisted on occupying the same compartment; but then the gentlemen became more agreeable, and entered into an animated conversation with our Freulein. In the evening we reached Smolensk, but all I could see was a pool of water from rain outside our windows. Only many years later, passing through the station in daytime, I saw that, like a fortress, the town nests on an elevation.
5. In the grey morning I awoke and looked out of the window of the train. In a snowy landscape of fields and forests trees moved and ran swiftly, the swifter of them, those closer to the tracks, overrunning the trees away from the tracks. In my solitary watch it appeared to me that the train was circling for hours as if going up a hill on which Moscow stood.
6. In Moscow we were met at the station by our mother and our brother Daniel, who was excited to show us the capital. We traveled through to Tverskaya Street, and came to a residential hotel in the business section of the town, the Kitai Gorod, where our parents and Daniel lived. There the Freulein and we occupied a room. In the hotel I spent time looking at the incandescent electrical bulbs with spiral filaments—this was new to me. In our room Freulein read to us *The Prince and the Pauper* and the story of *Little Lord Fauntleroy.* I could already read them myself; I also liked to copy geographical maps, especially of Europe, and color them.
7. We lived in that hotel for a few months. The summer we spent on a *dacha* in Sokolniki. I became seven, and I remember well that day. My father, sitting in a hammock in the garden, asked me how many days, in my estimate, I had lived. Having in my memory an inexhaustible store of events, I made a guess—“a million days”; but then, when my father bode me to calculate, I found to my great surprise that all my memories came to me from the experiences of some two thousand days only. For that birthday my father gave me half a ruble, the price of admission to the children’s festival, a big affair that happened to be on that day. This entitled me to participate in track running—and I remember how I ran, the first of the group, probably admired; I was, however, overtaken by one or two other boys, but still felt happy. In the evening there was a lantern festival.
8. One day boys from the other side of the fence threw stones at us and we three brothers fought valiantly against a “superior” force, and returned stones. One stone hit me in the temple. My mother saw me through the window, my head covered with blood; but I did not cry, and stood my ground. She ran down the steps and brought me in to wash my head.
9. That summer, thinking of the little pool not far away from our *dacha*, I made the following invention, which I explained to my brothers—though, it seems to me, I expressed it as though it were an event that had actually happened. By going very swiftly over the pool, so that before my foot could sink I would move it into a new position on the surface of the water, I would be able to walk on water. This sounded good in principle, but my performance was just wishful thinking, and a bit of a fantasy.
10. It was the time of the Boer War. My father’s interest in world affairs and even more his preoccupation with the problem of the Jewish people—which must have been already then manifest to me—made me, when once asked, “Whom do you love more, father or mother?” answer “father.” His idealism, in my consideration, gave him the right to preference.
11. My father in his unusually pleasant voice sang Hebrew songs at the evening meal with the children on his lap; these were songs of longing for Israel, songs describing Rachel, who cries for her children, or telling of a rose, symbolizing the Jewish people, torn and trodden by the passers by. He had beautiful melodies for his songs.
12. One day my father called me into his bedroom. There was a steel safe; he opened it and showed me a book by Dr. Joseph Sapir, *Zionism,* in Russian, and on the introduction page it was written that the book owed its appearance to the munificence of Simon Velikovsky.
13. My father had been one of the leading members of the Jewish community of Vitebsk. He went to the Second Zionist Congress in Basel as a delegate, and there met Herzl who, impressed by my father’s appearance, approached him to press his hand. My father returned enthusiastic about the new National Bank. He spent many efforts to persuade his friends to participate in purchasing the foundation’s shares, but found ignorance and apathy among the people he approached. Then he made an offer to the Vilno Zionist Committee, which was the central organ in Russia, to contribute 300 rubles for a literary prize, which was then a large sum. More than twenty manuscripts were sent in; the manuscript of Sapir won the prize. But the committee needed money to print it, and my father supplied an additional five hundred rubles, a matter nowhere mentioned. It was not known that my father gave his last money to make this possible; in his autobiography written many years later he commented, “I thought that if everything is fallen, at least this should remain from all my efforts.” On this book a generation of Jewry was educated to the national idea. Its preface was written by Moses L. Lilienblum, a noted Jewish figure. The book was also translated into other languages.
14. In Moscow we rented an apartment on Milutenski Pereulok, off Miasnitzkaya Street. It was one of the most modern houses, six stories high, with an elevator. It had a front staircase with the fashionable embellishments characteristic of French architecture of the turn of the century. There was also a back staircase for the servants—a family would in those days usually have two female servants, a cook and a chambermaid. The older of them were born still in slavery, abolished in Russia one year before it was abolished in the United States. One day crowds filled the streets and the windows, and waited long. First a dog ran by, frightened by the crowds; then Tzar Nicholas II drove by in an open carriage on one of his rare visits to Moscow. I saw that his face was white with fear, since from any place a bomb could be thrown at him, as it had been at his father.
15. The business of my father was on Nikolskaya in Kitai-Gorod, housed in large flats with numerous workers; one flat was used as a storage-place for fabrics, visited by sales people who traveled to sell the merchandise; another flat was a tea dispensary—imported tea was divided by a dozen or more workers into packages wrapped with lead paper and stamped with the name of my father’s firm. My mother assisted my father, who was always above the details, and easily cheated; but even the careful and exact nature of my mother did not spare the business from a collapse in a few years. No doubt the sales people took advantage of the freedom they had in giving credits; and with the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War many merchants did not pay their debts, and probably also the import of tea from China was hampered. Thus my parents saw their business deteriorating and apparently heading toward an abyss.
16. Soon after we moved to Moscow, Meta Redlich, who used to tell us stories before we fell asleep, left for her home and sent us her picture; in her stead came Mr. Messerer, a Hebrew teacher from Vilno. He was middle-aged, with a black beard and bald head; he left his family at home, and possessing a diploma, but no knowledge, in dentistry, could live in Moscow, otherwise restricted to the Jews. Since the time the Jews were expelled from Moscow and then selectively readmitted, he was the first and only teacher of Hebrew in the city; he was to act as our educator. He lived with us a few years. When in the summer of 1904 Herzl died, Messerer cried bitterly. On one occasion I remember him explaining to me the creation of the soul by God: a lighted candle kindles more candles without losing its own light.
17. My lessons in German were displaced by lessons in French. By moving the family to Moscow my mother intended to provide for her children the best possible education; the best gymnasium was considered to be the new Medvednikov, or 9th Government Gymnasium, founded from the bequest capital left by a rich and liberal merchant. There were three “preparatoires” followed by eight grades. Already in the first preparatoire the knowledge of French was required. I went to exams at the age of seven for entrance to the first preparatoire; I was asked questions, both oral and in writing. I made a favorable impression, and my mother had to decide whether to let me or my elder brother, Daniel, who also presented himself for examinations to the third preparatoire, be accepted: there was only one “Jewish vacancy,” the governmental rule being that Jews could compose but three percent of the students. She preferred, and justly so, that the elder brother be accepted.
18. Daniel traveled to the school, rather far away, and I was sent several times a week to a French lady, Madame Chaulet, who lived in the Dolgi Pereulok in the Devitchie Pole on the outskirts of town. She had taught in the Medvednikov Gymnasium in former years, and apparently was recommended to us to be my tutor. She was an elderly noble lady, of the Russian Orthodox faith, as I judged by the many icons in her bedroom. She was very kind to me. Each time I came she would greet me, inviting me to have a cup of sweet tea or chocolate with cookies. She was a good soul.
19. The way to Mme. Chaulet’s house was long. In Moscow there were no electric tramways as there were already in Vitebsk—only horse-drawn trolleys. I would walk to the Liubianskaya Square, where stood the building occupied by an insurance company, which fifteen years later became the headquarters of the secret police, a horrible place. On the square along the outside wall of the Kitai Gorod were little wooden stores with all kinds of merchandise; I would stop at stationery displays, at bookstores, and loaf. Sometimes I would buy a ball of chocolate with a “surprise” ring inside; the ring had a “stone,” and all was for three kopeks.
20. Daniel impressed on us early that the business of our parents was declining, and that they were having difficult times. Therefore, he told us, we had to save some of the travel money. My way to Devitchie Pole would cost five kopeks—half of the way in a two-story horse-drawn trolley and the second half in a one-story small trolley—to which I had to transfer at the quay of the Moscow River. But traveling only the first half on the open upper deck of the trolley, one paid three kopeks, but had to go afoot the second half. Thus to save two kopeks I would walk for an hour, but often I would save the whole amount by walking the entire distance both ways, which at my slow, loafing pace, took a full two hours. Sometimes I would go by the long park along the high wall of the Kremlin, sometimes through the Kremlin, by the long rows of cannons displayed there since the Napoleonic war. There was one particular cannon, not very big, that I could lift by one end, and I would not miss doing it each time I passed there. The Tzar bell, broken, the size of a house, and the Tzar cannon, with four immense cannon balls, were my permanent interest. But most of all I loafed, going by Volchovka and Mochovaya, with their many bookstores. I would look attentively at the postcards, and sometimes buy a few, with romantic content, such as a nymph at a well; but soon I was more and more interested in the books, and became familiar with many titles and authors. Daniel collected books, and all of us participated in this hobby; the books were mainly works of Russian authors or of foreign authors in translation, as given to subscribers of certain periodicals, usually in covers with gilded imprints.
21. When one year passed and I again had to present myself for examinations, I was not accepted—my French was but “satisfactory,” and not “very satisfactory.” I went another year to Mme. Chaulet; at the same time I had at home a tutor for Russian and mathematics. He was a medical student named Bialo, and sometimes he used the lessons to practice on me the art of making bandages, a study that I recognized twelve years later when myself a student of medicine.
22. After another year, at the third try, I had again only “satisfactory” for French—this was a strategem to keep me out of the quota, promised to somebody else. Madame Chaulet, very indignant, since she knew my knowledge in French was not the reason for my non-acceptance, went to the Gymnasium, where she earlier had taught, to talk to the director. I did not have any feeling of degradation in that as a Jew I repeatedly met rejection, while the Gentile boys found acceptance with no difficulty. But my mother suffered. Once she went to see the director, Vasili Pavlovich Nedatchin, who posed as a liberal yet was of a dictatorial nature with aristocratic aspirations, though a commoner by birth. Suddenly my mother burst into tears. A proud woman, she could never pardon herself this display of human weakness; but she so much wanted me to enter this school, thought to be the best.
23. Two years we lived in our apartment in Milutinski Pereulok, and then we moved into a more modest place in Obidinski Pereulok. Yet the two years in our first apartment—from my age of seven to nine—left many imprints. Our apartment was on the top floor. An attic was over the adjacent part of the building, and there the chambermaids or cooks would hang the washed linen to dry—there was no such thing as sending linen to a laundry. One day Alexander, or Lolya as we would call him, and I went to investigate the place. It smelled of pigeon habitats; heavy beams supported the roof, with one or two dormers opening onto the steep metal roof. The domestics who happened to be there, an uneducated folk unable to read or write, thought it a good joke to bolt the door and frighten us by denying us a means of returning. Only with children could the female servants, actually still living in semi-slavery (half-day off every second Sunday) permit themselves such a practical joke; and they laughed behind the door. Without much hesitation, Alexander climbed out of the attic through one of the dormer windows. The opening was close to the edge of the roof and Alexander, holding on with his fingers to the tin of the roof, was moving with his feet towards another dormer—six or seven stories above the street. The women seeing him there shouted in fear and opened the locked door and called to me. I, however, was already one leg out of the dormer about to follow my brother and possibly was already crawling along the roof’s edge. I climbed back and made my way out through the door.
24. In 1905 I went for the fourth time for the examinations of entrance. This time Mme. Chaulet went with me to the examinations; I was accepted, at the age of ten, to the first class.
25. Now that I was enrolled as a student in the Gymnasium, my mother took me to a store of uniforms, and soon I was, like all the others, dressed in the school uniform. It was made of black cloth, and included a black belt with an emblem on the metal buckle, and a military cap, with another large emblem in front identifying our gymnasium. There was also an overcoat in blue-grey, very similar to the one worn by officers in the army in peacetime. For festive occasions we had a short tailless jacket, in a dark color.
26. Ours was an unusally large class—fifty nine pupils; in the following years the number diminished to a little over forty. I still remember most of the names: Adelgeim, Aleksejev, Arkadjev, Armand, Bleklov, Vaganov, Vargaftig, Vasilief, Velikovsky... (In the Russian alphabet the letter V follows the letter B.)
27. The first, third and fourth, in a year or two, were no longer in the class. Yet very many of those with whom I started at the age of ten in the first class went with me through eight grades and finished, like myself, in 1913, at the age of 18—or some at the age of 19; I was one of the youngest in the class, by several months to a year younger than the others. The system required that a student be satisfactory in all subjects—and there was no free choice of subjects, with the exception of Greek, which was not obligatory and was offered in upper classes and taken only by a few students. If a student’s marks were unsatisfactory in one subject, he had to pass an examination in the fall before the start of the new class; if he did not pass the examination, he would be required to repeat the entire grade in all subjects, joining the younger class. This was a great humiliation, not so much for the loss of a year as for being compelled to part with one’s classmates and join the younger boys, for whom there was always some feeling of contempt just because they were younger. With more than two unsatisfactory subjects a boy would automatically “remain” in the class, without a chance to rehabilitate himself in the fall. Often such a boy would prefer to quit the gymnasium entirely; but some “remained” and even more than once, so that a few students who studied with Daniel became my comrades.
28. The year that I entered the class, two more students were *novitchki* or “green ones”: Golunsky and Gorbov, both very talented boys; all the others had already spent three years in this group, having started at the first preparatoire. In my class there was one other Jew—Eugene Luntz, the son of a doctor. We were free to abstain from the class of “God’’s law,” or religion, given by a priest.
29. On my way home from the gymnasium I was often joined by Golunski, whom his mother brought and came to pick up, whereas other students came and went by themselves. His father was a military staff doctor, whom I never saw. His mother was a large woman. The boy was pampered, always warmly dressed, with warm heavy boots long before the winter set in. He was very studious, never participated in any pranks, always knew his lessons excellently, was respectful toward authorities, and showed little imagination. Forty-five years later he was a prominent Bolshevik, a professor of international law, designated by the Soviet Union as Justice at the Hague tribunal. At his visit to the United States I could still recognize him by his picture in the press; but there was no one among the fifty nine students who fitted less the role of a revolutionary or member of the Bolshevik elite.
30. Gorbov was the son of a Jewish mother, with whom he lived; she was divorced or separated from her husband, a justice in a minor court in Moscow. Gorbov later became a poet, then a Bolshevik; at the height of his career he was denounced and purged.
31. Vargaftig, who grew into a very strong boy, was a baptized Jew; not a few Jews baptized their children to open them a road in life. Being baptized, they were never again discriminated against. Being strong and big and jolly, he soon dominated the class, and around him several other boys of some distinction grouped themselves. But he did not grow up to what could be expected of him: he later became a tennis player, a boxer, a trainer in sport, but nothing outstanding.
32. Another group in the upper classes centered around Zavadski, a very tall and lean boy; he was talented in drawing and liked to participate in school plays. In adolescence he was not interested in girls, and in later years became a noted stage director of one of the famous studios of the Moscow Art Theater.
33. It seems that I hurry to tell of these boys as they grouped themselves in later grades and as they grew up; the fall of 1905 neither showed yet their talents as clearly, nor presaged their future.
34. I was placed at one desk with a boy of Polish extraction: Sedlezki. He tried by various means to frighten me, but was unsuccessful. Pupils sat two to a desk of good oak. They were placed at the desks according to their height: smaller boys at lower desks in front.
35. For eight years I would walk in the morning some four or five blocks of Moscow’s side streets to the Medvednikov Gymnasium and in the afternoon retrace my steps homeward. My way passed a *kazienka* or a government monopoly store that sold exclusively vodka in bottles of various sizes. Occasionally I would see a man of the labor class come out of the store (it was not permitted to drink inside), slap the bottle on the bottom, thus uncorking it, and drink it on the spot, and stagger on his way, or return to the monopoly for another bottle. Sometimes I would see a drunk lying in the gutter, his broken bottle next to him.
36. The name *kazienka* was derived from *kazna* or State Treasury. Under Tzar Nicholas II every village in Russia had a *kazienka*, but by no means did every village have a primary or any other school. Russia was held in ignorance and illiteracy but was kept thoroughly drunk, and the government of the Tzar obtained its revenue from a monopoly that kept the peasant and labor classes in dissolution and mental decay. When drafted into the army, some of the men called to the colors had, during the training, straw tied to one boot and hay to the other, marching under the corporal’s barking, “straw, hay, straw, hay!” since many of the inducted could not distinguish right from left.
37. The Russian-Japanese war was started for the protection of the possessions and concessions of the members of the House of Romanov on the River Yalu and in Manchuria. It is true that upon mounting the throne in 1894, Nikolas had an idealistic plan for an international court (the Hague Tribunal), but this idealism did not last. In 1903 a pogrom in Kinishev, in southern Russia, was staged at the directives of the Tzar to frighten the Jewish population of the country and as punishment for their liberal tendencies and spirit of westernization. When the Japanese war was lost in the naval battle off Tzusima, the hero of the prolonged defence of Port Arthur, General Stessel, was sentenced to the Schluesselburg prison, a measure calculated to find a scapegoat outside of the inefficient and corrupt palace.
38. Workers who went to the palace to ask the Tzar’s (“Little Father’s”) protection were shot by artillery, and kossaks with their sabers were let loose into the crowd. In Moscow gendarmes occupied a place across the street from the university and shot at students, but the population of Moscow, undeterred by the “black hundreds,” the butchers, and similar “patriots” of Moscow’s lower places, staged huge marching demonstrations and won concessions from the Tzar: this was the 1905 revolution.
39. The Tzar was compelled to promise land to the landless peasantry and to grant a “constitution” and a representative Duma (Parliament), which he disbanded as soon as he felt safe. The members of the Duma, headed by the president, Professor Mouremtzev, gathered in Vyborg, Finland, and wrote the Vyborg declaration, inviting the population to refuse paying taxes; Muromtzev and other signers of the document were sentenced to prison terms.
40. From one Duma to the next (there were four), the franchise was ever more limited: a rich person voted in a different curia than a poor person and his vote weighed a score of times the vote of the latter. Stolypin, the Prime Minister, gave his name to the “Stolypin tie” which meant a noose at the gallows. Many revolutionaries spent their lives in Siberia; some great men and women, like Nikolas Morozov and Vera Figner, spent years and decades in solitary confinement.

# Nor would the Tzar tolerate the illustrious efforts of some of the nobility, most notably of Leo Tolstoy, to bring about reforms. Tolstoy did not advocate the overthrow of the regime, but he was persecuted by the government for his call to return to the ideals of early Christianity. While he lay dying in the station master’s house at Ostapovo, a refugee from his own house and estate, the Holy Synod, dominated by the Tzar, forbade prayers for the octogenarian in any of the Orthodox churches of Russia, and when he died, he was refused a Christian burial. So also was the evil Tzar, who was to meet an evil end. Student Years and Wanderings

In the early summer of 1912, when I was a tall seventeen-year-old youth, my wish of several years’ standing came to fulfillment: I traveled to the land of Israel. My father still had not seen the land of Israel, but he made it possible for me to visit the land, then a Turkish province. I departed as soon as the term in the Gymnasium was concluded. By now I had finished the seventh “class” and one year was still left before graduation. I went first to Kursk to meet my companion, the arrangement having been made by my father. Mr. Supraski was not of my age—he was 36 years old, the father of a family, and a delegate to several Zionist Congresses. I stayed one or two days at his home. The arrival of a gymnasiast from the capital was an event in the dull life of a few young girls in Kursk and they came to meet me in the garden of Supraski. A little dog bit me as I approached the waiting group, but true to the code of behavior, I did not even turn around—yet the signs of the dog’s teeth could be seen decades later.

From Kursk we travelled by train—stopping I believe at Kiev—to Vienna. There we stayed for a week. I went to museums, spent time at the Prater, and attended a meeting of the Parliament, which I remember only hazily. With Supraski I went to the cemetery where Theodor Herzl’s tomb—in black granite if I remember right—was next to his father’s grave. Another part of the same cemetary was Christian. I was in a mood that found expression in an elegy.

From Vienna we went to Trieste—a bustling city, then a part of the Austrian empire and its chief port. After two days we boarded the “Vienna,” the boat on which, I believe, Herzl had made his voyage to the land of Israel about a decade earlier. This was my first sea voyage. The blue water of the Adriatic and of the Mediterranean, the seagulls following the ship, crimson stony Crete, and the colorful sunsets, all impressed me. In Port Said we spent one night, and the silvery calm water of the port, with numerous boats and shouting Egyptians, was again a new and exotic scene to my eyes and ears. We traveled now in the first class of some Ottoman ship, and the food, served with innumerable dishes, including big cakes with candles burning inside casting a reddish illumination, had a flavor out of the *Thousand and One Nights* in the capital of el-Rashid. Because of the Turkish-Italian war our ship went all the way to Beirut. There I lent my passport to a Jewish youth who had left Russia to escape service in the Tzarist army. After he entered the country (Ottoman Turkey), the passport was brought back to me on board, and I went to visit Beirut and the American University.

We came to Jaffa, and shouting Arabs in boats tossed about by waves took us off the ship far from the shore and brought us to the stony steps; Supraski read me a letter from my father, and reminded me to kiss the earth for him—he had not yet been in Israel, the land of his dreams. But I reserved the carrying out of my father’s wish until a visit to a hill in Rehoboth.

Tel-Aviv was three years old. I still see it with the Gymnasium on Herzl Street, the only store near the railway track, and a little stretch of a boulevard and a few streets. On Nahlat Benjamin Street I shared my room in a little house that pretended to be a hotel with Kaplansky, a young engineer, who later became known as a political figure. Bezalel Jaffe, a distant relative, was one of the founders of Tel-Aviv, and I was received warmly at his home. We attended some classes at the Gymnasium.

Supraski made the itinerary. We visited Rishon le-Zion, where we were shown the vinepresses. I bathed in a reservoir in an orange grove in Nes-Ziona. In Rechoboth, at a private party in the house of an American cantor, I saw a girl whose face and figure caught my imagination; she had large dark eyes, a Roman nose, was dreamy, and was an embodiment of my taste then, an Oriental beauty; she was, as I found out, only fourteen years old, but ripe for that age. I was in love with her at first sight. I hardly spoke to her, if at all. The next morning a lady guest at the little hotel in which we were staying volunteered to show me where the girl lived and we went to a little one-story house with green shutters; the girl—Esther Bashist was her name—came out, and I saw her again. For many years she was in my thoughts my future bride. To her and her little house I wrote some poetry, and for the next ten years, in faithfulness to her, I preserved my “innocence” or celibacy, until I found my real companion in life.

We went as far south as Katra (Hedera), and on donkeys’ backs traveled to Ekron and Hulda. Then we went to Jerusalem and to the Wailing Wall. I was deeply impressed by the old city with its narrow streets, and by everything I saw there. Leaving Jerusalem for Tel-Aviv, I wrote in the train a piece of poetry “At the Wailing Wall.” It was, I believe, the first of my writings ever printed.

The journey from Tel-Aviv to Haifa took three days, the wagon being drawn by tired horses through deep sand dunes; there were no paved roads. We stopped at Petak Tikva, Hedera and Zichron-Jaacob, and I remember many details of these overnight stops. From Haifa we went by train to Merhavia. This was the only settlement in the Emek (the plain), presently teeming with settlements; and it had no building but the old *sarai* of the sheik who had sold the “village” and the land. I slept in the field among the tall sheaves of harvested rye and watched the full moon. We went on to Degania, which was new then, crossed the Jordan, slept in Kinnereth on the shore, went up to Poria in the mountains, and spent time in Migdal. My father was the initiator and organizer of the group that had purchased Migdal, but he himself did not participate in the ownership since he wished the movement he started to be democratic and popular and not exclusive, as Visotzki and other people whom he influenced to purchase the land wanted it to be. We did not go farther north, nor did we visit south of Hedera. At about that time Ruhama, in the south—my father’s second “pioneer colony”—was in the throes of being born.

We spent five weeks in Palestine. I parted with Supraski, who felt a little ill in Tel-Aviv, and I went to Egypt on the deck of an Arab boat. I slept in the life boat that was suspended above the deck, alone amidst the barefoot Arabs, probably pilgrims. On the train from Suez to Cairo it was so hot that I could not help but drink water from the tap in the dirty toilet compartment, and I wonder than I did not catch some disease. In Cairo I spent several days, went up the Cheops pyramid, pulled and pushed by three paid guides, and sitting to rest halfway up felt the immensity of the structure over the great valley.

On the streets of Cairo, as before in Vienna, prostitutes approached the seventeen-year-old youth, without evoking in him even the slightest desire to follow them.

In Alexandria I boarded a Russian ship bound for Odessa. I visited Piraeus, went to Athens, and climbed the Acropolis—and was almost late getting back to the ship. In Smyrna, on Turkey’s Aegean coast, I went with two students from Petersburg to see the town and the surroundings; from afar our guide pointed out the place where, he said, Troy once stood—which, I understand, could not be the true site. Two oarsmen in their boat carried us to the ship in Smyrna harbor. The two cocky students in white helmets had some disagreement with the oarsmen, and when one of the students pulled a revolver out of his pocket to intimidate the men, one of these, a true bandit, beat him over his helmeted head with the oar, and only the helmet saved him; there was blood to all sides. I bent down to help the wounded, and the people who witnessed the scene from the ship told me later that by this movement I saved myself, since the other oarsman, behind me, was about to stab me with his knife. The shouts from the ship made the oarsmen let us out, to another boat, or to the ship itself.

In Istanbul I wandered alone, saw Hagia Sophia, visited Perun and Galata. I saw the dirt and the colors of the oriental city, and the little wooden cubicles on the streets where brothel women called to the marines. Then, back on the boat, I remember its quiet glide through Bosporus, a storm in the Black Sea, and the landing in Odessa and a walk on its promenade above the port. From there I proceeded to Kiev. On Kiev’s main street I chanced to meet Supraski who was on his way back from the land of Israel.

It was the middle of the summer when I returned to Moscow. Riding in a horse-driven carriage through the street where Mme. Chaulet lived, I was filled with reminiscences of the years I used to visit her almost daily between the ages of seven and ten. Returning from the south, the summer in Moscow felt chilly. On August 16 (old style), as usual, the classes started. I had before me my last year, the eighth class.

Already the year before I had edited the class journal, actually printed it on a typewriter several times; the main illustrator was Golz, a pupil who first studied with Daniel, but being twice left to repeat a year, was now with me in the same class. To be an editor gave me some pleasure.

Once there occurred a small—or in the world of a Gymnasium class a big—disturbance. The class had to announce to the German teacher that our homework was not done: there had been an evening of dancing in some girls’ school the night before. As the teacher’s favorite, I was asked by the class to announce the failure. The teacher did not accept the collective “strike,” and called the Inspector. Finding the class in revolution the Inspector summoned the guards. The end of the story was that Gorbov and I got a miserable mark in conduct and were barred for a season from the balls and concerts—the big events in the Gymnasium—and forbidden to visit any place of amusement in town for many months. I heard that at the teachers’ meeting even our exclusion from the school was considered. I certainly was not a favorite of the director, Vasily Pavlovitch Nedatchin. He had a reputation as a liberal, but I am not sure that he was free from antisemitism—he was something of a libertine; certainly he had an affair with the mother of a close school friend of mine, who by now was in a lower grade. Yet Nedatchin compelled our French teacher to marry a girl whom this teacher, a bachelor, had made pregnant.

As two years before, I worked hard. I excelled in mathematics. Before graduation the final exams had to be passed, and I remember especially the written mathematics examination: it was held, as other exams, in the very big and high-ceilinged Aktovi Sall (Festivities Hall), each student at a separate desk, distanced from all other desks. I finished a full forty minutes before the next one (Golunski) and handed in the examination papers and left the hall, and certainly there were capable students among my classmates.

I knew history books by heart, and won high praise for my Russian composition. My permanent protector was Boris Ivanovitch Dunaev. His lectures were inspired. He loved the old Russian literature and traveled in northern regions and collected *bylins,* or songs and ballads, often of epic character. Once the teacher of English, Eduard Isaievitch Radunski, stopped before me in the class, and could not help telling me that at one of the teachers’ meetings Dunaev had expressed his belief that I would be the future great Russian poet.

I, too, liked the old Russian *bylins,* and the charms of the language. And whether it was the story of Protopope Abbakume, sent away into exile for heretical views, or the song about the young merchant Kalashnikov, by Lermontov, or the tribulations of Turgenev’s Rudin, whom I defended in a circle on literature under Dunaev that came together some evenings, I lived in Russian literature, and everyone thought that after graduation I would study philology. Once during the physics lecture, I believe it was the last year, I was observed by the teacher Baranov reading a book by Merejnovski on Tolstoi and Dostoievsky, and he, with some measure of respect to this interest of mine, took the book away and gave it to the Inspector (second only to the Director) Vladimir Pavlovitch Goncharov, who was also the librarian; but I was not scolded. I studied Latin second to none in the class; however in modern languages I did not excel, neither did I show great interest in natural sciences, if there were any courses in the last grade; but Russian, mathematics, Latin and history were considered the basic subjects.

It would take many pages to write of the colleagues who studied with me. Certainly there were talented men among them; I have already mentioned Zavadski, who became one of the leading stage directors in Russia. Some never proved their abilities because the war (World War I) and especially the revolution either killed them or reduced them to littleness. Of poets in our class there were three: Kharlamov, Gorbov, and myself. The first of these was an introvert; with Gorbov, however, I was on close terms.

About the time we finished the last grade and graduated, Kharlamov printed a booklet of his verse, and Gorbov and I printed a booklet together, each of us contributing, I believe, twelve pieces of poetry. I paid for this edition since Gorbov had no money to spend, as he said. We chose a miserable little press, which after the proofreading reset the pages—apparently they needed to use the types for some other printing job while waiting for our corrections, and so there were new typesetting errors introduced after proofreading. The booklet, entitled *Stikhi* (Poetry) was a success among our friends. At about the same time, or a little earlier, my poem “At the Wailing Wall” was printed in *Rassviet,* the leading Zionist weekly (or bi-weekly) published by Daniel Pasmanik, in Petersburg; it was the poem I had written on the train on leaving Jerusalem the summer before. A few months later, visiting the editorial room of *Rassviet,* I was told by the editor that I should continue to write.

I finished the Gymnasium in 1913, which was the three-hundred-year jubilee of the House of Romanov on the throne of all Russia. I received a gold medal at graduation, an equivalent of “summa cum laude.” It had on it the pictures of the first and last of the house of Romanov. Golunsky, Murahovsky and I were clearly the best in the class. Murahovsky was a silent, friendly, and industrious pupil. But in our class seven gold medals were given, and it was said that it was on account of Nedatchin’s, the Director’s, leaving that year, that the school made this rather unusual “splash”—unless our class had a true collection of very capable students.

The summer after my graduation—and what a feeling of freedom and relief—we three brothers spent several weeks in Finland. There, after a visit in Viborg and Helsinki (Helsingfors), we came to an isle in the Scheres. The travel by steamboat between the innumerable islands, with the sea narrowing to the size of a river and then again broadening to wide expanses, was an unforgettable experience, and throughhout my life I have wished to visit those islands once more. On the small island on which we landed we left our luggage on the pier with nobody to take care of it, and found it still there when we returned after finding a room in the house of some fisherman. Possibly we spent there a week. With Alexander I went to Abo (Turku of today). Again together with Daniel, we went northward from Helsinki on one of the lakes, so numerous in Finland, and descended southward, slowly, on a boat that went through many sluices or gates, the level of water being adjusted after each descent from gate to gate.

Though I had graduated from the Gymnasium with a gold medal, I was not accepted to the Moscow Imperial University because that year a new measure was introduced. Until that year of 1913, Jews were accepted only if they excelled—thus the recipients of medals filled the *numerus clausus.* But this arrangement compelled the Jewish gymnasiasts to study hard and thus many of them became the best students in their classes. Therefore in 1913 the antisemitic minister of education Kasso changed the procedure to a “lottery” ; henceforth not the Jewish students with the best marks, but those few to whom chance was gracious, would be accepted. At the offices of Moscow University I met an aspirant by the name of Burstein, from Balti in Bessarabia, who told me in advance that he would win the lottery, since his father was the managing agent on the estate of an important Petersburg bureaucrat. And in fact he won the lottery.

I did not regret at all not having been admitted to the University in Moscow, and made plans to study abroad. I thought of Italy, and bought a book to study Italian. Together with the choice of land of study I had before me the choice of the faculty—and this, to the surprise of those who knew me, was to be medicine. Actually my mother was insistent on that. I cannot claim that I myself had a strong inclination to this field, or that I had a burning desire to help humanity as a medical doctor. Yet I did have rather strong desires to be of some help, especially to my own race, and so ancient history, and in particular the history of the Jewish people was not unfamiliar to me. I was most interested in literature, but not in studying philology, which appeared too dry to me; I also felt an inclination toward architecture and interested myself in chances to study it—but not seriously enough. Actually, I was not attracted by any profession, and led a detached or dreamy way of life. In medicine I was interested in ophthalmology, and several times visited the Rumiantzevo library, the largest in Moscow, reading there on eyes, and even devising a plan for reducing myopia by cutting off a slice from the lens, thus decreasing its refractory power. For medical studies I had a certain disinclination, not believing in my abilities in chemistry, and thus in pharmacology. Before his exams, I gave some help in composition to my brother Alexander, who finished his Kommarcheskoe Uchinie (High School) the same year as I did; but I was aware of his far greater abilities in chemistry, a subject that did not attract me.[1](http://www.varchive.org/dy/student.htm#1)

My father advised me to talk over the choice of university with a lawyer, Urison, a friend of his; he advised me to choose Montpellier in the south of France. I still remember many episodes of my journey to Montpellier. One late evening and night I spent on the train, my neighbors being people of show business or the circus. I stopped in Frankfurt on Main and observed a Zeppelin over the town, then a new sight. I did my sightseeing dutifully, visiting the Rothschild library; then I continued my journey. I arrived in Belfort early. Having to change trains, I went to see the lion carved into the rock of the outside wall to commemorate the defense of the stronghold in 1870. Passing through Dijon and Avignon, I came at night to Montpellier and slept in a hotel near the railway station. The next day I found a room in a pension close to the Roman viaduct.

About five hundred Jewish students from Russia gathered at Montpellier; it was the time of the trial of Beiliss. Every day at some fixed hour when the mail and newspapers arrived, we would crowd the two rooms of our fraternity library where the detailed records of the trial were read to the assembled crowd. Many would stand under the windows in the quiet narrow street to listen to the newspaper readings from the Kiev courthouse, where the trial of Beiliss went on for weeks.

It is a matter of historical record that Tzar Nicholas II was the instigator of that trial, in which Beiliss (and by implication the entire Jewry) was accused of using gentile blood for *matza* (unleavened bread). The police and the government knew the real murderer of the boy, but let the female criminal appear as a witness for the prosecution. The civilized world shrugged it off as it had the Dreyfuss trial nineteen years earlier, but this time not Beiliss only, but clearly the entire Jewish people was under indictment.

The campaign against the Jews of Russia was formulated early in the twentieth century by Pobednoszev, the head of the Holy Synod: “A third will emigrate, a third will be killed, a third will assimilate.” Too true was this prognostication.

Among the students in Montpellier the socialist party of Bundists reigned supreme; the main speaker was a student named Fleischer. The Zionists were as if not present at all; nobody confessed openly to such leanings. Once when after the reading of the newspaper report the Bundist spoke provocatively, I answered with a speech. This proclamation of Zionism spread among the students like wildfire, and before long we had the majority in the student meetings. I was chosen to be the group’s chairman, and a student who had also just started his studies, Michael Marek, was elected as one of my assistants. He, too, had come from Moscow, but there we had not known each other. There was also a student from Israel, Garber: he was from Petah-Tikva, and was studying medicine at the insistence of his parents, although he loved agriculture. Another student from Israel was Baharav; the large majority of students, however, were from Russia and from Poland, then a part of the Russian empire.

Once, after a meeting, five of us climbed over the iron rail and walked on top of the aqueduct, a tall and narrow structure from Roman times, possibly just a meter wide, with no rails, as tall as a six story building and possibly a kilometer or more in length. It was evening, and seeing the numerous lights below and in the distance it appeared as if one could see the entire Provence. On the way we sat down, but it was frightening to stand up again; and when the one going in front announced to the one who followed, and this to the one behind him, that there was a bend—a new direction in the aqueduct—Baharav, who was supposed to be behind me did not answer; and we did not know whether he had fallen down until we reached the end. We went to the end, then returned to the starting point, and found him standing there.

One evening after a heated debate at a meeting, where I was among the disputants, Marek and I in our colorful student berets started toward the fishing village on the Mediterranean seashore to cool ourselves off by a long night walk. We ate and slept in a little chamber in the village and in the morning we continued southward, climbed towards a castle built a thousand years earlier by Charles Martel, saw the expanse of the Mediterranean—at the other end, we knew, was the land of Israel—and wandered farther amid the dunes and the lagoons.

Back in Montpellier, soon after the classes started, we were unpleasantly impressed by the rigorous discipline and the disrespect shown by the teachers to the pupils in one of the classes—this was far different from the freedom we had known as students in the universities of Russia. Standing on the platform near my home, from where the aqueduct started, with a bright view stretching in front of us, I suggested to Marek that we not continue the classes but go together to Israel—to which he gladly agreed. Our friends in the group were impressed by this decision; to us it seemed to be merely the natural and immediate consequence of our Zionist attitude.

We traveled to Marseilles; from there we wrote home of our decision. Visiting the geographical society of Marseilles, we asked to be shown maps of the Sinai peninsula, since we had a fleeting idea to cross the peninsula by foot, thus repeating the desert wanderings of the children of Israel. We were dissuaded from the plan, being made aware of the lack of roads and of our own lack of preparation. This course would have been rather perilous, if realizable at all. We bought two revolvers in Marseilles.

Climbing the hill on which stands the church with a gigantic Madonna on its roof, we looked out at the island made famous by the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo,* which I had read many years earlier when I was about twelve. Then we boarded a ship; it brought us to Egypt, again on the blue waters of the sea familiar to me from my travels less than a year and a half earlier. In Egypt we found letters from our parents. My mother regretted my decision to drop the study of medicine, but my father wrote me an enthusiastic letter and blessed me on my road. Marek’s parents thought his step unwise. Marek’s father was a publisher of art books in Moscow; he eked out his existence, and it was an effort to send a son to study abroad. Michael’s monthly check was not big, less than half of mine. Neither did Marek’s parents feel bound to the land of Israel in any way.

In Cairo we climbed the pyramids, but once again I omitted visiting their interior—faced with the choice, it appeared more interesting to spend money for the ascent. By boat we came to Jaffa. In Tel-Aviv we received from Bezalel Jaffe, one of the leading citizens and a remote relative of my mother, a letter to Eisenberg, the director of Agudath-Netaim, in Rechoboth. We were seen only by his assistant, and were included in the cadres of plantation workers on a day-to-day basis. We took two rooms in the “colony,” as Rehoboth and other settlements were called, and ate in a primitive laborers’ kitchen. But of work in the field not much was done: it was the rainy season and during the rain we had to stay home and were not paid. One day we worked at slicing the earth and pulling out the roots of *ingil,* a strong weed, and my tallness was not an advantage since the work was done in a bending position. Another day we worked in planting. And again ceaseless days of rain. Some days we subsisted on chocolate powder and condensed milk, preparing this drink again and again. In our room, I read Dostoievsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* and was impressed.

I met Esther Bashist at the square where mail was received, and again on a late afternoon on the hills near Rehoboth, when other girls were with her. I languished, hardly exchanging a word with her. This was untypical since among my friends in the Gymnasium I was the most daring and able to start an acquaintance with a girl, surprising these “wolves-to-be.” Here I was without initiative and without speech.

Marek and I would go to visit the huts of the *shomrim* (the sentries): this was the romantic period of the movement and the *shomrim,* who guarded the plantations and who rode horses, were the heroes whom the youth of the colony would come to visit, and sing or dance.

For our mail Marek and I used to go to Jaffa, a walking distance of five hours in each direction, but it did not appear to us impractical to make this trip each time on foot. On the way, in Nes-Ziona, we would take oranges in some grove—to take for one’s meal was regarded as permitted—and bury a few in sand and find them on our way back from Jaffa.

On our way we slept one night in Rishon le Zion. Since during those days the founding meeting of the Histadruth was taking place, presided over by Ben Gurion, there was no place to sleep under a roof, and we slept on the benches in front of the large synagogue building. In the middle of the night some pious man awakened us and brought us to sleep in a Hassidic prayer house; it was a cold winter night.

At the end of December—and we had long since given up the idea of working for Agudath Netaim (all we earned was a few silver coins)—we made our way afoot to Ruhama. It was the southernmost Jewish settlement. The first day we walked as far as Castini, which until the founding of Ruhama had been the southernmost of the Jewish settlements. There we slept. Early the next morning we were again on our way, being told that to find the way to Ruhama we had to follow the track of wheels, since Arabs at that time did not use vehicles on wheels but traveled on foot or rode camels. The entire day we hardly met any human beings. To the left were mountains at a distance, and once at the foot of a distant slope we saw what appeared to be the ruins of a large ancient town. The sun and the moon were of the same size, and like two equal arms of a balance stood symmetrically in the sky, the moon very shiny and the sun somewhat dimmed. When the winter’s early darkness fell rather suddenly on the semi-desert, we thought to lay ourselves down on the sand of the moon-lit desert for sleep. But when we had already selected the place to lie down we heard from afar the barking of dogs and we understood that the Ruhama farm was close by. We now traveled in the dark through valleys along some winding *wadi* and came to a farm yard. When we stood in front of some one-story building we heard from inside dancing and singing—it was Friday night—*Am Israel hai ad bli dai:* “The people of Israel is alive and so forever.”

This settlement, Ruhama, owed its existence to my father. It was founded by the group Sheerith Israel, which my father had organized. The idea of redemption of the soil in the land of Israel first took shape when the Israel Colonization Association, a Baron Edmund Rothschild Foundation, began its work in the 1880’s. The entire Herzl movement added but very little to the program of land redemption. In 1895 Warsaw Jews founded Rehoboth, and somewhat later The National Fund started a few points like Degania and Merhavia. Poria, a small settlement, was built above the lake of Kinnereth (Galilee), by the private endeavor of Americans.

In about 1909 Migdal on the shores of Kinnereth Lake was begun at my father’s initiative. In the years 1905 and following he had influenced by personal efforts one by one a group of prominent Jews in Moscow to participate in the redemption of land in Palestine, not by donation of a few rubles to the National Fund (Keren-Kajemeth), but by an investment of substantial sums. Vissotzki and Gotz, rich Jews, were among the members, and Dr. Tchlenov, too. The latter was a leader of the Zionist movement in Russia. When a group was organized and land purchased, the farm that was founded was called Migdal. I remember with what unusual devotion and effort my father made this possible. It had not yet been tried, and nobody could think in terms of a national business action, buying land in an Ottoman province, governed by *pashas* and Ottoman law. My father needed to persuade people, but by nature he was not what one calls a “talker.” So he “spoke his heart.” His idea was not to have one settlement in Palestine, but to have a central cooperative, composed of Jews of Moscow, whom Jews of other Russian towns would trust, and in whose steps they would follow. This cooperative he intended to call *Sheerith* *Israel.* This name, familiar to him from his prayers when a youth in the *yeshiva,* was holy to him: “the remnant of Israel.” Yet the group he organized decided to be exclusive and was disinterested to gather around itself more groups and to found more settlements. Then my father, again neglecting his own business, devoted his time and energies to creating a new group. Endlessly he tried, visiting those of his acquaintances whom he thought could be persuaded to become members of Sheerith Israel. The sum pledged by each member was about five thousand rubles, a substantially smaller amount than for Migdal, yet large enough in those days in Russia; it was to be paid in installments.

My father started this one-man crusade, as was said, when the revolution of l905 had not yet been suppressed, and a pamphlet by Prof. O. Warburg was disseminated by a messenger when it was not very wise to do so. Buying land in Turkey was seen as a political activity abroad and must have aroused the Tzarist administration’s suspicion. My father asked to have these activities legalized. He was called before a committee of the Governor-General in Moscow. He was ill on the day he had to appear but went nevertheless, together with Prof. Schor, a concert pianist and prominent figure. The matter, discussed and questioned before this bureaucratic assembly, was referred to the administration in Petersburg. But my father, who went there with a fever, fell sick with pneumonia. The sickness dragged on—he was sent to Menton in the south of France to recuperate, but he had Dr. Buchmil, an orator who had participated in Zionist congresses from the first one on, come out to him, and engaged him to travel to certain districts in Russia to try to find people interested in sacrificing part of their property to invest in the land of Israel. Yet Dr. Buchmil failed in the task. Upon his return from abroad, my father resumed his Sheerith Israel work, as soon as he was able to do so. Whenever he would obtain another signature on the list he carried with him, he could not refrain from showing us that the list of names was growing. And how many times did he fail, too, to influence the men he went to see! He was oblivious of his own business. The expenses incurred by the organization work he carried gladly; in his entire life he always gave, never took from anyone. Finally, when he had about forty signatures, a group from Bialostock joined.

There was land for sale in southern Palestine. Dr. Ruppin, then new in Palestine, looked for a way to realize the purchase. Dr. Tchlenov influenced the group to invest the funds in Gemama, in the district of Gaza. My father wished to start from the extreme Negeb, from el-Arish, which was under the British, who governed Egypt; this was in line with the idea of Dr. Herzl, who thought of beginning in the small area outside of the Turkish province. Yet Gemama’s land was bought. My father was asked by the group to choose a Hebrew name for the new settlement, and he chose Ruhama; in the prophet Hoshea, the rejected daughter, symbolizing the Jewish people, is renamed Ruhama, the one to whom grace and compassion are shown. In most settlements, especially in those founded by Baron Rothschild, the settlers employed the cheaper Arab laborers, thus making it impossible for Jewish workers to get a foothold; but my father insisted that in Ruhama Jewish workers should be hired. Then he stipulated that ten percent of the land should be owned by the workers; finally, that only Hebrew should be the language of Ruhama. When the “colony” was founded, the members of the group gave my father a palm tree, which stood in our apartment.

Marek and I arrived in Ruhama in the last week of April of 1913. Until then, I believe, nobody of the Moscow group had been there to see the place built. Hirschfeld, a farmer from Rishon le Zion, was chosen as manager, and he was eminently fitted for the job, where Jewish work and the Hebrew language had to be honored. He offered to let me see the books, but I was not interested to check on what he spent. Marek and I worked a little in the field, with other workers, their number being about thirty, or we rode horses.

The pride of Ruhama was its artesian well. At a depth of about fifty meters water was found and thus the problem of settlement in the south seemed solved from the standpoint of water. Gemama, the former name, means actually Waste or Deserted Land. The new name was prophetically chosen.

We stayed in Israel during the winter months. Memorable and dear is the religious experience I had when I went alone to the “cave of Samson” in the afternoon, alone in the deserted height, and returned in the dark.

In spring Marek and I returned to Moscow, traveling by fourth class. A few days after coming back I contracted diphtheria. But I was tall and generally in good health, and I pulled through.

In the spring of 1914 I entered the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and took pre-medical courses in the natural sciences. I had the opportunity to hear lecture of Henri Bergson, then a visiting professor at Edinburgh. But I was handicapped by lack of familiarity with the extensive nomenclature, especially in botany and zoology. For the first time I had a spell of indecision—I had to compel myself to persevere in my resolve to study medicine. There was in Edinburgh a very small Russian colony. I stayed for only one term.

On my return to Moscow for summer vacations the Sarajevo crisis was ripening. Soon there was war, and I was stranded in Russia. My parents were at that time in Germany, and with difficulty they made their way back via Switzerland and Bulgaria.

I enrolled in an institution which was not under the Ministry of Education, but under the Ministry of Commerce. The University of Moscow since its formation had enjoyed autonomy, which meant that there were not trustess, the university being managed by a rector who, instead of being appointed by the government, was elected by the professors. Now the reactionary government of Tsar Nicholas II wished to take away this autonomy from Moscow University, and this caused the rector and most of the professors and anybody with a good name to leave the university and to found a new school under th Ministry of Commerce. For this reason it was called the Commercial Institute, but actually it was a full-fledged university. The best minds in jurisprudence and philosophy were teaching there. I studied at the Institute for the next two years, taking courses in philosophy, law, ancient history, and other subjects. Of these my favorite subject was ancient history. But since the Institute had no medical faculty, I sought admission to the Medical School of Moscw University. After one year at the Commercial Institute I was admitted, following an interview with the new minister of education, Graf Ignatiev. For this I had to travel to Petrograd (the present Leningrad). I explained to the minister that I had a letter from the Dean of the University of Edinburgh that any points I would earn at Moscow University would be credited to me in Edinburgh. Graf Ignatiev, unlike his predecessor and unlike his own father, was a liberal man, and I was admitted, along with several other prmising students, into the second year of study. For the next year I studied simultaneously at both universities.

In the year 1915-1916 I took a very strenuous program in medicine, besides a program in the humanities. I undertook to cover the entire course on anatomy in the two terms of a year. There was also a platonic but very emotional experience in the spring. All this together caused my athletic body to lose its resistance; and to work in an unhygienic and poorly ventilated anatomic theater certainly exposed the students to all kinds of infections. In the spring I lay down with signs of pneumonia and, according to the doctor, of the Fraenkel and Friedlander type simultaneously. At first my father called a doctor whom he knew as a Hebrew writer. Whether he was a good writer I do not know, but as a doctor he treated me for abdominal typhus. My brother Alexander, alarmed by my worsening condition, insisted on calling a doctor who had cured a friend of his. Dr. Loewenthal, a small and slenderly built elderly man, was kind to the patient, but harsh on the family, demanding strict rules. There was a consilium between the two doctors, and they raised their voices one against the other. Dr. Loewenthal became my healer.

In the late spring of 1916 I went to the Crimea, and after a summer there, returned to resume my studies. The next term I again worked furiously. But before the new year 1917 I still felt run down and went to Kislovodsk in the Caucasus. There, in the mountainous resort, I took a room in a pension, but a few days later I found out that before me a patient dying of tuberculosis had used the same bed and mattress. I moved out and took another room. Once, walking on the snow-covered hills of the Kislovodsk Park, I spat blood. Seeing blood on the white snow, I became depressed and thought that I had become sick with tuberculosis. I applied to a doctor. He had a five-ruble note on his table, as if left by a previous patient, but, since I found it there again on the next visit, I realized that it was a sign to the patient not to leave less (in Russia there was no practice of billing a patient; money was usually stuck into the the doctor’s hand). The doctor assured me that there was nothing seriously wrong with me. So I could again turn my thoughts to problems not concerned specifically with myself and, walking in the streets of the Caucasian village, I wrote page after page of *The Third Exodus,* a pamphlet of religious fervor and Zionist zeal. In this work I urged that the nations of the world that would convene after the war should right a wrong and create a Jewish state in Palestine. I believe many sentences from the pamphlet became prophetic after World War I, and even more so after World War II.

At the end of February 1917 Kislovodsk, together with the rest of Russia, became excited by the news from Petrograd (as St. Petersburg was then called because of war with Germany). Every new day brought exciting news. The Tzar, last of the Romanovs, abdicated. I remember that day. Full of emotion I went across the hills of Kislovodsk; I met an old man. He seemed unaware of the news, or it did not mean much to him. “O little birds, little birds—such a snow, no food for you? How will you survive?” said he.

I left for Moscow. The land was in exaltation. Those years of war had witnessed Rasputin’s baleful rise to power over the Tzarina, and hence the Tzar, and hence the country. An illiterate “monk,” a debauching fraud, Rasputin hypnotized and mystified her as his mental prisoner; any prospective prime minister had to crawl to him and kiss his hand to be appointed—this was the case with prime ministers Gromykin, Stuermer and Plotopov. These were the days of World War I, and the Tzarina, originally a German princess, was suspected of disloyalty to Russia and its army.

Prince Yssupov and a few monarchists lured Rasputin to a dinner party and killed him in order to save the monarchy from complete perdition. This was the beginning of the revolution; ten weeks later, the war lost, the land in anarchy, the Tzar was forced to resign and Prince Lvov formed the Provisional Government, with Kerensky as minister of justice.

After two weeks in Moscow I left again for the Crimea, where I remained for eight months, mending my health, living in a village in the Crimea’s mountainous crest. I returned to Moscow at the news that a new revolution, of the end of October, had changed the order in Russia. The October Revolution of 1917 was followed by the Civil War. The White armies were brandishing anti-semitic slogans. The train did not go straight to Moscow. All was in a state of great strain. In the fall, with the country already under the Bolsheviks, I printed my pamphlet, *The Third Exodus,* under the pen name Immanuel Ram.

I spent the winter and the following spring as an intern in the clinics, and also attended the course of Prof. Ross.

On an evening in late November or early December 1917 I was in Moscow, only a few weeks since the street fighting against the regime of Kerensky was over. Some of the buildings showed the wounds of the battle: many stuccoes were pocked by numerous bullet-holes, and here and there a larger hole in a brick wall showed where artillery shots had fallen. There was no jubilation, as there had been in February, some nine months earlier, when the regime of the Tzar fell; the atmosphere was gloomy, either because such is the late autumn in Moscow, or because the fratricidal fight, at a time when Russia was still engaged in war with Germany, was a cheerless affair.

But the white Columned Hall of the old Nobility House was illuminated. The place had not yet been designated for the meetings of the All-Russian Soviets; and so soon after the October (actually November) Revolution, many of the activities which soon thereafter were to be banned were still possible in Moscow. The Jews of Moscow came there to participate in a festival: on November 3, during the very days when the city was in the grips of the street fighting, the so-called Balfour Declaration had been proclaimed by the government of Lloyd-George in England. It was not yet the foundation of the state, but the promise of a national home was made—a very unusual message, awaited for some two thousand years. Only a couple of years earlier, such a “messianic” event would have been laughed down by the same Jewry in Moscow. But the last two months were by themselves an apocalyptic time. The Jews of Moscow filled the white columned hall, the place of many glorious ball festivities in the past. I, too, went there. I was at that time a student in Moscow University, in my early twenties. All the places in the brightly illuminated hall were taken, and I stood to the side of the platform, built for the presiding officers, speakers, and notables of the community, or of the Zionist movement. I stood leaning on one of the big white marble pillars, hidden from most of the public by this pillar. Among the notables on the platform the absence of one person was conspicuous: Dr. Jacobson was the president of the organization that called the meeting; and if I was not wrong, I had seen him at the beginning of the evening—but then he disappeared.

As I stood there, and the speakers replaced one another on the platform, my face must have glowed with some inner light—not because of what the speaker said; not even because of this very festive convocation; I had believed that this event would come, and therefore was less aroused by it than those for whom it was above all expectations. But still my face must have glowed with some not everyday expression, because I was suddenly approached by a stranger, who made his request in the very first sentence: “I am a sculptor; I would like to make a sculpture of your head. Would you like to sit for me?”

The man was not exactly small, but somewhat undersized. He had long hair, sticking in strains, which should denote an artist; on the other hand, he had something proletarian, even plebeian, in his face and figure. His face, and especially his forehead and his nose were bony, and the skin was brownish-sallow, tautly stretched and thin on the forehead, but lying in deep faults on his cheeks. He looked up to me; nevertheless, there was in his bearing something of a prince newly-recognized from the crowd of beggars, as if he was the man of the day. His age may have been thirty-five, but these must have been thirty-five years of deprivations. His Russian was very bad: not as of a foreigner, but as of a Jewish man who had spent his life entirely in a Yiddish-speaking community. Actually, I had never heard a Russian Jew so poorly in possession of the language of the country.

I asked him his name, and he spoke it—Itkin; it was familiar to me, and actually, I had already anticipated that he was Itkin. For the last two weeks I had read a few times in the newspapers about him. He really was the sensation of those days, when today one would think nothing could have been sensational in Russia next to the political revolution, or the events on the German-Austrian front. But it was not so. Itkin was the unusual news. The newspapers—there were still the bourgeois dailies—wrote about an exhibition of his works shown to a select crowd. But the story around him or, better, his discovery, was interesting. He had been a cobbler in some small town in south-western Russia until this very year. I believe he did not even have his own shop, but worked for somebody else; and in the time that he could spare from work or sleep he produced some unusual carvings. Then three sisters, baronesses—the titles were not yet abolished in Russia—all three unmarried, living in Moscow, became aware of his existence and work, interested themselves in him, and brought him to Moscow; they put at his disposal a mansion that belonged to them. All this was told in the papers, which also reproduced prints some of his sculptures.

Hearing his name, I told him that I had heard about him, and could read the satisfaction on his face. Before he gave me his address—to which he invited me to come in a few days—he interrupted himself and said: “Have you heard? Jacobson died of a heart attack.”

We stood in the back of one of the marble pillars, between the platform and a room in the back, in which some activity was going on. I was surprised, since I knew the man. We inquired in the room: it was true. Dr. Jacobson had felt badly, apparently had a heart-attack, was ushered home, and died there. But we were told not to spread the news. The festivities of the Balfour declaration went on, and the organizers thought it better not to sadden the gathering by the news. There were speeches and singing, the large crowd not suspecting that the organizer of the affair had died the same evening.

Outside the weather was windy and cold. All the leaves in the parks and boulevards of Moscow had already fallen, patches of snow lay in the streets, and the wind zoomed in the wires stretched between the poles.

A few days later, at the appointed hour, I was ringing at the door of the mansion, in one of the side-streets. The mansion was not large, but it was not a private home; it had all the attributes of a mansion: the elaborate facade in front, the expensive iron work, the very large and tall windows, the luxurious marble staircase. The sculptor came down himself to open the door. Possibly the house had been put at his disposal because otherwise it would have been requisitioned by some revolutionary group, not necessarily communists. At that time groups of people calling themselves anarchists rang bells, requisitioned private autos, or occupied villas, and there was no person or agency with which one could lodge a complaint.

Itkin led me upstairs to his studio—a room with a big window—probably a drawing room until recently. There he showed me several of his works. One was the head of a murdered man, his skull deformed by a blow—a Jew killed in a pogrom. It was impressive and even now, thirty years later, I remember the face. A large reclining figure of clay—he was still working on it—called “Russia” was a deformed woman with archaic, even animal features.

Then he asked me to sit down, and started preparing his clay on the rack, looking at me from time to time. When he had a large enough ball of clay on the wires of the rack, he started to work. After about half an hour of modelling, Itkin stopped, and turning to me, said:

“Do you remember the evening I spoke to you in the Hall of the Nobility, when the chairman, Jacobson, was ushered home, and died? Do you remember?”

Of course, I remembered it.

“You see, Dr. Jacobson wished me to make his portrait. We talked it over and we agreed that as soon as the festival affair was over, he would no longer be so overburdened, and he would come here. So he said he would come on Monday, after that festival week, at five o’clock in the afternoon. At the celebration I heard, and I told you, that Jacobson died. Well, it was a pity. But I knew him only slightly; he was not my friend, and I struck this appointment out of my mental calendar.

“But when it was Monday, shortly before five in the afternoon, strangely, I could not do any work. Sadness gripped me...” Itkin looked at me, his face was pale and strained, and he searched for words. The words did not come easily to him, and he brought them out as if unproperly fashioned or chiseled.

“Yes, I sat there, sad, and thought, What is man? Here a man was to come to me in a few minutes to make his portrait, but he will never come. I will never make his portrait. What is man? Clay? Not even fired clay. Just dust. And what is his spirit that endures? Vanity of vanities? There was his desire to have his features retained in clay, and the model is dead, dead forever; what is man, and what are his days on earth?

“As I sat here on this Monday, two days ago, at this hour, thinking these sad thoughts and deliberating over man who is just grass that dies overnight, as the clock started to sound—one—yes, he was to come—two—but he will not come—three—because he is dead—four—dead forever and ever—five—and the doorbell rang. I expected nobody and was startled. I shook a little as I went down the steps. I opened the door. There was a messenger. He said:

‘I am sent by Mrs. Jacobson.’ And he gave me an envelope. There was a note. It said, ‘Please come to take a mask from the face of Dr. Jacobson, my husband.’

“He had kept his word.”

I listened all this time without interrupting the sculptor; when he ended his story, we both sat in silence—he absentmindedly kneading clay with his hands, looking to the reddish hue of the pale grey sky, until it turned dark.

**References**

1. Alexander later became an outstanding chemist, and, as I was told, winner of the Lenin prize.

**Ukraine**

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| *And laughingly calls me the wide road far-running, The winds of the plain bathe and roll in my breast. How far to the master? It’s far to the Master. Don’t rest.* |
| These lines from a poet—his name I did not keep in memory—I read in the summer of 1918. We spent that summer in a *dacha* in Malachovka, about an hour by train from Moscow. Feodor Chaliapin, the singer, occupied the neighboring, larger, summer house. That summer a Jewess, a member of the Social Revolutionary Party, made an attempt to kill Lenin, wounding him, and this act was followed by a policy of terror on the part of the Bolsheviks.  It was already the end of the summer; I sat alone on a bench opposite a field and thought poetry, when a note on a small piece of paper was handed to me. It was sent from a place of detention of the Cheka, the highly feared secret police,[1](http://www.varchive.org/dy/ukraine.htm" \l "1) and was from a young man named Birk, a student employed to visit new members of Sheerith-Israel to collect sums due for their shares. He had only slight success in his task, before he was arrested and a full list of names of members of this group was discovered on him. Yet he found a way of sending a note to me. In it he let me know in all brevity that under interrogation he had named my father as the head of the group; he urged my father to flee Moscow.  It was the second day of Rosh-Hashana, the day which, as I think now, was memorable in my father’s life. The Haftara, or reading from the prophets before the congregation, is on that day from Isaiah and contains the words about Sheerith Israel, the remnants of the people of Israel, upon whom the Lord will have mercy. When my father first came to Vitebsk, and when he first came to Moscow, and when he, in the beginning of World War I, came to Odessa on his way to Moscow from Switzerland, he was honored by being asked to read these verses—a sign of respect and esteem. In Odessa this invitation was extended to him by the congregations of Ussishkin, Klausner and others. He used to read it incomparably, his voice being very melodic yet forceful, and invariably he moved his listeners deeply. It was from this Haftara (Isaiah ) that he drew the name Sheerith Israel for the group which he hoped would comprise many of the nation. Delivery of the wastes of the land of Israel from the eighteen centuries of neglect was but part of the activities of the planned groups, with humanitarian activities of general character as the other part. But the work was cut short in the beginning.  It was certainly audacious and imprudent to gather every week another group of people in our home to give them a lecture on the land of Israel (which was my task), to let them join the groups of Sheerith Israel, and to collect money for redeeming the land—in the very year of the Bolshevik revolution, dictatorship and terror. The payments were made in uncut sheets of Kerenki, the inflationary money printed without numbers and even without dividing the sheets into individual bills of forty rubles each. Yet it was not actually against the law to participate in such activities. Under the Communist regime the policy was not yet formulated—so, for instance, the Hebrew theater Habima was patronized by Lunacharski, minister of education in Lenin’s cabinet. The elected cashier was the civil engineer Cooper; but I brought the money to Izhak Goldberg and exchanged it for drafts on a London bank, an operation saving them from utter devaluation and thus directing the funds for their future purpose in Palestine—an operation certainly not officially permitted under the Bolsheviks. Thus we were taking a risk, and now the whole matter was in the hands of the Cheka, with the list of members taken from Birk. We had no way of knowing the steps that would ensue in the atmosphere of terror that followed the unsuccessful attempt on Lenin’s life.  From that moment there was to be no more peace of mind for me until I would be able to take my parents to the Ukraine. I had to find my father; then we had to go into hiding. He did not sleep with us that night in our *dacha*; nor any of the following nights. He slept with the in-laws of my elder brother, not far from our summer place. My father never again entered our apartment in the city, nor did my mother. Our apartment was in an old aristocratic house, with N. Berdiaeff, the religious philosopher, and Prof. Focht, the famed cardiologist, as some of the tenants. Nothing, neither furniture, nor personal belongings, were saved from there; it was closed. My books were left behind; my diaries, about thirteen tomes, that I had written daily for seven years, from the age of sixteen, I left at the apartment of my brother Daniel, innocent of the thought that they could serve as indiscreet reading for his wife, Genia, or for anyone else who cared to read them. I was too open in them about my thoughts, my religious yearnings, and in my accounting of everything that accompanies the development of a boy into a youth. I should have destroyed these diaries. On the contrary, I continued to make my daily entries during our travels.  For about three weeks my parents slept in different places, and during this time all efforts were made toward leaving Moscow and going to the Ukraine, then separated from Soviet Russia by the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed by Trotski with the Germans, victors in the war. A few times I went to our home to take a few things. It certainly appeared to me that somebody was on the lookout for my father: once I saw a woman watching, half hidden under the staircase; another time I noticed a man on watch on the opposite sidewalk.  It was necessary to obtain a Ukrainian permit for entry. The courtyard of the Ukrainian legation was crowded by a throng waiting to be admitted. It was not easy to gain entrance into the building. My elder brother Daniel tried to reach the door but was not let in; then I tried and succeeded. Actually, a classmate of mine, Michail Ionoff, though not a Ukrainian, was employed in the legation, and he helped me to get inside the building. My father, seeing me enter where my brother, always very capable in getting things done, failed, acquired the confidence, as he told me later, to put his and my mother’s lives in my hands. And so it was I who was to accompany them on their way to the Ukraine. Daniel had a family of his own. Why Alexander did not go with us I found out only some years later: he was deeply in love—possibly unanswered—with the younger sister of Genia, Daniel’s wife. Also, he was studying chemistry at the Economic Institute, and there was no need for more than one of us to go with the parents.  I was about to begin my last year in the medical school of Moscow University. The class before ours left after only four years of study in view of the dire need for doctors. Our class might have had possibly only one term of the last year of medical training; but whether it would have taken till December 1918 or May 1919 in order to obtain my medical degree, not the slightest thought ever entered my mind to continue my studies instead of taking my parents out of Moscow; and it could have easily happened that by leaving the University and the country then I might never have obtained the degree.  Before leaving, an accounting and a protocol of the now-discontinued activities of Sheerith Israel had to be prepared, and this was done together with civil engineers Cooper and Elkind, who served as honorary treasurer and secretary, and for this I had to make various ways through the terror-stricken Moscow. One night I slept at the apartment of a young lawyer, Hershmann, whom I knew from our common interest in the Jewish Legion (of Jabotinsky), and who was a son-in-law of a member of the first group of Sheerith Israel, which had purchased Ruhama before the World War, in 1911. Hershman gave me his nightshirt to use on that occasion, and this remained in my memory because of the Iskariot role this Hershmann was later to play in this same affair.  Never before had I known a sleepless night—but during those weeks I would turn over on my bed at night, tormented by the thought: Would I be able to save my father from doom? Our exile started on September 23, 1918, when, after several contacts were made to obtain passage on a train—some officials of the railway even came to the apartment of Daniel—we (my father, my mother and I) boarded a train at the Brianski Station and headed toward the Ukraine. I do not remember whether it was the same or the next day that we arrived at the Russian-Ukrainian frontier. Leaving the car at a whistle stop, I ran to an official on the track at some distance who was giving the permits to leave—two words written in pencil. I showed him my passport to travel to Palestine, given me nine months earlier by the Bolshevik government; but probably even without this I would have obtained the permit. From there a distance of several kilometers had to be covered; my parents traveled in a wagon drawn by horses and I followed afoot. At that moment it appeared to my father that the guards were taking me into a forest, but it was not so.  We arrived at the Khutor Michailovsky, in the Chernigov Gubernia, not too far from Starodub in the same Gubernia where my parents met for the first time back in the 1880s. We found a place to sleep in the utterly crowded village, in the house of a peasant. Outside, the migrants made here and there a bonfire to keep themselves warm. Shots were heard intermittently. In the early morning, walking through this village, I heard the loud wailing of a woman who, in the middle of the broad village street, was bemoaning the death of someone dear to her, killed that night.  During that day I came to the place where the Germans were giving permits of admittance to the railway station—following the treaty of Brest-Litovsk the German occupation forces ruled the Ukraine under Hetman Skoropadski. People stood outside and a young German soldier was counting them from the steps by touching their heads not too gently with his baton. When I finally succeeded in reaching the station—the track ran there on an embankment— there were shots; somebody on the track was killed. My father, who was waiting below, was told by the people around him that a student had been shot to death. He was terrified by the thought that it was I. Human life was worth but very little.  The train finally took us away to Konotop and another train to Bakhmach. There we waited long evening hours and I was sadly impressed by the sight, in a silent and tired evening crowd of travelers waiting for their transportation, of a German soldier in his metal helmet courting a handsome Jewish girl who was not displeased by this situation.  When the unilluminated train on which we were to travel forth was put on a track and people stormed toward it, I felt in the dark that my documents were being pickpocketed as I was caught in the squeeze, but I noticed it in time to shout that thieves were at work, and they dropped my passport, my pocket Bible, and my wallet on the floor, where I collected them as they ran away. After a night of travel the train stopped at a station, and we had to wait for transportation to Poltava. This town was a kossack *khutor,* on a flat plain, with low houses scattered in empty orchards in autumn garb. The place was noted for the pogroms made by the kossacks not long before and, I believe, also remembered for the same since the days of Hetman Khmielnitzki in the seventeenth century, under whom hundreds of thousands of Jews were slaughtered. We spent a day and a night there waiting for a train.  There my mother showed the first sign of a sickness that was to take hold of her soon after our arrival in Poltava.  It was my intent to go from Khutor Mikhailovski toward Odessa in order to find there a ship for Palestine. But my father decided that we should go to Poltava, where his brother Feivel, known to us as Uncle Pavel, lived. There my parents wished to rest and to wait until my brother Daniel would succeed in sending us some means, because we had left with very little money in our pockets. So I submitted.  Uncle Pavel met us with his horse-driven carriage at the station and took us into his house. He was one of the richest men in town, belonging to the little group of four or five wealthy men whose names were known to all. He started his career in life when my father called him from Mstislav to Smolensk to assist him and to be his partner: thus the hardships of the start from nothing had been carried by my father alone, who was five years older than his brother. Always there remained cordial relations between them, but my father regretted Pavel’s marriage to a daughter of a Poltava merchant, a family of hard dealing people. Yet relations were never clouded by any disagreement or neurosis, so common between brothers. Pavel had the greatest esteem for my father. Also in learning, knowing Hebrew only by his prayerbook, Pavel was by far inferior to my father. He had two sons and a daughter; one son, Peter, recently married, lived in Poltava. He was of a meek character. His younger brother, as also his mother and sister, maintained a household in Kharkov, a large city not far from the more agricultural Poltava. There they had a large apartment building, or several buildings, and a mansion for their own use. Thus Feivel lived most of the time alone in his Poltava house taking care of his soap factory.  A day after our arrival my mother fell ill with dysentery. With no specific drugs against this disease, it was a perilous illness. Feivel’s wife, Pasha, on receiving the message that “illustrious guests” had arrived from Moscow, wrote that she would come in a few days, and so she came. But finding the house in Poltava occupied by refugees, and turned partly into a hospital for my sick mother, she quickly changed her attitude and became impatient and hostile.  From my childhood I knew that my elder brother, at the age of three, had fallen sick with dysentery and that the doctors had given up on him; but then someone who knew folk remedies advised my parents to give the child an infusion of flowers of white clover mixed with a certain herb. Daniel survived, though he never again was the sturdy boy he was before. Now remembering this family tradition, I went outside of the town to some wet fields covered with October or November mist in search of clover, and went to mills and asked them to grind the herb. The tannin in those plants might have been the helpful ingredient. Dr. Gurevitch, a local practitioner, who later worked as a podiatrist in Palestine, a man of few words, told me that the chances for my mother’s survival were slim. There were also consilia, when more doctors conferred, helpless beyond prescribing bismuth. But finally my mother slowly recovered.  At the time that my mother was very ill, Pasha, instead of leaving for Kharkov where she had a house all for herself and her unmarried children, produced an hysterical grand fit by throwing herself on the floor, together with her daughter, true to her mother, demanding that my parents leave the house. There was no place to find for rent. The scene occurred when my mother was in bed, my father in his room, on the door of which the women banged, then dropped to the floor in cries; I was at the time not at home, actually looking for a place to rent.  Also outside the world was not at peace. Soon after we arrived at Poltava we heard that a movement started by Petliura had gathered momentum and an army of his was driving the Germans and the puppet Hetman Skoropadski out of the land. Petliura was approaching Poltava from Kharkov. Feivel occupied the upper floor of his house, the lower floor being rented to the town police. Cannon shots resounded for several hours; we sat in a corridor which was but slightly more protected than other rooms, and listened to the cannonade. When Petliura’s troops entered (shortly they would leave, only to come again) a police officer was seized by his antagonists, possibly his fellow police troopers, and beaten on the floor below us. This went on for hours, he ever weaker, crying for mercy, the blows by belts and clubs sounding in response to his cries, until he died.  But the rule of Petliura did not endure. More than once we heard cannonades shelling the town. And then, close to Christmas, the Reds took over the Ukraine, battling the armies of Petliura. In the foreshadows of a new change of power in town, Feivel and his wife married their daughter to a young “Don Juan,” the son of a rich owner of mills. He used to seclude himself with the girl, who had big black eyes and who, on her arrival from Kharkov, showed certain interest in me. Uncle Feivel had long since harbored the idea of one of us brothers taking his daughter, our cousin, to wife. Now the family wedding went on like a hidden affair in the dining room, my parents and I not being invited though we stayed in the same apartment; I slept in a small office room in the apartment, and saw the lights and heard the voices from the wedding room.  My uncle was a kind and goodhearted man, but he was entirely helpless against his wife, a boisterous woman; there was something very hard in her, and the younger brother of my father, Israel, used to call her *grobovaya doska* ("coffin lid” ), though not to her face. Israel, too, soon arrived in Poltava from Nizhniy-Novgorod (Gorky), deserting his business and property. He, too, was a man of means—a reason for fear under the new regime. Feivel’s other fault, besides his being submissive to the will of his wife, was his tight-fistedness. In my father there was an unusal broadhandedness; in Israel there was a mixture of this and of great care for order and of thriftiness. Feivel had only the latter, yet was willing and eager to make any effort if only he could help a person. He was tall and stooped, and had a melancholy look in his large eyes. He obviously suffered from the behavior of his wife toward his brother, to whom he owed much and whom he almost worshiped.  About the beginning of January 1919 the guns thundered, the bullets whistled, and the Reds took Poltava. Somewhere nearby people were killed and buried in the field. The rich were arrested and required to pay large sums, and Feivel was repeatedly under arrest, being one of the leading rich men of the city.  Only with the approach of the Reds did I succeed in finding a place to live for my parents and myself: two front rooms in the house of Vorozheikin and his wife. A gentile married to a Jewess, Vorozheikin had a very rich estate. The entire block of large hotels belonged to him. He was one of those Gogol type of estate owners who did absolutely nothing, spending his day on his couch. His wife was good-looking and younger than himself. They rented out the two front rooms so that they would not be requisitioned by the incoming troops, being by their economic status and political views very adverse to the communists. But a little time passed and a handsome, dashing Red army officer contacted our landlady and easily talked her into giving him our rooms; then he abruptly informed my parents that they would have to leave in a matter of hours. I was not at home and did not see the officer. When told of this I went to the department of “Living Space” and brought an official to see our place, then went to the headquarters of the commanding general, the conqueror of Poltava. I spoke to the general, a tall man, in a large room and made him put in his own handwriting his command to the officer to submit to the decision of the Department. He signed the document, “General Bondarenko.” I hurried home and there I sent for the officer, a debauching type of hero soldier. I told him in our hall to stand at attention since I would read him the order of the general, and when I read it the man was done and left, to the disappointment of Mrs. Vorozheikin. Some time later, possibly two or three months thereafter, I heard that he had been shot by order of his commanding officers, after a court martial for debauchery.  We lived three months at Uncle Pavel’s and about ten months at Vorozheikin’s . During these months the city of Poltava changed hands many times; every incursion was followed by terror, White or Red. From the very beginning my father, expecting a prolonged stay and in order to have income for living expenses, organized in partnership with two of Feivel’s young clerks a candlemaking workshop, he not taking part in the manual work, but asking me to participate. Thus I observed and learned candlemaking.  When money arrived in a Kharkov bank, sent by my brother Daniel, my father (we were still living at Feivel’s ) went to Kharkov by train and, having received there the poorly printed Ukrainian money, changed it in the same bank to English pounds—twenty banknotes of a hundred pounds each. Upon his return to Poltava, I expressed my fear that England would soon come on hard times—India, for instance, would fall away from the British Empire—and I went by train to Kharkov to try to return the British banknotes. The director of the bank refused to cancel the deal, and my father was prudent enough not to let me keep these banknotes with me; but we retracted an option for another thousand pounds. Soon the Ukrainian money was worth nothing.  Machno, a dwarfish robber who called himself an anarchist, also raised an army, established a front, and took Kremenchug, but did not reach Poltava. His warfare, like that of Petliura, was accompanied by pogroms. Then Denikin’s “White Army” swept up from the south and occupied Poltava. Again, one army left, killing hostages and other unfortunates, and drew out of town, and another entered, sparkling with sabres and bayonets. Poltava was spared from a large pogrom, but many other towns and cities of the Ukraine were not so fortunate. Reading of the massacre in Kremenchug and the rape of Jewish girls by soldiers, I wrote a poem to those unfortunates, “Pure in the House of Israel.” I sent this poem to Beka (Rebecca) whom I knew from the last year in Crimea and whose home was in Kremenchug, that she might console someone whom she knew, and she answered by letter that she had to console with my lines her own sister, age 17. I sent to Beka all the money I earned from candlemaking.  When seven months of our stay in Poltava had passed, Daniel arrived for a visit. It was about the time of Passover, 1919. These seven months had seemed endless. Daniel could come while Ukraine was united with Russia under the Reds. But then the Whites came, and as usual the hotels in Vorozheikin’s block were occupied by the officers of the victors. One evening while going home I was stopped by two or three soldiers of Denikin who attacked me as a Jew; but an officer passed by and ordered them to abstain. When I followed the officer in order to thank him, he said: “From a Jew I wish no thanks.” I had only a wound on the palm of my hand, but a greater wound in my pride.  For the Jews it was a time of suffering that naturally called forth Messianic hopes. Only a few days after our arrival in Poltava a man came to see us, we having newly arrived from Moscow. He had a ruddy complexion, broad face and forehead, and a large beard, not unsimilar to the image of Zeus as usually painted or sculpted. He was finely clothed in an expensive coat with a velvet collar. He had messianic ideas, and if what he said sounded exalted, that which he had in writing was not very coherent. He said he had to see Trotsky and actually, later, went to see him in Moscow. I was told that he was a farmer or a merchant of a village who had been very tight with his money, his charity, and his love of neighbor. Then something happened to him and he changed completely; I believe he gave away his property. He had in his mind a vision collected from the teachings of Tolstoy, from messianic hopes, and from communistic ideology. But only later, when his behavior became even stranger and his appearance less immaculate, and he was also occasionally arrested, I heard that he suffered from progressive paranoia which took the form of religious delusion, entirely appropriate to that time of great sufferings.  I loved to spend time with the rabbi of Slobodka, as he was called, because he was a rabbi refugee from that famous place of learning in Lithuania. He resided that year in Poltava, and a few times I spoke with him, meeting him in the empty loft of a synagogue, he trying to introduce me to the works of Maimonides, but without much success.  In Poltava there were three synagogues, one next to another. One was Sephardic, for the oriental way of worship, though I wondered that there should be such worshipers in Poltava. Was the oriental worship a heritage from the movement of Shabbatai Zvi, the seventeenth-century messianic claimant who ended as an apostate and convert to Islam? One of the other synagogues in the group was Hassidic. Once a young cantor came to town and into one of these synagogues. He did not sing as cantors usually do, but spoke the prayer. Never before or since have I heard such conversation with God in public, never such a way of saying words, and I have known the celebrated actors of the Moscow Arts Theater, and have heard a number of times Chaliapin saying his monologue in Boris Godunov, and have seen Sarah Bernhardt on stage. The crowd was as still as if there were not a living soul in the synagogue save the cantor speaking to God for his people. The young cantor left town and was never heard of again.  Several times I tried to arrange our departure toward some place from where we could proceed to the land of Israel. But by now it was becoming more and more dangerous to travel. Once when I made plans to leave with my parents the city of Poltava, where we were rooted now for so long, five or six Jews who had been killed in trains were brought to Poltava, displayed at the station, and then were carried in a cortege followed by a few hundred, or even thousand, Jews to the cemetery, the gentiles gazing from their windows. I participated in the cortege. The rabbi of Slobodka came to our home to dissuade us from traveling. All four routes from Poltava were equally dangerous.  At this rabbi’s I was witness to a gentile man in his forties who came with his son to become Jews. He came from some place outside Poltava, and had the very fine face of a sufferer dedicated to his inner call. He was a man of some manual profession—a carpenter I believe. As is usual in such cases, the rabbi first used his eloquence to dissuade the man from his plan: the Jews are not only disinclined toward missionary zeal, but are adverse to having proselytes in their midst. But I was very strongly impressed by this man and his young son, age ten or eleven, who was following his father wherever he went or whatever he did. I met them again on the street, the man still going through the throes of his irrevocable decision; it was an hour of dim light, before evening, and the messianic expectations in the man, his boy at his hand, were close to madness amidst the wide stretches of the Ukraine, darkened in a craze of torture and blood.  In Poltava my father met Israel, his younger brother who, as I already said, arrived in town after us, coming from Nizhniy Novgorod, later named Gorki. After years of separation my father again became close to him. Being infirm on his legs, Israel usually carried a folding chair with him; a gentile woman of Caucasian origin, Sosieva, took care of him and was also his companion. We left Poltava later than he did, but he reached the land of Israel before my parents, by way of the Black Sea.  Before we left Poltava we talked of my father’s plan for organizing cooperatives of land and farms in Israel for the Jews who congregated there as refugees, many of them from Vilno in Lithuania; but we took no direct part in the material or financial part of the cooperative. Its participants decided to start a business with the cooperative’s funds to save them from devaluation, but this was the end of the plan because before the ware arrived (they were wool spinners, for the most part) they were already heading each in a different direction.  We, too, made a mistake. My father, seeing the money (not exchanged, as mentioned before) losing its value, bought some real estate, a group of tenement houses. The negotiation was made during Sukkoth (Tabernacle). I spent a sleepless night. Now, when I was hoping to get out of this place, it was as though, with the purchase of this property, we had chained ourselves to the town. But a few weeks passed and, leaving that property behind, never to have anything from it, we left Poltava for Kharkov.  It was a labor of love, preparing for this trip of a few hours, the first leg of a journey away from a 13-month-long frustration, some way or somehow toward the land of Israel. Under the “Whites” a Jew could not travel in a train unprotected without risking his life, almost forfeiting it. Therefore White officers were sought to accompany the travelers. There was in town a Jew, a military tailor on one of the main streets, who was supposed to know the officers and be able to procure their services. He acquainted me with a young officer for this purpose, but we did not travel with him. Some of the Vilna Jews hired several officers and a box car, used for cattle or for cargo—the manner of travel then ubiquitous in Russia—and one day, with others of the group and all protected by the hired officers of the White Guard, we traveled to Kharkov, usually a distance of only a few hours.  We arrived in Kharkov about midnight. Rain was pouring from the dark sky. We found an open, flat platform on wheels, unprotected from the rain, hired the vehicle and its man and horse, put the two trunks on the platfrom to use as seats, and then started looking for a hotel or guest house. On the Moskovskaia Ulitza, an old two-story house with a sign “hotel” made me cross the street, stepping into deep water, but the dimly lit place had no rooms free. Likewise a large hotel on the Ulitza had no vacancy. We passed in the rain a lone building on a square, and strangely loud music was blaring from the illuminated but otherwise as though uninhabited place. The streets were all empty, the windows were dark, the city was asleep; we were drenched. Then, after traveling along the streets for what seemed hours, my father ordered the driver to direct the vehicle toward the house of his brother Feivel. There in front of us stood a tall apartment building belonging to Feivel, and in the back his mansion. We rang at the door of the mansion and Uncle Feivel, poor of sleep, came down and opened the door; he let us in, arranged for us mattresses and covers on the floor of a big living room, and took care of us. In the morning I left early to look for for a place to move. My parents were still asleep, and my uncle asked me to have tea; I, however, answered while going down the staircase: “I will not eat or drink until I find some place for my parents"—and asked him to protect them until I returned. I went first to a far-removed relative but was not admitted since his daughter was ill with scarlet fever. Then I found a room in the same large hotel I had visited during the night.  I immediately took my parents to our new quarters, a corner suite in the hotel. From there I went to the muddy autumn open market to buy victuals. This I continued to do in the days following, as I had done the whole year in Poltava, in order to relieve my mother, still weak after her sickness. From the peasants I could buy milk in clay jugs, bread, and other food. But not two weeks passed before Kharkov was in an uproar.  The Red Army once more rolled southward. It took Belgorod, north of Kharkov, on the chalk hills, and advanced on Kharkov, the capital of eastern Ukraine and the largest industrial city south of Moscow. The two-room corner suite which we occupied in the hotel—with windows on two streets—was, as we were told, occupied by the Red Army chief-of-staff the previous time the Reds held the city. It was unwise to remain there. And actually we considered Kharkov a transit point of short duration on our way to the land of Israel. The way from there led to Rostov, and from Rostov to the Caucasus.  Soon after our arrival at Kharkov we were visited by a man, white-haired and sad and very likeable; his name was Janovsky. I believe he was from Grodno in Lithuania. He had a portion in Ruhama. His wife, if I remember correctly, had killed herself in a fit of melancholia during his wanderings in the Ukraine. He had a daughter and a young son in Russia, and two daughters attending school in Israel. He strove to reach them. He told us of a group of *halutzim*—or pioneers—that had convened in Vladikavkaz (later renamed Ordzhenikidze) in the Caucasus, on their way to the land of Israel. I believe he told us that his daughter was in that group.  Thus the direction was clear to me—via Rostov on the Don to Vladikavkaz. Now the task was to obtain passage to Rostov, not an easy thing because there was a stampede to get out of Kharkov. One of the Vilno wool merchants, who came from Poltava with us, went to the railway station to make arrangements but was snared by an agent of the Osobiy Otdel, the terrorizing secret police of the Whites; he was taken to the Otdel, questioned, and freed only after being relieved of his money. Still agitated and frightened, he came to our hotel to tell of his effort and to warn us not to try to obtain passage via the railways. Though running away from the Reds could not be looked upon by the Whites as anything but legitimate, yet it was—in the absence of law—thought a crime to try to obtain passage when only the military and the privileged were first to be evacuated.  I went with Janovsky to some distant office to ask for evacuation. Neither he nor I had reason to flee before the Reds, but our desire to reach the land of Israel dominated us entirely, and with the frontier moving over our heads, we feared that our goal would be cut off from us. I went also to the railway station, though warned not to do so. On my way there, in an overcrowded tramway car, I was pressed suddenly from all sides, and then my Bible was gone from my breast pocket; yet I found it on the floor, dropped by a disappointed pickpocket. In the station building I looked for an opportunity and found it: I saw there the young officer who was introduced to me by the military tailor in Poltava as one who was “honest” and ready to sell his services. I spoke to him and he told me to come to his address and bring money for the passage and for his services. Then I saw, not far from the hotel where we stayed, on the sidewalk, with his face to the throroughfare, a white-haired general in a red-breasted coat, the usual garb of generals in Russia. I boldly approached him and asked him to help me and my parents get passage to Rostov. Certainly he was to leave in a private railway car. He was kind to me and told me to come to him the next morning. This was a perfect opportunity. But I was so eager to reach the Caucasus, the group there, and Palestine with them, that I made the mistake of going to the young officer at his hotel. It happened to be the same dark building that I had visited by chance two weeks earlier on that first night in Kharkov while looking for a room, stepping knee-deep into water. I was met by a soldier, and soon there were two, who told me to wait while one went to call the officer; soon I was with him and three soldiers, all of the regiment of General Shkuro of Denikin’s army. This regiment was famous for its cruelty. They closed the door with a key, and I understood that I was trapped.  My four captors were armed with rifles, pistols, sabres, and daggers; and if that was not enough, they were four against one. They tried to frighten me with their sixteen pieces of weaponry. I said: “Comrades, stop it!” *(Tovarshtchi, prosite),* and this was a slip of the tongue; though *tovarishtch* was a word much used among friends in our school days, presently it was a designation applied by communists or socialists to others of their kind. The officer, the scoundrel with a snubnose and shifting eyes who put me in the trap, started to repeat in a singing way: *tovarishtchi, tovarishtchi,* and his three men did the same. There was a mental struggle—for they kept me, I believe, for an hour or more; I do not remember what was said in detail, but I know that I did not humiliate myself; just the opposite—if I was not beaten or killed then and there, it was because of my bearing. They searched me for money and took that which I had brought for the passage. Then the officer ordered two men to take me to the Osobiy Otdel to be questioned further and then killed, and the two took me to the street. It was evening. We crossed Moskovskaia Street and I looked up at the hotel where my parents were waiting for me. The six-story building was dark, but the corner windows of my parents’ rooms had light. The hotel, which only two weeks earlier had been filled to the last room, was deserted now because its occupants had run away. After crossing the street, we passed along the very walls of the hotel building, and in my thoughts I parted with my parents; their future without my return could not be anything but desperate. We went only a short distance—a block or a block and a half—when I spoke to the two soldiers; one was of Caucasian or southern origin. Would they let me go? And I may have mentioned my parents. “Let him go,” said one to the other. I often thought, later, that in the mental struggle of that evening was born in me the future psychotherapist. They certainly saw me superior to them; my striving to go south and not be left in Kharkov indicated my not being a communist. But hundreds of thousands of people were killed in the Civil War without any reason or proof. I did not think of all this then. I went, liberated, not straight back to the hotel, but made a circuit around the block in order to calm myself before seeing my parents. I wanted to look at my watch—I had on me a little steel watch of my mother’s—but it was gone; when I was being searched, one of my captors had stolen it without it coming to the notice of the others or of myself.  When I came to my parents, I did not tell them what had happened; but soon my mother asked what the time was, and I had no watch on me. She had already wondered why I was away for so long; now, with her unerring instinct, she guessed that I had been in a trap. She announced that she would not travel; we must remain in Kharkov—it was too late. I disagreed, determined to obtain passage through the general, in the morning. But in the morning when I looked upon my mother’s pale and tired face—she hardly slept that night—I surrendered. The thirteen-month-long longing to go southward in the direction of Israel was left unrelieved, and we were faced with the prospect of staying in the Ukraine for an undetermined time longer.  I left the hotel in the morning to look for a more permanent place to stay: we were told that the hotel would probably be closed—the Reds were almost on the outskirts of Kharkov. I went on the same sidestreet on which I was led the evening before, then I turned left and saw a large platform truck. It was loaded with dead human bodies; the loaders put one row of corpses one way, the other row on top of the first, the other way, across. I lifted my eyes to the building from which they were being carried out—a large sign read “Osobiy Otdel.” For only a few seconds I observed the scene, then turned and went away. It was the place to which the soldiers had been leading me twelve hours earlier; I did not know then how close we were to the goal when they let me go.  I went toward the residential parts of the city and wandered about two miles; at several places I saw furniture or valises on the street, belonging to people making a last hour evacuation. Finally, seeing pieces of luggage being carried out from an apartment building, I asked the people whether they would rent their apartment; in the rush of evacuation, practically of escape, the people let me into the place and gave me the keys. Their name was Soloviev, and he was professor of gynecology and obstetrics at Kharkov University. Probably I made a reliable impression, but in their hurry they could not deliberate much, and an empty apartment would immediately be seized by the incoming Bolsheviks. They also left their maid servant in the place.  I brought my parents from the hotel. My father occupied a small room with a glass door, my mother the Solovievs’ bedroom, and I made my place in the dining room; but after a while my mother, feeling the small dark bedroom depressing, exchanged with me. The Bolsheviks were in town. The first posters were signed with Stalin’s name, Stalin being in the vanguard of the army, but at that time having a much lesser name than Trotsky, the organizer and commander of the entire Red Army.  In his room my father wrote his autobiography; in longing for the land of Israel, which he had not yet seen but for which he worked devotedly all his life, he sang a song which he composed—words and melody—to Ruhama, the farm which had been founded by his efforts—as if she were his daughter. It was a melancholy song. In the kitchen the maid sang a loud song, and sang it again and again. I put my feelings into the words of a poem about the sufferings of the Jewish people, and I adapted the Ukrainian melody of the maid to my song, and it suited it exceedingly well. The two front rooms, with gynecological instruments, we gave to a civil engineer with his wife, a gynecologist, who turned up by chance—and this we did since these rooms would certainly have been requisitioned, in an apartment occupied only by the three of us. After a while the maid made an attempt to steal some valises stuffed with valuables hidden in a storage space by sending an accomplice with forged instructions, as if from the Solovievs, to hand over the things. When this did not succeed, the maid disappeared.  The majority of the university professors, like Soloviev, ran away, and the only way open was to Rostov. But the University started to function with the remaining faculty. I registered in the medical school: since I could not travel farther, I intended to use this time to finish my medical studies, cut short by our departure from Moscow. I especially remember three teachers. The pharmacologist, Prof. Postoeff, was the dean. Before I started medical studies years earlier, I deliberated whether I wanted to study chemistry and pharmacology, feeling an aversion to this last subject. Now I studied it in the book of Kravkov, and admit that never had I seen so interestingly written a textbook. I went repeatedly to Postoeff at his home for examination, part by part, of the subject. The lectures and laboratory work in criminal medicine were given by a professor with a Latin name, an elderly man with a big bald head, who was on intimate terms with one of his laboratory assistants. The course in psychiatry I took with a young lady examiner, and the course in surgical anatomy with a stern professor who, unmindful of the revolution and the new liberties, sat while examining the students, whom he made to stand in groups of four.  Some time passed, and my brother Lelia (Alexander) arrived. I was going up the staircase to our apartment and there he stood ringing the bell. He was lean, and his shoes were worn. He came to us after being released from prison. We had not been informed by Daniel of what had happened. My two brothers had continued their business and sold shipments of oil to some old customers. In one place there were, as it seems, parties in strife, and intrigues, and arrests; Alexander, who was more of a factotum, was accused of selling ware unregistered in the *kommissariat,* which issued permits for all manufacturing and trade activities. I do not know whether I correctly narrate here the cause of his arrest, but he was in a Bolshevik prison for several months. There *typhus exanthemus* was rampant: the cots of the prisoners were in rows, one near the other, and lice crawled all over them; yet Alexander did not get the disease, though in places next to him others had lain sick with it, with high fevers. The prisoners were reduced in number—new ones always arriving—by summary executions: repeatedly the prisoners were put in rows in the courtyard and every seventh, or fifth, or tenth, as the case would be, would be taken out of line and shot. Alexander was chosen by his fellow inmates to be their head, or chief; this would free him from certain duties, like carrying out the heavy pails of urine, but he would not take advantage of this privilege of the unwritten law of the prison. Daniel worked furiously to get Alexander free. Finally there was a court hearing. The justice was not above reason and human interest in the case. Alexander was freed. All this was told by him in the most unpretentious way.  Time went on. I do not remember going to any show, or movie, or concert in Kharkov. A Jewish philosopher, Ish-Horovitz, who in his time created a controversy by attacking another Jewish philosopher (Ahad-Haam), visited my father occasionally; and there was a circle in which Jewish problems were discussed. It convened in the house of one Hillmann, his son being the leader of the group.  The winter, spring, and summer of 1920 passed. In Kharkov I stopped writing my diary which I had been keeping since the age of sixteen, the beginning of the seventh “class” in gymnasium, for about eight or nine years. At some moment (possibly already in the first weeks of our stay in Kharkov) when there was danger of a change of power, with the usual searches, I gave the booknotes I wrote during our stay in the Ukraine to an acquaintance—a person whom I do not remember and knew only slightly—to keep for me, never to see them again.  In August 1920 we received a message from Moscow that Daniel had been arrested. I left for Moscow. By the time I arrived there, Daniel was already free. He had some diamonds he wished to sell and fell into a trap, but his wife Genia had “connections” and succeeded in freeing him. When in Moscow—for perhaps ten days or less—I obtained a certificate from the University and, with the courses absolved in Kharkov, I was presently admitted to start the final examination for my medical degree.  Then I met a young acquaintance, Kimmelfeld. I had a message for him from his father, who was languishing in a cell of the Cheka in Kharkov. Once my father passed by on a sidewalk when this man, who had once been a rich man in Moscow, noticed and recognized him, and let him know from his iron-barred cellar window of his plight. But I found the son entirely indifferent to his father’s fate. His brother was in exile in the isles on the White Sea, and he himself might have been punished by the Bolsheviks. Were I a novelist, the little I observed of this family since the age of seven or eight would have inspired me to write a sketch.  In Moscow I also provided myself with a *kommandirovka,* or a statement that I was delegated to travel to Vladikavkaz—without a *kommandirovka* one could not travel; I obtained mine from a department where I had a friend. The department was that of mining, and the *kommandirovka* was for studying the mineralogical deposits of the Caucasus. It was my intention to take my parents and Alexander there: the Caucasus up to the ridge of the mountains was now in the hands of the Moscow regime. Daniel accompanied me to Kharkov to take leave of our parents, since we (my parents, Alexander, and I) intended to obtain Palestine via the Caucasus. After a few days in Kharkov, we parted with Daniel at the station, he being desirous to join us on our way. He then returned to his wife and child.  **References**   1. Cheka is a shortened form in Russian for an organization with the full title of All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for the Suppression of Counterrevolution and Sabotage. | | |

# Caucasus and Lithuania

Once more I left behind, without a single thought, the medical degree; to reach it would have required only weeks, no longer months or years. The train brought us to Rostov on the Don, the route on which I had been denied travel ten months earlier. And possibly it was for the better. At that time, in October or November 1919, an epidemic of *typhus exanthemus* (Flecktyphus) reaped a grim harvest in the terribly overcrowded trains, and many of the escapees did not reach Rostov.

We reached the station of Mineralniy Vody, from which a short sidetrack leads to Kislovodsk, the place where the revolution of February 1917 found my father, myself, and Alexander. Now it was all very different. For two nights we slept on the floor of the station or its platform, during which people would be awakened and required to show their identification. Finally there was a train that carried Armenian refugees toward the south. We traveled in the crowded boxcars, changing trains somewhere. My mother, used to comfort, never complained. Some years later my father recalled that I had made a step of my back for my mother to get out of the boxcar. This was all self-understood and did not require any effort on my part. A train on a short track took us to Vladikavkaz. Upon arrival we obtained two rooms in a hotel, but after a few days we were told to move to a more permanent place. All we had eventually was a single room for the four of us (for Alexander was with us) with a kitchen and a yard, in a rather primitive building with a ladder instead of a staircase.

It was from Vladikavkaz that Janovsky, who reached it several months before, had written to tell us a few details about the group of *halutzim,* or pioneers, that assembled there and waited for a chance to reach the other side of the Caucasian ridge and from there to proceed to Palestine. Now Janovsky came to us, and sat next to the window in a dark corner, his face framed by white hair and a white beard; his boy, also silent, stood next to him. One of the first men we got to know was Lichtenstein, a local cobbler who was an active Zionist and interested himself in the *halutzim.* Then we got to know the group, too. Many of them were from Rostov, some from the mining region of Donetz, and a scattering from other places. Altogether, counting those who arrived after us, there were thirty or forty souls.

The oldest travelers were a bearded man, Ratner, and his wife, the sister of his first, deceased, wife. He had an estate in the land of Israel, in Rishon le Zion. Winter in Vladikavkaz was moving in rapidly, and it was cold in the unheated dwellings; it happened that I took Mr. Ratner, a sturdy octogenarian, to a place where I knew pieces of lumber could be purchased—cuts left by a maker of wooden soles for shoes. I would fill a large sack with the wooden pieces, lift it on my back, and carry it to his room to use to fuel their little stove. These stoves were usually placed in the middle of a room so as to have heat also from the smokestack. Ratner promised to offer me wine from his vineyard in Rishon when we should reach that goal of ours. It was highly improbable that such old people as they would make it, but the day did come when I was offered a glass of wine by the Ratners in Rishon le Zion. Fate was not as merciful to many others.

The town of Vladikavkaz, later renamed Ordzhonikidze, lies at the foot of the Caucasian ridge, and the river Terek, emerging from the deep gorge of Daryal, rushes through the town. The main street runs on flat land, but in front of it rises the wall-like ridge, here dominated by the snow-covered Kazbek. The Voyenno-Gruzinskaya Doroga (the Military-Georgian Road) crosses the ridge, starting from Vladikavkaz and running to Tiflis, the capital of Georgia, on the other side of the Ridge. This road is famed all over the world for its wild beauty: a gorge runs alongside, and mountains rise above the road and the gorge. Snow covering the road and avalanches of snow falling on it from great heights cause the road to be closed in wintertime; yet that winter the Red Government tried to keep the passage free—but not for the usual mortals. The would-be emigres had congregated here to wait and wait for a miracle, or plan to travel afoot over the snow-covered slopes of the Kazbek when even the road was perilous for travel.

The bulk of the group rented, or more properly, occupied, a space on the main street and worked on farms somewhere close to the town. The leader of the group was a dedicated man in his middle or late twenties; he and Mina Janovsky, a girl of about twenty, with a kind and dreamy face and curly black hair, intended to marry. There was Nahum Karpovsky, a well-organized youth, but a little dry for a *halutz*—a bookkeeper; Raia, an exalted girl, tall, with sparks in her greenish-gray eyes and a crown of hair; Kulkin, a youth of small but athletic stature and a daring spirit; Vinnik, a simple soul, not handsome, with a deep furrow above his nose, a good worker; and many others. They called themselves *Hapoel baderekh,* or “laborers on the way.” In large dormitories they lived, they cooked and ate, and spoke of the land of Israel, and sang Hebrew songs.

One day there arrived a young man who called himself Gibori. Small in stature, with nervous ticks, he told a story of persecutions, wanderings and escapes. He knew perfect Hebrew, having come from the land of Israel. I had already met him briefly in Poltava where he gave a few Hebrew lessons to my uncle Israel. He thought himself followed by the Cheka, and more than once jumped from a train. He wrote poetry and sang a Hebrew song about the wind. After escaping from Vladikavkaz he was heard of here and there, and finally several years later made news by living in a cave in the outskirts of Jerusalem and having a Yemenite bride and followers.

Should I tell in advance the story of each of the members of the group, I would commit an error against the biographical character of the story: I could not know their individual destinies, as they would come to pass in succeeding years and decades. The members of the group *Hapoel Baderekh* and those who did not belong directly to the group were awaiting a chance to cross into Georgia, then outside of the Soviet Union and communist domination; month after month passed. Alexander took a job, since without it he would hardly be in the graces of the local soviet administration, and so did many of the others stranded in Vladikavkaz. He and I would chop firewood to heat our place, and a neighbor, the wife of a communist, would express to our mother her liking for us, young fellows, working so handsomely. We slept all four in one room.

In Vladikavkaz I wrote “Thirty Days and Nights of Diego Pirez on the Bridge of Sant Angelo"—a poem in prose in Russian. Pirez, a *marrano* (a Jew from a family forcibly converted to Christianity), born about 1500, was high in the court of Portugal. He returned to his Jewish faith, impressed by the arrival of David Reubeni, who claimed to be a royal prince of a Jewish kingdom in Arabia, and an ambassador to Christian princes, the pope included, with the mission of finding allies for a war of deliverance against the Arabs and Turks who had penetrated to the outskirts of Vienna. Among the many unusual experiences of Diego—who upon circumcizing himself took the name Solomon Molcho—was a thirty-days-long vigil on a bridge across the Tiber, close to the Vatican; a death sentence from the Inquisition from which Pope Clement VII saved Molcho by having another prisoner burned in his stead; and finally a death by fire, after being condemned by Charles V, the emperor, to whom Molcho had traveled together with Reubeni, trying to convert him to their plans. I wrote—with no notes or books before me—three or four pages for each of the thirty days and nights of the vigil. The first four days I had already written in Kharkov, but all the rest I wrote in Vladikavkaz.

Once I read my poem in prose to Ierahmiel Krupenin, a youth from the northern Caucasus who arrived in town after us. He knew and loved my cousin, Njuta Rosenblatt. Knowing that I was her cousin, he was friendly to me. Once I went with him and Selig Rivkind, an unusual youth from the group, to the snowy slopes of the mountains rising over the city, and sat there and read from the Bible that I carried with me in my breast pocket all these years—the Hebrew Old Testament.

Once, trying to find the way out of Vladikavkaz, I went to the palace on the hill in which was the office of the chief of the military-political police, a kind of political governor of the area. He was a young Jew from Siberia. He knew very little of Jewish problems and was interested in what I would say. And I, like some Solomon Molcho going into the den of the powerful to plead for his people, pleaded the case of young and old who strove to reach their ancestral home in the land of Israel. I even invited this feared chief to come to the place where the majority of the group lived, and see for himself; they intended to go to the land of Israel and live there in a commune. It was a risky thing that I did, but I was full of faith and kindled something in him, too; he was not a scheming man, and he was impressed by me. Two or three times I visited him, and on one of these errands I took with me Nahum Karpovsky, one of the members of the group.

At the same time we looked for another means to proceed on our way. My father told me that some family whom he by chance met was about to depart on the road to Tiflis, having bribed their way, and that they were ready to tell me with whom to do it; so I visited them—there were two couples, rich people trying to leave Russia. They introduced me to the police officer who had arranged the trip for them, and told me that their diamonds would be secreted in the tires of the lired automobile. A few days later, going up the staircase of the palace of the military police to see the police chief, I found the two men sitting on a bench. I approached them, but they told me to go and not to talk to them because they had been arrested, and the same would happen to me should I be seen talking to them. In their plight they thought of my safety; they had been trapped by a provocateur.

In this atmosphere of impatient waiting we lived through the end of 1920; in front of us stood the towering wall of the Kazbek, with the river Terek tearing and foaming through the town. The unusally good pears bought at the market and the food cooked by our mother kept us alive and healthy. One of the girls in the commune, Raia, had an exalted dream and told it to all: she saw me as a High Priest in some magnificent hall, someone to whom was entrusted the deliverance of the Jewish people. Rivkind, years later, told me of the strong impression my father and I made upon him at our visit to the group, when he first saw us.

By January 1921 I had decided to go back to Moscow and to seek there a chance to get out of Russia. This decision was taken in view of the fact that the Soviet regime was about to occupy Georgia.

I made my long travel to Moscow, leaving behind my parents and Alexander. It took several days. In the meantime Daniel’s little daughter, born just before we left Moscow in September 1918, had grown into a charming child; I wrote for her long nursery rhymes about a cat and a goose, and she learned them by heart; by heart she could also narrate long poems read to her by her nurse. I slept with the child in her room, which had been our boys’ room when we went to school. Only two rooms in the apartment were left for my brother and his family, and soon I moved in with Moshe Halevy, my cousin, who was a member of the cast of Habima, the Hebrew theater, then a kind of miracle, performing in Moscow.

Years earlier I had been one of the first two onlookers of Habima’s first production. Now Habima was working on *ha-Dibbuk*; Moshe was competing with the director, for the role of a prophet in a messianic piece: both ended up playing the role.

Daniel told me of a great tragedy: Avsey, a brother of Moshe and our favorite cousin, had been killed by the Cheka during the years we were away. When in 1918 uncle Israel left Niznij Novgorod, he entrusted the business (factory) to his manager Zirlin, who had once worked for my father and loved us children, and to Avsey. This Avsey was very handsome. At the age of seventeen he had come from Mstislav to Moscow to work for my father. He was crazy about opera and introduced Daniel to this operamania. He would work during the day, managing the little factory as a trusted relative, and go to the opera almost nightly. Then he went to study in the conservatory of Petersburg, and there was a long affair with a Russian girl. When on a visit to Moscow he would receive four or five letters from her every day; then, when we were in the Ukraine, he decided to leave her and to marry the daughter of a competitor, a rich family in Nizhnij. Zirlin was arrested. Instead of fleeing, Avsey stayed and tried to release the man, but was arrested too. Daniel in Moscow was alarmed and arranged that a demand be sent to Nizhnij to bring Avsey to the capital, but on the day arranged for his marriage he and Zirlin were shot. Avsey was then about 30 or 31.

I slept on the upholstered chairs put together at Moshe’s room. He told me of Khana Rovina’s love for him; she was then in the sanatorium, and I urged him, out of compassion, to go to see her there.

At Daniel’s house I was once witness to this little scene. A couple of guests were visiting, among them Vladimir Mayakovsky, the famous poet. Genia, Daniel’s wife, always had people of name or distinction among her acquaintances. Daniel was playing with them in some card game. During the game Mayakovsky announced that the “bank” was his, and threw the winning card on the table—face down. Daniel lifted it, put it with the rest of the cards, and shuffled them; after a little while Mayakovsky, who knew that Daniel had seen the card, called to resume the game, and pushed back the pile of cash he had grabbed before, saying it was a joke. Later, when the guests left, I asked Daniel the meaning of the thing: why did he not announce the fraud when he saw it? He answered, “He was my guest at my home.” This Mayakovsky was deified, especially in later years, as *the* Bolshevik poet; in the end he killed himself.

I did not stay long in Moscow. It was a successful visit. During thirty days I passed thirteen medical examinations, and thus obtained my degree. The exams were spaced two or three days apart, but in a few cases there were two on the same day. There was very little to eat; it was the year of hunger, the winter of 1920-21. I studied in Moshe’s room, went afoot to the clinics at the Devitchie Pole, a distance, and there drank a sort of “tea” made of carrots or other vegetables, with a little jam for sugar—there was nothing else. But at the abandoned Okhotnyi Riad in the center of Moscow, where once the most unusual delicacies filled the stores on both sides of the sidewalk, a solitary figure would sell me a quarter pound of butter from under his overcoat, and I would eat it in slices, without bread. But I passed all the exams.

Had I succeeded to leave by way of the Caucasus, I would not have become a doctor. During the same month I managed to achieve something else, which had actually been the purpose of my travel: to obtain a permit for my parents to leave Russia for the land of Israel. This was among the first such permits given. I found some protection. There was a distant relative, of the same name, working in the political police; I saw him at his house. The incident that made us leave Moscow in September 1918, when the Cheka looked for my father because of his Zionist activities, had apparently been lost in the files. Several weeks later Chaim Bialik, who too came to Moscow to seek a permit obtained it as well. One more thing I achieved: I went to the University (Kommercheski Institut) in the technical department where Alexander had studied before his arrest, and reinstated him, obtaining permission for him to renew his studies and matriculate again. With these achievements I traveled again to the Caucasus, a journey of some days; I hardly remember this passage.

My father was daily awaiting me, often at the window or the glass-paned door of the humble place where we lived on the second floor, a ladder serving as the outside stairs. Finally I came. I did not boast of my achieved degree, so that months later my parents were surprised to hear from me that it was in my possession. Actually I did not take out the degree until close to my own departure from Russia—otherwise I could have been drafted as a military doctor. But my father I found with a bandaged head. The day before my arrival an automobile had knocked him down on the street; he was wounded in his temple. I went with him to the clinic of the town hospital, and when the dressing was taken off to be changed I felt a faint spell and had to sit down.

During my absence from the Caucasus the family of Janovsky, father, daughter and son, and Yania (Jacob) Zipelson, the daughter’s husband-to-be, went to the mountains with guides who promised to take them over the Caucasus to Tiflis in Georgia. Even on the Military-Georgian road travel in winter was hazardous, but to go over the snowy slopes of the Kazbek was foolhardy. Yet the greatest danger was in the treacherous Osetin guides. It was agreed between Zipelson and Janovsky and their friends that should they succeed in crossing into Georgia they would send a note back with their guides. After several days a note did come, written by the hand of Yania, but it was hardly reassuring: it was obviously written under coercion: its contents were not as agreed beforehand; thus they sought to warn their friends, and a certainty of the disaster that befell them at the hand of their guides gripped the hearts of those who waited behind. Had I then been in the Caucasus, I probably would have opposed their going, an old man and a young boy being in the group.

Yet soon after I returned the other youths desired to follow Janovsky’s example: one was Eliezer Finkel, the other by the name of Melodist, a tall and friendly youth. I remember the evening in the hall, the group gathered around the stove, these two, and a bearded Menshevik by the name of Mintz, leaving the Soviet Union for political reasons. Mr. Lichtenstein found them guides who would take them that night into the mountains. Possibly I tried to dissuade them, but it was too late to change their hearts. After parting with us they left, and went into the night. A year later when the bulk of *Hapoel Baderekh* reached Palestine in a round about way, through Europe, they found a heartbreaking letter from a sister of Finkel—please, oh please write us a single word that you are alive. But this letter awaited Finkel, and he was no longer alive; Melodist, I believe, was the only son of his mother, and how much must she have loved this fine youth.

Despite my father’s wound we decided to start on our trek back from the Caucasus. His bandage, we trusted, we would be able to change at some stations where there were ambulance rooms. We found such an occasion on a train to which a salon car was attached—actually the car that once belonged to the Tzar’s Prime Minister Stolypin (assassinated in Kiev in 1911). Under the conditions of the time this was very fortunate. But our itinerary was not clear to me: the permit for my parents to go abroad had only a thirty-day force, and though after my return from Moscow I remained only a few counted days in the Caucasus, it became obvious that should my parents travel to Germany via Moscow, the permit would expire before they would be able to cross the border. Thus when the train remained standing for an hour or so at a station from which a side track was running toward the Black Sea port of Novorossijsk, I went through a spell of indecision. Having wandered with my parents for two and a half years, I was afraid to send them off on their own to Constantinople: they would have to find their way alone to the land of Israel, without knowledge of Turkish, French or English. And so I decided to take the risk of going via Moscow and applying for an extension of the permit, in the hope that this time, too, nothing would be uncovered that would trap my parents in Russia. But the indecision repeated itself at another station from where, again, a railway line ran to the same Novorossijsk. Many years later I traced to these events the indecision I would often experience before going on travels.

Thus we reached Rostov; we lived in the railway car for several days. The car was out somewhere on the very numerous tracks of the Rostov terminal. For over three days we waited for a train for Moscow. I went to town where by chance I met Yuza, my cousin, the son of my uncle Feivel. In 1919 they had succeeded to run away from Kharkov to Rostov, the route I tried then so unsuccessfully to go with my parents. On the way they experienced typhus—it was then a dreadful journey. Soon Feivel found my parents in the railway salon car—I was again away—and came to see them, after some seventeen months. He sat there in the car, sad, and asked the forgiveness of my parents for the way they had been treated in Kharkov, that night when, after seeking shelter from the rain, we slept on the floor of their mansion.

After three days of waiting I learned that a train set up at the platform was to leave for Moscow in a few hours, and I again arranged a salon car for my parents and berths for Alexander and myself. I transferred my father and a part of our belongings, and went back to transfer my mother, but I could not find the car on the sidings. There are several hundred sidings in Rostov, and all were blocked by the rolling stock, almost all of it boxcars, in the near-paralyzed traffic of Russia. I was frightened: the car with my mother in it had been moved away. I looked around and searched, and could not find it. I asked somebody and was told that it must have rolled away to Bataysk, across the river Don. After years of travel, during which I carried my parents through all perils, I had lost my mother. In the condition of Russia then, this would mean a parting forever. She would be helpless, and how could we proceed to Moscow without her? My father and Alexander were already in the train awaiting departure. I ran toward Bataysk. There are several stations, I read later, seven kilometers distant from Rostov. But could it be seven kilometers that I ran? I came to a railroad bridge over the river Don—I believe it was the longest bridge in Russia. An armed guard stood at the entrance and would not let me in, but there was another bridge close by. I climbed over barbed wire, in view of the guard, and ran over this bridge, waving to the soldiers that guarded it some papers I had in my hand, as if a permit, and I reached the other side at Bataysk. There stood a lonely train, very long, packed with refugees, mostly orientals, who sat and also loitered in front of the cars of the train. I ran and cried: “Mama, mama!” I ran to the end of the very numerous boxcars of which the train was composed and there was not the car I looked for, nor my mother. Time was running out; in the meantime my father’s train would leave without my mother and myself. I ran back to Rostov in the hope that I would find her there. This time I headed for the railway bridge; on this side, too, the sentinel would not permit me to enter it, but I waved my papers, and shouted at him: “Shoot!” and ran onto the bridge. With every step I had to touch the crossbeam under the rails: in between was the blue of the river beneath. A single false step and I would be flying to the depth. The kilometer-long bridge and a thousand steps in running, and not once did I slip: perhaps the fact that I was under great stress kept me from a false step, as if I were on “automatic pilot.” On the other side of the bridge the guard that had not let me in let me out without shooting me, and soon I was again on the Rostov terminal sidings. I cried again “Mama!"—and suddenly saw her at the door of the car that had apparently been only slightly transferred to another track. With the rest of the strength in me I took my mother and the belongings still with her, which I loaded on my back, and ran to the train at the station. The train was still there. I lay myself on the upper berth, my shirt as wet as if taken from a pail of water. There I remained, unable to stand up.

The train moved. On the lower berth was a famous socialist, a military hero; years later, if I remember right, he was put to death in one of the purges. The travel was not short. It was around the time of Passover. Finally we reached Moscow.

In Moscow my parents came to know their first grandchild—Lenochka. The few weeks in Moscow until the permit was renewed (and this happened without a hitch), my parents lived in a rented room in the building complex where Daniel lived, and where we had lived for many years.

Came the day, and all three of us were at a station seeing our parents off in a very comfortable Pullman car, almost empty; direction: Riga, the capital of the newly-independent republic of Latvia. After the train left we three sat on a bench. It had taken me from September 1918 to late spring or early summer 1921 to achieve this.

In August of the same year it was planned for me to meet my parents, who would take the train in Riga and travel over Latvia to Germany: I would join them in Kovno (Kaunas), Lithuania, and accompany them to the German frontier in Virbalis or Eydtkuhnen. This also came to be and I spent a few hours with my parents whom I had not seen since the spring, when my brothers and I brought them to the railway station in Moscow and saw them off to Riga. My mother looked healthier and happier than I had seen her in many years. The stamp of deprivation from the years of wanderings in the Ukraine and the Caucasus during 1918-1921, amidst civil war, as refugees and with no household, were now all but erased in the healthy atmosphere of the seaside resort where they had spent the summer. My father, however, had had some fearful moments or worried days when the Latvian authorities questioned their right to enjoy a temporary residence in that republic; possibly he was even concerned that they might be returned to Russia, probably an exaggerated fear. But their friends in Riga—an engineer whom we met in Kharkov, in the Ukraine—helped them to solve the bureaucratic difficulty. Now on the train, leaving Latvia, both of my parents seemed relieved and eager for a new leaf in life having Russia behind and life in the land of Israel before them. The stations of Virbalis, the old Russian frontier town, and of Eydtkuhnen, the German town on the other side of the state frontier, were familiar to me from several crossings, when at the age of 12 and then at the age of 14 our parents took us to the Baltic sea resort of Krantz near Koenigsberg. On one of these neighboring stations I parted with my parents who continued to Berlin. Waiting for a train to take me back to Kovno I looked over the small paperbound books on the rack and bought myself a copy of a book—I do not remember whether in German or in Russian—on the Theory of Relativity. I spent two months in Kovno and obtained documents to enable my two brothers and their families to leave Russia, should they wish to do so.

Now I had to think how to make my way to the land of Israel. I made several efforts. Returning to Moscow, I registered as of Lithuanian origin on the ground that my mother was born in Grodno. Eschelons with repatriates were then leaving Moscow and going through various steps, and I was registered with one eschelon. At the Lithuanian embassy in Moscow I had to receive a permit. I was asked whom I knew in Grodno, and I named the familiar Jewish names, and so was declared acceptable by the Lithuanians. Daniel was with me at that legation and asked advice whether he too should leave Russia; I did not influence him to do so, and for that in later years I blamed myself. But his wife was too much of a Muscovite, and strong-willed, too.

Alexander renewed his studies and did not consider leaving. He was in love with the sister of Genia, and for that reason he also had not left with us that September, three years earlier; but she was admired by a few others, one of whom she married, and died young several years later from measles, complicated by pneumonia.

Thus I was to part with my brothers at the age of 26, they being 27 and 29. They never saw our parents again. With Alexander especially we had been very close. He did not envy me in anything, and was proud of me; and since our early childhood there was an unusually fine relation between us two. Daniel was older, more precocious, and only when all of us were students in the universities did the relation become comrade-like; but his marriage again made a difference.

One day somebody appointed to my eschelon told me that that very day the eschelon would be leaving. I hurried home, to Daniel, and left for the Briensk railway station. I do not remember whether Alexander came to the station to see me off—I left in a hurry, when he was not home. It seems to me that he found out still in time and came. The eschelon was put in many boxcars and the train slowly left. The Russian frontier was in the town Sebezh. Crossing into Latvia the “refugees” were interrogated by a Lithuanian commission visiting the train. I saw a group of Jews who were denied entrance, and they stood immobile; they had come from Siberia or some other distant place. I went to them and led them back to the members of the commission that they should reconsider the decision. At this point I was also regarded as one to whom entrance had been denied, and I was turned back, too. Then I hid myself among the sacks and valises in a boxcar. Immediately upon my arrival in Latvia, all emigrants to Lithuania were called out to attend an evening meeting where communism was denounced and Jews were attacked (verbally); when the inmates of the car where I was hid returned, I heard the repeated word “zhid” (Jew). In the morning, possibly it was still Sebezh, I left the boxcar guarded by the military as if for some needs, and from the bushes headed over a large field into the town.

I succeeded to make my way to Riga, capital of Latvia, and from there to Tallin, capital of Estonia. Then a ferry took me to Stockholm. After about six days in Stockholm, I started on the last leg of my journey—toward Berlin.

# My Years in Berlin

A train carried me from Stockholm over Göttesborg and by ferry to Germany, and in the early evening I was at the hotel on Kurfürstendam Street where my parents were staying.

It was a balmy evening; Kurfürstendam was brightly lit and my spirits were high. Now I was reunited with my parents after being separated from them since late spring. I was told that two messages were awaiting me—one a telegram from Daniel that he had arrived in Kovno to meet me: he had obtained a *kommandirovka* from the Kommissariat for External Trade in which he worked to go to Riga for a few days; and from there he made a quick trip to Kovno, only to find that I had already left. The other message was from the Jewish community in Vladikavkaz, in the form of a mandate to attend the Zionist Congress in Karlsbad, the first after the World War. I wished to be simultaneously in two places, and since the Congress had already convened, I telegraphed to my brother to wait for me, and having picked up the “mandate” at the Palästina Bureau, I headed by train towards Carlsbad. In the train I was approached by a friendly gentleman, the chief of the Palaestina Bureau in Berlin. He had the sign of the Congress in his lapel, and so we came to converse. Before parting I inquired where in Berlin I could have kosher meals and he gave me two addresses. There was some fatefulness in this meeting. An old Russian saying has it that “The one who is fated as your consort you cannot elude, not even on horseback.”

In Carlsbad I spent only one or two days. I hardly participated in the proceedings. I had to choose my place according to my political sympathies, and was not clear to me where I should take my seat. I was one with the left, since I was a socialist in my sympathies; I was one with the Mitzrahi, since I had a strong religious inclination; I was one with the Revisionists, the group of Vladimir Jabotinsky, since I was for the Legion and had wished to participate in it in the years that preceded, and felt not much differently now; finally I felt sympathy with the General Zionists, because I was against fractionalism and saw in this group a striving for union. Yet the question was merely academic; I hardly voted on any issue. But I made the acquaintance of Professor Heinrich Loewe, who spoke Hebrew with a mixture of German and Sephardic accents, and had a friendly smile. I needed Loewe’s help because I already had a plan. We agreed to meet in Berlin again.

I went from Carlsbad to Kovno, where I met Daniel. He was already eager to travel back to Moscow. I told him of the papers I had received in Lithuania which were to enable him with his family and also Alexander to leave Russia. When my train was taking me back to Berlin, I saw Daniel, one cheek wrapped in a kerchief because of a toothache. I have not seen him since then, nor my other brother Alexander.[1](http://www.varchive.org/dy/berlin.htm#1)

Again I did not try to influence Daniel to leave Russia, since I knew the stand of his wife Genia, who was enamored of all things Russian, and would not leave Moscow; and Alexander had just resumed his studies.

It is a great pity that Daniel did not come out of Russia. Possibly also lack of funds abroad kept Daniel from undertaking a change of domicile: he had several great transfers to Western Europe—London, also Switzerland—but these needed first to be be cashed. Life in the years to come would have been very different for my parents, for myself, and especially for Daniel, if he had decided to emigrate.

In Berlin my parents stayed at the same place as Itzhak Goldberg and from him they received the sums that in 1917 they had transferred abroad, some five or six thousand pounds sterling; besides they had the sums, not fully 2,000 pounds, that my father had bought in a bank in Kharkov. These were not large amounts; the greater part of my father’s property was lost, either nationalized by the communist state (his houses, factory, business), or abandoned (his apartment with all in it), or not immediately obtainable (several large transfers abroad), and, as the following years would show, also lost and not redeemed.

Feeling gratitude for having come out of darkness into light, and nurtured by his never ceasing desire to do something for the good of the world or of his nation, he talked to me of his intention to start something of importance. The nations of the world were licking their wounds after the World War; my father thought that a new foundation for peace propaganda would be the proper way for him to invest part of what he had saved for himself—and the means should be spent on calculating and making known how many schools, hospitals, homes for the aged and infirm, scientific laboratories and other institutions for the benefit of all races could be built by the sums spent on war, the human sacrifice being irredeemable. I disagreed with this plan, believing that the roots of wars and animosity among the nations are hardly extricable by these means—that the knowledge of what could be bought by the resources spent on armaments and on war could hardly suffice to keep mankind from another war.

I offered my father another idea, and he immediately agreed with me. My idea was for a collective publication which would bring scientists and scholars of the Jewish faith together to prepare the intellectual foundation for the future Hebrew University in Jerusalem, to develop the Hebrew language in various scientific fields, and at the same time to advance science.

The planned publication would demonstrate the role played in the scientific world by Jews, who were then known only as citizens of their adopted countries—thus Einstein, or Paul Ehrlich, or von Wassermann, were considered Germans, Hadamard French, and Levi Civita Italian. The volumes were to be published in the name of the National Library and the University of Jerusalem. At the time, the National Library existed, but of the University there was only a piece of land on Mount Scopus, with a foundation stone on it from before World War I and nothing else. The National Library, housed in a two-story unpretentious stone building in Jerusalem, had been founded decades earlier by a fanatical lover of books, Dr. Joseph Chasanowich who, residing and practicing medicine somewhere in the pale of Tzarist Russia, for many years collected books for a modest beginning of a National Library in the far-away Turkish province of Palestine. He died destitute in 1919 during the revolutionary war in the Ukraine. A year later the library which he founded in distant Jerusalem and which carried his name was recognized and renamed the “National Library,” and Dr. Hugo Bergmann became its director; he was known as a writer in philosophy who in the second decade of this century came from Prague, from the circle of Max Brod. He is no longer alive.

The idea of a University goes back to Hermann Schapira, professor of mathematics at Heidelberg, a position he achieved starting as a poor Jewish youth, self-educated and, like the others here named, dedicated to the idea of the Jewish renaissance. He offered his idea at the First Zionist Congress in 1897. I do not think that he ever visited the land of Israel—travels in those days were not what they are today. The idea of the University lay dormant for the next quarter of a century. It was the purpose of the *Scripta* to become the real founding stone of the University; today the Hebrew University in Jerusalem is one of the most prominent places of higher learning in the world.

I approached Prof. Heinrich Loewe, whom I had met, as told, at Carlsbad; he realized the scope of the idea and guided me (he prided himself on having guided, years earlier, Chaim Weizmann, then a student in Berlin, in Zionist education); my father, after giving me the funds, left with my mother for the land of Israel, now in British hands after having been seized from the Turks to become a mandate territory, the mandate of the league of Nations being to create there a “Jewish National Home.” Loewe and I came into written contact with hundreds of scientists and scholars. Weizmann, then president of the Zionist organization, who came from Manchester for a visit to Berlin, agreed with our plan and gave us his blessing. With all the energy stored during the years of wandering I immersed myself in the materialization of the plan. I had no previous experience with the publication of a scientific journal. One of the first tasks was to find a printing plant that could set type in Hebrew as well as in European languages, but also had types for mathematical articles, and oriental scripts like cuneiform, Arabic, or Ethiopic. After surveying a long list of printers, we selected Kreysing in Leipzig.

Each contribution was to be published both in the original language of the author and in a Hebrew translation. Soon the response showed that two fields were best represented, “Orientalia and Judaica” and “Mathematica and Physica.” Einstein, then in his forty-third year, one year after being accorded the Nobel prize, agreed to act as editor for the latter series. Soon we had contributions from a galaxy of illustrious names in mathematics, physics and engineering, like Harald Bohr, L. S. Ornstein, J. Hadamard, and others.

The answers from the scholars were by far not all in the affirmative: some French Jews refused to participate with German Jews in one venture—the wounds of the World War were not yet healed. Some German Jews wished to be known only as Germans *des mosaischen Glaubens* ("of Mosaic faith” ), an attitude that did not save them years later from the onslaught of the Nazis. Freud, when requested to participate, answered in longhand, but refrained from contributing a paper: his readers would not be able to find his articles if printed outside his own journals. The collection of letters that thus came my way had historical-cultural value. But as I found on a recent visit to Israel, not much of this collection is still preserved.

The work of translating the contributions into Hebrew required the combined effort of quite a few Hebraists versed in the subjects, especially mathematics, physics and engineering, while translations in Judaica and Oriental Studies did not require pioneering work. I took the task very seriously. For instance, the article by Edmund Landau, the eminent Goettingen mathematician, was given for translation to three different scholars: Landau’s own pupil Amira, a graduate of the Tel Aviv gymnasium, working for his doctorate (in years to come he himself was a professor of mathematics at the Hebrew University), Dr. Jacob Grommer, assistant to Professor Einstein, and Dr. H. A. Wolfson, earlier a professor at Kharkov University and at the time on a temporary sojourn in Kovno (Kaunas), Lithuania. I engaged Simon Rawidovicz, a young Hebrew writer, to work as the editor of the Hebrew translations, and also to see to it that there should be a certain uniformity in the use of scientific terms by various translators.

To translate the monographs by Levi Civita and Gino Loria from Italian into Hebrew it was necessary to find an Italian Hebraist knowledgeable in physics and engineering, and I was fortunate to find such a person in Dr. Nathan Sholem. Today, with many institutions of higher learning and many scientific publications, Israel has no problems of this nature—but it was a time when the field was virgin.

The secretarial work was all done by Rose Bombach, a dedicated worker, whom a cruel illness later snatched from normal life. Elisheva Kramer, a violin student under Adolf Busch, volunteered to help me in organizing the work. I had other help too, but Elisheva helped me not as an employee—it was a work of love. Elisheva had been a pupil of Hess, who wished to promote her, when she left to study with Adolf Busch, who gave her private lessons for only nominal pay because of her talent.

Every manuscript went through the mail more than a score of times, once after every one of the steps: each paper was typed (most were sent in handwritten), then corrected by the author, seen by the editor, sent to the translator, to the printer, to the editor of translation, and this was repeated for the series of galleys, on the same round.

I visited Einstein several times, and once or twice sent Elisheva Kramer to him. He admitted to me that he did not understand many of the articles, which were in various fields of physics or mathematics, but then he relied on the reputation of the authors. He lived on the upper floor of an apartment building in a quiet residential section of Berlin. Still unconvinced that the Jewish nation needed to be preserved and not assimilated, he once asked me: “Are not all races equally ancient?” I called him to the window, next to which he had a small telescope, a gift from somebody, and asked him to look down on the street, and told him: “Do you see those cobblestones of which the road is made? They are ancient, but they are not collected and preserved in a museum.”

In February 1922 I traveled by boat and train from Europe to the land of Israel, to which I felt a strong attachment throughout all the years following my departure in the spring of 1914, after I had spent the winter there upon leaving Montpellier University. Now, in February 1922 I returned and spent the next five months there, directing the progress of “Scripta” from afar, but it gradually came to a standstill. Loewe admonished me in letters to come and continue the work we had started together. He also came to Israel, and we traveled with David Yellin, leader of the Jewish community in Jerusalem, to Mount Scopus; I photographed them at the foundation stone of the future university.

In Jerusalem I found the girl I had loved, Esther Bashist. She assured me that she loved me, but it was hardly sincere, and I asked God what was the purpose of these nine years of love at a distance to be ended at the first meeting. So I returned in July 1922 to Berlin and became closer to Elisheva. I plunged myself again into the task. The editorial office, which before I had in my furnished room, small as it was, on Schaperstrasse, I now transferred to 13 Xantenerstrasse, where I rented two larger rooms with balconies.[2](http://www.varchive.org/dy/berlin.htm#2)

When on the sixth of January Dr. Weizmann came to Berlin we met again and I acquainted him with the progress of the work; he was impressed. For years the idea of a Hebrew University had occupied his mind, but nothing was taking place. Now he spoke to me in Hebrew: *Thi av l’universita*—“Be the father of the university.” I was not yet twenty-eight. He wished that I should take upon myself to bring the university into existence, and thus to materialize the plan not progressed since 1897 when H. Schapira came with the idea to the First Zionist Congress. I did not promise, and Weizmann thought, as it appeared later, that I wished to think it over.

Already since my return from the visit to the land of Israel, in July 1922, I went rarely to the Moabit section of Berlin where Loewe lived, and soon took the entire work of editing and publishing upon myself. Possibly he was a little hurt, but generally he was a good-hearted man, with smiling eyes on his broad face, framed between a large bald top covered with a few tufts of hair overlayed from one side, and a glorious greying beard, which he liked to stroke; he and his wife were in love after many years of marriage, but children they had not.

I met personally only a few on the large list of those who agreed to collaborate. One of them was Professor A. von Wassermann, the discoverer of a diagnostic test for syphilis, in his office at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Dahlem near Berlin; on the same visit I also saw Professor Neuberg, who dominated the field of biological chemistry. Prof. A. Fodor at the University of Halle felt and complained that Neuberg had closed to him the doors for scientific advance and publications; he was soon in contact with Weizmann, later to become the first professor in the University of Jerusalem. I also visited Professor Ernst Cassirer, the philosopher, in his mansion in Hamburg.

In the early spring of 1923 Elisheva and I took out our marriage license (civil marriage, preceding religious rites) in Hamburg, where her father, George Tuvia Kramer, had a Hebrew bookstore and also published books on rabbinical subjects, among them the codifice Shulhan Aruh of the early sixteenth century by Joseph Caro of Safed. Elisheva had lost her mother at the age of 19; it was then that she left Hamburg to study in Berlin.

On April 15 we were married in Berlin by the well-known Rabbi Munk in the courtyard of his synagogue; the dinner thereafter we had, at the insistence of my landlady, only recently widowed, in her apartment. Professor Loewe represented my parents by reading a telegram sent to his address: “We bless you with Psalm 128.”

The next afternoon we spent some time in the Berlin Univesity Library, studying the ways scientific institutions published their proceedings. A visit to the library became an observance on many of our anniversaries. I regard my meeting Elisheva as the greatest luck I had in my life. The nobleness of her character, her femininity, her honesty, her self-denials—all is before me through now thirty-six years as an unending blessing. She would go afoot across a large part of Berlin to visit a girl from Poland suffering from a brain tumor whom she happened to meet; she would walk, and not ride, because it would be Shabbat. On some visits she would play the violin for the girl.

I would travel to Leipzig often, possibly once a week for some period of time—and sometimes Elisheva would go with me. I had only good experience with the printers. If Elisheva would not accompany me, leaving for the train I would whistle one of our melodies, and even from the other end of Oranienburg Platz, a block or two away, we would exchange the duet in the morning hours of this quiet residential quarter.

With collaborators of *Scripta,* I had only once an unpleasant experience. Professor Radcliff Solomon of London, when invited to participate, sent in a paper on “What Became of the Philistines?” The paper was forwarded by me to the printer, and the galleys arrived together with the plate prints of the lithographs for the illustrations; I read the galleys one morning still in bed and was aghast. Radcliff Solomon reproduced scenes from the bas-reliefs of Ramses III in Medinet-Habu that depict the Pereset, recognized in the historical literature as the Biblical Philistines. Now Semites are supposed to be dolichocephales, or of long skulls; Pereset on the bas-reliefs were brachicephales, or round-headed. Three thousand years later among the Jewish legionnaires fighting under the British general Allenby, many were round-headed, as seen on photographs which, I believe, Radcliff Solomon made himself. He came to the conclusion that the Philistines became absorbed into the Jewish People. The argument seemed very flimsy, and, to add to it, the way I felt then and saw the purpose of the *Scripta,* it would have been almost sacrilegious to spread such an idea which would obtain, by publication in *Scripta,* a sanction of scholarship. I wrote to Solomon an apologetic letter and offered, also ordered, the lithographs to be sent to the author for his use wherever he might succeed. (Actually, two years later, at the opening of the Hebrew University, I received a reprint of the article with a few triumphant words of the author who came to participate in the opening—by then we lived in Jerusalem.)

When all this took place, I could not have anticipated that decades later I would write a volume on *Peoples of the Sea,* as a part of my reconstruction of ancient history, in which the Pereset would largely figure; and that I would be able to show that Pereset were Persians and not Philistines, and that the time was not before the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, but long after the destruction of the Judean monarchy. The better that I was so resolute then.

A work in the volume on “Orientalia,” by E. Mahler of Vienna, dealt with the chronology of the el-Amarna Period; of it, too, I could not have anticipated that I would use it five decades later for certain source arguments in dealing with the cuneiform letters found in el-Amarna, in the frame of the same work on *Ages in Chaos.*

Scientific contributions that I received from scientists in the field of biological sciences—and there were a few great names—had not a true scientific value; a paper such as was sent by von Wassermann I did not find to be of an adequate level: it was a popularization instead of a scientific contribution. Thus the only monograph I selected for print was by Professor D. Katz from Rostock who claimed to discern special nerve endings that could register vibration.

I also published in Hebrew, separately from the *Scripta,* a popularizing work by Dr. Jacob Greenberg, who worked as one of our translators, on “Atom and Ether” ; and I made a new edition of the two Hebrew volumes, *Sfotenu,* published by my father in Russia, with scores of philological essays by Dr. Joseph Klausner, later one of the leading Hebraists of the Hebrew University.

At that time Berlin was becoming a cultural center for Hebrew and Judaica, and several publishing enterprises were initiated; thus Nahum Goldman began a multivolume *Jewish Encyclopaedia.* Chaim Nahman Bialik, the great Hebrew poet in his earlier years, now more absorbed by the commercial publication of Hebrew books, having seen the plan of *Scripta* and its fulfillment, said to me in his affected way: “This is the greatest collective work [for Judaism] since the conclusion of the Talmud.”

Except for two short vacations to the Harz and to the Sächsische Schweiz (near Dresden) all my time was taken by work. At the beginning of my stay in Berlin I also participated in several post-medical courses given to physicians, a number of them from various foreign countries, at Charite Clinic of the University of Berlin, and took courses in serology at the Kaiser Wilhelm Academy. I also bought myself a Zeiss microscope. There was nothing memorable in these courses; the time was before antibiotics, just before insulin; few hormones and hardly any vitamins were used in medicine. My mother wrote me letters advising me to specialize in some branch of medicine that was needed in Israel, but I was more and more absorbed by *Scripta.*

When in 1924 the volume with twelve papers on mathematics and physics by prominent scientists was published, together with the other volume on Orientalia and Judaica, the leading British journal *Nature* (June 28, 1924) observed that if from a scattered population of thirteen million Jewish people sprang talents like Edmund Landau, Jacques Hadamard, Albert Einstein, Levy Civita, Gino Loria, Theodor von Karman, Harald Bohr, and others, then clearly the Jewish nation is unusually rich in creative spirit and ability. The published volumes served the National Library in Jerusalem (Later University Library of Jerusalem) for exchange with many scientific institutions for their publications.

The Hebrew University was begun in 1924 and inaugurated in 1925: at the time of the inauguration the two volumes of the *Scripta* were placed in front of Lord Balfour, who came to the inauguration ceremony, and the wind coming from over the valley in which lies the Dead Sea played in the pages of these books, on which my father had spent a large part of his fortune, and to which I had dedicated several years of passionate work.

**References**

1. Alexander died in August 1973. Shortly before his death I received a letter from him, the first letter since the beginning of World War II, in which he expressed his feelings towards me. He followed the course of my career through several articles about my work that had been published in the Russian press.
2. The

order and organization in the small room was unbelievably meticulous—E.V.

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| SCRIPTA UNIVERSITATIS ATQUE BIBLIOTHECAE HIEROSOLYMITANARUM **A. MATHEMATICA ET PHYSICA**  (The papers of this Series were also published in Hebrew)   1. E. Landau, Göttingen: *Über Diophantische Approximationen.* 2. H. Bohr, Copenhagen: *Über einen Satz von Edmund Landau.* 3. Loria, Genoa: *Osservazioni Relative alla Rappresentazione Analitica dei Sistemi Elementari di Coniche o Quadriche.* 4. J. Hadamard, Paris: *La Notion de Differentielle dans l’Enseignement.* 5. A. Loewy, Freiburg: *Über Algebraisch Auflösbare Gleichungen.* 6. A. Fraenkel, Marburg: *Die Axiome der Mengenlehre.* 7. A. Einstein and J. Grommer, Berlin: *Beweis der Nichtexistenz eines überall regulären zentrisch symmetrischen Feldes nach der Feldtheorie von Th. Kaluza.* 8. L. S. Ornstein, Utrecht: *Eine neue Methode zur Intensitätsmessung im Spectrum.* 9. T. Levi-Cività, Rome: *Sulla Velocità di Transporto nel Moto Ondoso Permanente.* 10. Th. V. Karman, Aachen: *Usher die Grundlagen der Balkentheorie.* 11. S. Brodetzky, Leeds: *Fluid Motion past Circular Barriers.* 12. I. Popper-Lynkeus, Vienna: *Grundsschema eines Schraubenfliegers.* |

**Home Ancestral**

As soon as the two volumes of the *Scripta* arrived from the printer in the summer of 1923, Elisheva and I went on our way to Israel with two copies (still without title pages) in our hands. We traveled first to Kissingen, where we met Elisheva’s uncle Solomo, then continued to Wurzburg, where we came late in the evening, and, waiting for the train to Carlsbad, wandered through this charming medieval town, even more charming because of the night, our steps in the empty street being the only sound except for the clocks on towers that sounded the time.

We arrived in Carlsbad, where the Zionist Congress was convened. On the sidewalk near the Congress hall, Professor Chaim Weizmann stopped me and said that he still waited for an answer to his proposal to me to head the work of establishing the University in Jerusalem. We gave the members of the Congress reprints of the works published in the *Scripta,* and not remaining too long there, traveled toward Trieste.

I believe that the first of our many visits to Venice took place then. This city later again and again attracted us. On the boat to Egypt was Elieser Kaplan, whom I knew well from my student years in Moscow, and I asked his advice about the form in which I should mention Prof. Loewe’s role in publishing the *Scripta.* Loewe gave me much support and guidance in the beginning, but for more than a year since my return from Israel he was practically out of the picture. This indecision I called the “Loewe problem.” In the end I mentioned him following my name. If I think back, I wonder why the name of my father, who gave the funds, is not mentioned at all on the front page of the books, which is printed in Latin, but appears only on the Hebrew side of the volumes; the volume on Mathematics and Physics also has his Preface. But in the libraries of the world these volumes are not mentioned on the catalogue cards in any relation to my father. Apparently the “Loewe problem” had something to do with my father, whose name I omitted on the Latin front page as if from modesty, as I understood then.

The work on the *Scripta* was not continued. Had I been a practical and honor-seeking man, I would have accepted Weizmann’s offer, put myself to work to organize the University, traveled to America to find funds, and continued the *Scripta.* My father’s funds were exhausted, and actually he had so little to begin with that nobody in his place would have thought to underwrite such a costly enterprise.

From Egypt we traveled by train, and on the sand near the primitive railway station in Tel Aviv we were met by my parents: there they saw Elisheva for the first time. With one arm I held her; in the other arm I had the fruit of our great effort—the two volumes of the *Scripta.*

My parents immediately liked Elisheva, and my mother, speaking fluent German, could converse well with her. But already on the very first day of our arrival, October 30th, 1923, I had to take over a mission: my father had come into agreement with the Anglo-Palestine Bank (later the Jewish National Bank) on the division of Ruhama. During the World War Ruhama played an important strategical role. In the British parliament and press the role of Ruhama was mentioned often, when for long months the army of General Allenby held the front there and had water from the only artesian well in the region. When the Turks under Djemal Pasha retreated before general Allenby’s army, they planted a bomb in Ruhama’s well, the only artesian well in the south of Israel. As soon as they departed after igniting the fuse, two Hebrew pioneers climbed all the way down into the well and at the last moment severed the fuse from the mine.

For many months the army of Allenby remained stationed in the Negeb, the well of Ruhama being its main water supply. Then the British Army and the Jewish-American Legion conquered Palestine. But the farm fell on difficult times: the manager, Mr. Hirschfeld, died of typhus, and the place became deserted. In some way the bank supported the place a little, and though not a single tree or plant was added the Bank presented a bill for 29,000 pounds sterling to my father for the loan. The entire farm with its plantations and buildings was worth much less. My father could refuse to acknowledge the debt because the Bank had not been asked by the owners to make this loan, and the amount of the loan was but the result of an arbitrary conversion of Turkish pounds into British pounds sterling. My father informed the Bank that he had the interests of the Bank—which he had helped to create as a member of the Second Zionist Congress in Basel—as much on his mind as the interests of the cooperative, and offered to divide the land with them. By this he hoped also to preserve this, the only settlement in the Negeb, because the members of the cooperative had no means, or were not reachable, since the October Revolution in Russia. The Bank agreed, and we had to accept the division as mapped by the Bank—certainly prepared to its advantage. And the day after my arrival I had on me this task.

Soon I found out that my father was having a very hard time also with the new group of Sheerith Israel. My father had lost as much as 95 percent of his property; his own transfers of money to Europe were not honored by the recipients, but the money of the second group of Sheerith Israel we saved to the last ruble, even though the rubles were worthless “Kerenski” money. Yet these sacrifices were not appreciated, and those who thought that they had some rights demanded money, as if we were in the money transfer business. Actually, none of the original members of the new group arrived in Israel. What we did was to purchase land in Palestine, or, as it was usual then to say, to “redeem” the land. Actually my father had already bought land for that purpose, but considering the changed conditions, and partly being influenced by brokers, he bought land adjacent to the developed portion of Tel Aviv, that was soon to become its central part.

My father appointed a lawyer, Hershman, mentioned earlier, a son-in-law of a member of Ruhama, to help him, and to advertise in papers in Poland that anybody who participated should write to him. Soon, on being warned that this lawyer had a bad reputation, my father severed connection with him. Hershman used the answers he received to inform the writers that he could obtain money for them, whereas the plan was for a new settlement.

To make the long story short, for the next seven years my father was exploited by lawyers who wished to be near the pot, but who could not solve the problem—especially the legal problem of whether the old group and the new were the same or two different companies. I never hesitated to take on this burden and, instead of starting my medical practice, became involved in the protracted consultations.

I remember how once in the morning I stood on Herzl Street and waited to meet Hershman—I did not wish to see him, yet I needed to talk to him, the man in whose night shirt I had slept five years earlier when the secret police found out about my father’s and mine Zionist activities. As for the money that was due to us from various sources, I made hardly any effort to recover it.

Elisheva took in her stride this our waste of time; she organized a quartet, and in the spring of 1924 they traveled through the Emek Israel and Galilee, and played, and I accompanied them. Still I hear in my ears the aria of Bach and the melody from Schubert’s “Der Tod und das Madchen.” It was the first time that the people in the *kwuzoth* heard chamber music in their places. In Kinnereth the mother of Marek, who had wandered to the land of Israel, wept, listening to the music.

About ten months after our arrival in Tel-Aviv, I traveled one day to Jerusalem, and found a place where I could practice medicine with a group of better-known doctors. Each practiced his own specialty, and the post of internal specialist happened to be open. So Elisheva and I moved to Jerusalem, and lived there for almost two years. We liked to go to the Old City, to the Wailing Wall, and walk on the walls around the Old City. Our daughter Shulamit was born in Jerusalem in 1925. My mother came from Tel-Aviv to help—from Shulamit she had her great and last joy. Our second daughter, Ruth, was also born in Jerusalem—on April 26, 1926, while I was away in Tel-Aviv. That day Elisheva accompanied me to the taxi—and I saw on her face the first signs of labor; but in her self-denial she told me to go, and then in Tel-Aviv I received the message that she was in the hospital.

One evening in 1926 we parted with Jerusalem, for the last time walking on the city wall. In the spring of 1927, after having spent about nine months in Tel-Aviv in the house of my parents in an ever-frustrating effort to find some legal solution to the conflict over the group Sheerith Israel, I went one day to Haifa. My nerves were strained; I was not earning anything, giving my time and efforts to helping my father in that thankless task. My mother was now on the decline in her health, and the means of my parents were also diminishing, all making mandatory a change in my unproductive way of life that now dragged, week after week, through the fall and winter of 1926-1927.

In Haifa, in the space of two days, I had a little luck: passing by a pharmacy on a stony road uphill, I was called in by the proprietor—it was Simoni, who recognized me from the days back in Crimea where he had spent time ten years earlier because of an incipient tuberculosis. He told me of a musician’s family in the building in the court who wished to have a violin teacher for their son—for very little pay, but it would be a beginning. Then from that family I heard of a violin teacher who was about to leeve town and had a rather large class to give over. I visited him. He had about thirteen pupils, and cared that they should not fall into the hands of his competitor at the local music school, who was truly an unsympathetic character. Neither of them could measure up to Elisheva, even by a long stretch.

Traveling on the little bus to Mount Carmel, I entered into conversation with a man, Marcus his name, and he told me that in the Ahuza of Herbert Samuel, farther back on the Carmel, they would like very much to have a visiting physician, and would I not agree to look at the place and the room they had for that purpose in their new settlement? This Mr. Marcus was a brother of the organizer of the new settlement of Rumanian Jews, and himself an official of this enterprise. I continued to travel with him, and found the new houses high above the Mediterranean and the Jezreel to the northeast. There was no salary in it, but a kind of “monopoly.” Then I found myself a place to live on Carmel: it was in a stone house with an entrance room, and two bedrooms, each with a stony and roofed porch—one to the sea and one to the woods. I also spoke with a lady physician who was leaving Carmel, and another physician who had a very small practice. There were no others on Carmel and I decided to settle there, and rented the place. I also agreed to take over the care of the thirty or so members of Kuputh-Holim, a labor union on Carmel. A few times a week I was to visit their clinic in a dingy little room, all for four Palestinian pounds a month: the only paying job I have held in my life.

I returned to Tel-Aviv after one night in Haifa at the house of Simoni, with a certain feeling of success: a good start! I would tell all these little achievements to Elisheva. We had not much to pack. So we moved. We looked at the wide horizon of the Mediterranean from our porch, and we said to ourselves, quoting the words of our poet friend Kamskoi:

The heaven all around closed us here in a ring,  
And here we shall stay and not move.

It is much better in Yiddish. We longed for a place of our own for peaceful work, for the horizon of the sea, for a little sunny place in the homeland, that land we had dreamed of for so long. I would soon be thirty-two, and we wished to drop our anchor, prepared to find satisfaction in very little, to have peace. I was the only doctor on Carmel. Elisheva earned more than I did, giving violin lessons in Haifa. She had a large class, and two of her pupils later made prominent careers—Ivri Gitlis and Zvi Zeitlin.

My mother spent some time with us after we moved to Carmel, but her condition deteriorated; my father cared for her during the fall and winter of 1927-1928, and she died. Elisheva, I, and our two daughters, Shulamit and Ruth, lived on Carmel from the early spring of 1927 to December of 1930. I had an office in town, but would also go to Ahuza on foot, and say Kadish for my mother.

My father was left alone in Tel-Aviv. He came to Carmel to visit us and, upon returning, felt lonely. A year later he married a widow, a much less educated woman, who at first concealed that she had grown-up children in Tel-Aviv.

The death of my mother coincided with my beginning to work in psychiatry. I was reading books on psychology and occupied myself with the problems of memory, subconscious mnemes, automatic actions, and telepathy. The books that I read about spiritualism—though written by the detective mind of Sir Conant Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, and quoting as confirmed spiritualists such authorities as Crookes and Oliver Lodge the physicists, Flammarion the astronomer, Richet the physiologist, or Weber or Fechner the psychologists—did not convince me in the least: the messages of the deceased were just not worth dispatching, and the only feeling left was that from immemorial times—from the days of the witch of Endor—the same practices were repeated and the same claims made, in different ages and various cultures.

But still my thoughts were not exactly conservative. In the tower that was atop the house we rented on Mount Carmel, or in the train I jotted down my thoughts on the mental processes in man. In the summer of 1930 I went to Paris, visiting the Pasteur Institute, and then to Switzerland. There a very nice person, Rivka Schaerf, who later emigrated to Israel and lived in a kibbutz, gave me freely of her time to help me express the concepts in my paper in a more precise form; until then it was only a draft. The work done—I called the paper “*Ueber die physikallische Existenz der Gendankenwelt”* ("On the Physical Existence of the World of Thought”)—I showed it to Professor Eugen Bleuler. He was the most prominent psychiatrist of his generation; it was his interest in the work of Sigmund Freud, a private scholar, that brought the work of psychoanalysis out of the private domain into the academic circles. In Burghoelzi Krankenhaus the theories of Freud were tried out, and one of Bleuler’s assistants, Carl Jung, soon became the main armorbearer for Freud, only to become a renegade later. As Bleuler did to Freud over twenty years earlier, he did now to me. He showed enthusiasm for my essay and the thoughts it contained, discussed the themata with me at his home in Kuessnacht, close to Zurich, on Zurichsee, and invited me also to follow him to Lucerne, where a psychological convention was to take place. There we met again and he wrote a preface to my paper. In it he said that my work serves science by opening for discussion a region that had previously been taboo.

The main idea of my essay was the unity of mind and matter; thus an idea has a physical existence, and I imagined that the idea of light and the perception of physical light have the same physical existence in the human brain. Memory (mnemes) are are in a sense physical “negatives” of ideas and experiences; and thus I envisaged an artificial memory.

As an addendum to the paper I wrote a preliminary note about the prospects of applying electroencephalography in epileptics and expressed my opinion that strong discharges should characterize the brain waves of epileptics. This I was subsequently able to demonstrate in a series of experiments I performed at Hadassa Hospital in Tel-Aviv. A boy about ten years of age was brought to me from Tiberias. He was having daily epileptic seizures, and was under the care of a pediatrician there. I took this opportunity for recording an early curve of *petit mal* using a cardiograph adapted for the puropose.

In Zurich I also visited Carl Jung, in an effort to see whether his teaching would be in harmony with my own feelings and approaches. He was a tall man, inseparable from his dog, a Great Dane. All went very well until I mentioned that he was a pupil of Freud. He bristled at my words—he did not like the reference to himself as a pupil of Freud. Nevertheless I suggested that we should spend some time together. He referred me to a lady-analyst who was close to him, but after two meetings with her I decided not to continue. I worked for a while at the Monakow Brain Institute in Zurich, and developed a friendship with Prof. M. Minkowsky. In Geneva I investigated the methods of treatment applied by Baudouin and attended lectures of Prof. Claparede at the J. J. Rousseau Institute. But I could not stay indefinitely—my family was in Israel. Elisheva joined me for a week in Switzerland, then went to see her father in Hamburg.

Although my paper “On the Energetics of the Psyche” had a preface by Bleuler, the first scientific periodical to which I sent it upon my return to Carmel declined to publish it. Then I mailed it to *Zeitschrift fuer gesammte Neurologie und Psychiatrie,* the leading journal in its field, and its editors published it in the January 1931 issue. I sent a copy of the paper to Freud. He wrote me that he himself had very similar ideas—almost identical he said—ideas he had not yet published.[1](http://www.varchive.org/dy/israel.htm#1)

Shortly before my paper was printed, we moved from Carmel to Tel-Aviv. With an increased part of my practice devoted to psychotherapy, and with patients traveling from afar, I need to choose a central location in the country; this was one of the reasons for the move. Another was to enable Elisheva to participate in music. I rented a villa and paid my first rent, as agreed, later in the month—I arrived in Tel-Aviv with 33 piasters in my pocket. Beginning in December 1930 and for the next few years I was very busy with work on patients, being also chairman of the Psychological Society in Tel-Aviv, and often the lecturer at its meetings. This left me with very little time for reading or for following the scientific literature. The Sheerith Israel affair was practically finished. After securing from the Mandate Government the consent that the portions of absent members would be given to the Jewish National Fund, and not appropriated by the Government, a voluntary liquidation was arranged. The appointed liquidators—the prominent lawyer Mordechai Eliash was one of them—wrote a statement officially praising my father’s role, conduct, and sacrifices. Ruhama became the property of the Jewish National Fund. Today it is a large agricultural settlement.

The *Scripta* were not continued. In Jerusalem Dr. Magnes, later Chancellor of the Hebrew University, asked me to continue by printing textbooks and the like, but I declined. We had no means. All these years Elisheva and I worked hard for necessities, and my father’s income was insufficient. My father greatly regretted that he could not do something like the *Scripta* anymore. In his seventies he wrote several dramas, two of which I published. I also saw to it that an issue of *Haaretz* and other newspapers carried several articles of prominent authors, among them Simon Dubnow, dedicated to the jubilee of my father, which gave him satisfaction in the atmosphere of oblivion in which he lived.

From December 8, 1930 until the summer of 1939 we lived in Tel-Aviv. These nine years in Tel-Aviv were taken up by work with patients. I used to start early and work till the late evening, and yet I could not earn more than expenses. Even so, we invited one after the other three sisters of Elisheva to move to Israel, and at first stay with us. While I practiced medicine, Elisheva brought music to the land. She was the first to organize a quartet to go to Emek and Galilee and play there; and there were among the listeners those who cried. She gave concerts in Jerusalem and also in Tel-Aviv, Haifa, and other places. She led the Palestine String Quartet, first with Bentwich and Yellin, traveling often from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem for this, and I encouraged her to play. Then she organized another string quartet in Tel-Aviv. She is a very fine musician, and her playing was sometimes divine.

In the spring of 1933 Elisheva and I went to Vienna. On the way we visited Italy, going by train from Brindisi to Naples, to Rome, to Florence. I had already selected in advance to see Dr. Wilhelm Stekel. In a book that I had, describing various forms of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, I liked Stekel’s approach best of all. I thought that the shortest preparation and the shortest analysis would be the way that would suit me best, partly because of my temperament. Stekel was of the first generation of Freudian pupils. Freud started his work in 1895, the year I was born, and the next nine years he spent in “splendid isolation,” a time when he had no followers and no pupils, and felt best. In 1904 he had two pupils, and these were Wilhelm Stekel and Paul Federn. Stekel was a very prolific writer and intuitive thinker, and was considered a better dream interpreter, quicker in thought, than Freud. But I did not come to Stekel empty-handed. I brought a paper in which I revised his analysis and interpretation of dreams in a case of his, described in detail in the first volume of his multivolume work on *Neuroses and Psychoses.* The patient was an opera singer, who had lost the ability to sing. Stekel described this analysis on many pages, including her associations and dreams. Though I was not very knowledgeable in German literature, I observed immediately that what she was telling Stekel was actually from Goethe’s *Faust.* The entire analysis—her dreams, her associations—were from this poem, and she confabulated herself into the role of Margarete. Stekel did not notice this and gave a far-fetched interpretation of the dreams and the case itself. I wrote a re-interpretation of this analysis, and with this came to Stekel, three years after my visit to Zurich. He read the paper and was so generous as to invite his group of followers, some twenty people or more, and let me read my paper—a devastating criticism of his way of analyzing this singer. He acknowledged that I was right, and only then revealed that the patient’s real name was Margarete. On the part of a dream interpreter superior to Freud himself, it was magnanimous. But this was in some respect also my undoing, because after a rather short time Stekel told me: “You are a master, I don’t need to give you analysis; you can do it yourself.” He himself had taken only eight lessons from Freud.

In Vienna analytical practice and theory occupied a very important place in that year of 1933. Daily there were public lectures, especially open meetings held by people of the school of Alfred Adler. In order to have insight into the ideas of the contending schools of thought in psychoanalysis, I attended a seminar given by Adler at his house. I also visited periodically the psychiatric clinic of the University and attended consultations given to delinquent children by Aichhorn.

In those days of my sojourn in Vienna in 1933 I also became acquainted with Dr. Paul Federn. As president of the International Psychoanalytic Society, Federn chaired that year the monthly meetings of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, of which Sigmund Freud was the founding member. At one meeting that spring at which I was present, the discussion became rather emotional—a chapter in the new book by Freud was the theme, and it dealt with telepathy. Freud was absent due to his poor health (he repeatedly underwent surgery on a cancerous jaw) but his daughter Anna was present. The subject of telepathy, foreign to the tenets of psychoanalysis, caused visible and audible consternation among the assembled members of the Society, mostly psychoanalysts. Only Federn and I sided with Freud and spoke up. After that meeting Federn and I spent the rest of the evening in a Viennese cafe, and though I soon left for home, our friendship can be dated from that date.

With Freud himself I had a tête-à-tête on his 77th birthday in a suburb of Vienna where he went for this occasion. He left his guests on the terrace and came to see me, and we spent thirty or forty minutes together. We had already corresponded long before, and he had published several pieces of mine in *Imago*—so I was not a stranger to him. He impressed me as being a fragile man. I did not write down what we discussed, and regretably I do not remember too well.

That spring Freud published a paper of mine, “On the Dream Interpretation in the Traktate Brachot of the Talmud.”[2](http://www.varchive.org/dy/israel.htm#2) In it I showed that the ancient Hebrews knew of various things considered innovations of psychoanalysis. I also published a paper in Stekel’s *Psychanalytische Praxis* under the title “Psychische Anaphylaxie.”[3](http://www.varchive.org/dy/israel.htm" \l "3)

In this paper on a case of my experience I established the existence of the anaphylactic phenomenon in mental processes. Thus I introduced a new understanding of the complex nature of neurosis. A patient who as a child almost drowned reacted to the next peril to his life with asthma, although he suffered from no lack of air. This paper was accompanied by a short excursus on the physical signs of fear as self-defense. Finally, before leaving Vienna, I submitted to a medical journal a paper in which I discussed the phenomenon of melancholy, or depression, and the role which tears play in relieving a person in distress or mourning.[4](http://www.varchive.org/dy/israel.htm" \l "4)

We stayed a few months in Vienna—Hitler’s shadow was already reaching there. On our way back to Israel we visited Venice and fell in love with Lago d’Iseo, the village of Del Castro and the surroundings. After crossing the Mediterranean, we visited Cairo and saw the Cairo Museum and the pyramids. Then we continued by train to Tel-Aviv. Upon my return to Israel I resumed my practice, adopting a method of participating personally in the analysis, rather than the accepted way of sitting passively, making notes. I wrote several additional papers on psychoanalysis, among them one dealing with the psychological problem of the specificity of the brain centers and the discrepancy in the different levels of intelligence in the same person. In another paper I explored the question whether a newly-acquired language may become the language of the unconscious. I showed how in dreams are to be found plays on words—and not only in dreams, but the entire structure of a neurosis is sometimes built on a play on words. This I was able to show on numerous cases, presenting a few lines from each—and each case could have been made into a complete story by itself, had time permitted. Yet I see now how my years of sessions with patients prepared me for my future work by allowing me to see similarities in things that do not at first glance appear related. I also investigated the role played by subconscious homosexuality in neuroses, and planned a book on this theme entitled *The Masks of Homosexuality,* of which I wrote several sections.

In 1935 Elisheva’s father, George Kramer, and his second wife Mally came to Israel from Hamburg, leaving behind Nazi Germany. But he died several months later in Jerusalem and was buried on the Mount of Olives. Elisheva saw that morning a dream that was as if telepathic—we did not expect her father to die; he was not seriously ill.

In 1935 I published in Paris my Russian prose poem “Thirty Days and Nights of Diego Pirez on the Bridge of Sant’Angelo,” written fifteen years earlier in the Ukraine and Caucasus. It was accepted by Petropolis Publishers after Ivan Bunin, the Nobel Laureate (1933) read it and wrote in praise about the talent of its author. It is the story of Solomon Molcho who spent thirty days before the palace of the pope, waiting for God’s sign to act as a messiah. I admit that many of the feelings ascribed to Molcho were ones I myself experienced during those years.

Once, in 1935, Elisheva and I went to the Cedars of Lebanon, and stayed there above the clouds. My hair greyed early, and Elisheva also had a few grey hairs. That same year I started to build a large building on the site in Tel-Aviv where my father had a small structure. I drew the plan myself, including the exterior—all that an architect would do. Capital we had not, even the small building was mortgaged, but I was able to raise the necessary money through a large mortgage based on future rents. But I chose a difficult man to execute the building, and soon became depressed. The depression passed when I took a boat to Cyprus with my family; there the children enjoyed riding on horses on paths above precipices. Returning from Cyprus (1936), I sent the contractor away and finished the building myself, with great energy. It was one of the best buildings in town, and the professor of Architecture at the Haifa Technion came to see me, looked at my sketches, and said he would bring his class to see the building.

After I finished the building, Elisheva and I went on a grand tour of Europe. Four months we traveled, spending some time in northern Italy, again in Venice and Florence, then in Paris, on the left bank. In Paris I attended the XIth International Congress of Psychologists. A great number of psychologists attended, also from America. The Chairman of this convention, Prof. Claparede from Switzerland, read the main address, “Hatred among the Nations.” My paper, “The Psychological Origins of the Hatred among the Nations” was the only other discussion of the same theme. Following the convention, Mally, the widow of Elisheva’s father, brought our children, Shulamit and Ruth, to Venice, and we traveled with them to Como, Pontresina; there the children saw their first snow. When we returned to Tel-Aviv, my father was weak. He had waited for me so long, and said to me as Jacob said to Joseph, that it was good that he lived to see me. I visited him daily for the next few months until his death. He died on December 16, 1937, in the house he had built for himself. My father died as if he were going to a wedding with death—such was the expression on his face. I have a photograph made by myself. His last blessing to me was barely audible.

In Tel-Aviv we lived about two years in the rented villa, and seven years on Shadal Street. By now the war was approaching. In our new apartment on Rhov Balfour, we lived three months. To the memory of my father I started a new series, *Scripta Academica.* I saw Weizmann, explained to him the idea of an Academy, and later he gave me for publication a paper he had written in collaboration with E. Bergmann.[5](http://www.varchive.org/dy/israel.htm" \l "5) After this I published a work of Prof. A. Fodor, also a chemist, the first professor of the University, the results of twelve years of his research.[6](http://www.varchive.org/dy/israel.htm" \l "6) I regret that I did not start this series in the lifetime of my father—it would have been a source of great satisfaction to him.

Looking back on the almost sixteen years spent in Israel, I could note but little achievement. I treated many psychoanalytic patients, and usually succeeded. I published a few philological works of my father *(Sfotenu),* and two issues of *Scripta Academica* after his death. I wrote several psychological papers, as well as a treatise on philosophy and biology called *Introgenesis,* which was accepted for publication by Presses Universitaires of France but was left incomplete because of the war. I experimented with electroencephalography; Elisheva bore me two children; I built a large building in Tel-Aviv. But altogether it did not amount to much for the best years—my 28th to 44th—and I stated to myself that my achievements were few; at this tempo there was nothing but the chance to write some more essays on psychology, to see some few hundred patients, to make a few trips to Europe, and to be the landlord of an office building. All this was far from what I expected from my life. But at the age of 43 I had already lost the faith of achieving something great as a scholar. I thought of continuing the *Scripta Academica* as a basis for a Hebrew Academy based in Jerusalem. But once Elisheva on a walk asked: “And what of your own vineyard *(kerem)?* Don’t you think to do something yourself?”

Once I stood before a window of a bookstore; there was the book of Hitler, *Mein Kampf,* and the book of Freud, *Moses and Monotheism.* I deliberated which to buy, and bought the latter. Actually, I had read Freud’s earlier presentation of his ideas about Moses already when I was in Paris in 1937. At the Bibliotheque Nationale, a place that I liked to visit, I read the paper by Freud in *Imago.* Now the reading of *Moses and Monotheism* led me to surmise that the Pharaoh Akhnaton, whom Freud thought to be the originator of monotheism and a teacher of Moses, was in fact the prototype of Oedipus of the Greek legend. Today I wonder what were the sufficient grounds for that conclusion, which I would later elaborate and substantiate with material which I did not then have. But in a few weeks I had a rather convincing list of supporting evidence. I also concluded that Freud had some unsolved problem of his own concerning his being a Jew, and I turned to his own dreams as found in his *Interpretation of Dreams,* about sixteen in number. I found that, truly, he had a subconscious desire to convert to Christianity, in order to open up for himself the road to advancement.

Thus I had the idea to write a book on Freud and his heroes. In Tel-Aviv I could hardly concentrate on writing, and the meager Tel-Aviv library did not suffice for doing research. Also, I looked with concern upon the approaching war, which I correctly predicted in an article offered to Klinoff, ed of Haaretz.. I decided to go to America. As long as my father and mother were alive, then my father alone, I could not leave them: the land was harsh and they had too many aggravations. Now they were resting in peace; and only three months later we were packing to go to the United States, with the plan to stay there for a while.

I remember coming to Ruth’s school to take her out: the children ran and jumped, not surmising with their parents that the war was approaching. I felt a little of a coward to leave at that time, but I had wished for so many years to start working on some book. *Freud and his Heroes* appeared to me an important enough work.

The last two nights, and especially the last before leaving Israel, were nights of agony. I could not overcome the feeling of indecision. It was like jumping into the unknown. The future was not revealed to me: many times I opened the Bible and looked for a verse to guide me. Finally, leaving my business affairs unsettled, we took a cab to Tel-Aviv harbor, intending to board a ship going to Trieste. There was no place there, and I could have room only on the ship from Haifa. We went to Haifa and took the ship bound for America. I wavered until the last moment; when the boat reached Larnaka in Cyprus, we disembarked, but immediately regretted it bitterly; Elisheva advised to cable Paris, and a new passage was secured. Within a few days the “Mauritania” came and we continued to New York, where we arrived on July 26, 1939. It was still a gay trip; a few weeks later the boats were arriving without lights. The war started with the invasion of Poland on September 1, five weeks after our arrival.

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# America

In America we took rooms, later an apartment, and I was visiting the library daily. For eight months I worked on “Freud and his Heroes,” publishing the interpretation of Freud’s dreams as a paper in the *Psychoanalytic Review* (1941). After eight months we were prepared to go home.On the day we had to sail, I was informed that my manuscript, “Freud and his Heroes” was accepted for print. We remained. In April 1940 I came upon the idea that the Exodus took place during a physical catastrophe; I started on the reconstruction of ancient history—fromt he end of the Middle Kingdom to Alexander of Macedonia, finding the correct correlation. In about October 20 the same year I came to the understanding of the real cause of that catastrophe that was embodied in *Worlds in Collision*. I also realized the implications for the celestial mechanics—and published a summary in “[Cosmos without Gravitation](http://www.varchive.org/ce/cosmos.htm)” (1946), as an issue of Scripta Academica, to which previously Ch. Weizmann and Prof. Fodor contributed.

I worked hard for all those years. It is difficult to describe in short the enthusiasm and devotion provoked by and given to my research. We lived almost in poverty. I used pencils, two for a nickel, and could not buy a fountain pen, when I lost mine. We had for a year an apartment with a beautiful view of the Hudson, but none of us used 10-cent bus that passed in front of the house, because we could travel for 5 cents. Actually the second year in the U.S., we lived for $2,000, out of which $1,000 for apartment. Morning, day and evening I went to Columbia Library, and daily I had new finds. A little of the story is found in early sections of “Stargazers.” Elisheva studied sculpture at Columbia University under Moldarelli, and showed an unusual talent; her ability to give expression to a face, of unusual beauty, is probably unsurpassed, even in the scuptures of the Renaissance.

My books were rejected by many publishing houses. Finally Macmillan showed interest. When the mns. was given to the printer—I sailed with Elisheva to Palestine. Our daughter Shulamith left in 1946 after having finished college (Hunter), Jewish Theological Seminary and having started in Columbia (Physics, graduate). Ruth remained in the U.S. and married a boy, Sidney Sicherman (later Sharon); we first opposed, then conditioned our consent on his going to college—which we also made possible. During the 1948 war in Palestine Shulamith actively participated. She was in the most dangerous spot, the Old City of Jerusalem when it was besieged, she actually went there with the intent to fight. she was the last to leave when the city fell. She saw her girl friend die next to her, wounded. She was attacked by Arab soldiers, cried to God, and was saved by an Arab officer, before harm was done.

I published over 40 inspired articles “[Observer](http://www.varchive.org/obs/index.htm)” in *N.Y. Post* on the editorial page, dealing with the Middle East. They were widely read, in U.N., in Washington, by Jews, and the identity of the author was a discussed topic—nobody knew, for several months not even the editor of the Post, Thackrey, who found it out only by a trick on the day the Israeli state was founded. Not many single items served so well the cause in America as these articles. Then in 1948, Oct. 27 we—Elisheva and I went to Israel, by Mauritania to France. In Paris when the Security Council deliberated sanctions on Israel, I wrote an article that caused indignation of the British representative. In Israel we met Shulamith. There I became depressed: My depression started in January 1949 and deepened. I was overworked (by the work on my books, by articles, by psychiatric patients that I started to see since 1945). On February 1 we left Israel, the new state, reaching New York on Feb. 9 after a hard time in Paris. Finally Elisheva broke down. We both spent time in sanatoriums; I was four weeks under care, but did not receive in these weeks any medicine except once or twice one tablet of aspirin. Finally by the end of April I was my old self and on May 8 I was reunited with Elisheva, who suffered for me.

I resumed my psychoanalytic practice, and worked on “*Ages*” and “*Worlds*.” The latter work was described by *Harper’s* (Eric Larrabee) in the January issue of 1950 in advance of publication. An enormous amount of criticism, for and against, followed the publication of the book. The story of the opposition is described in *Stargazers*. The book immediately rose to the first place on the non-fiction best-seller list and remained there for about 20 weeks. The opposition used unfair methods; Macmillan was coerced already in May-June 1950 to transfer the book to Doubleday.

In the fall of 1950 Shulamith came from Palestine and soon thereafter came Abraham Kogan and they were wed. Abraham studied aeronautics in Princeton. In 1952 first volume of *Ages in Chaos* was published; in the fall of that year we moved to Princeton, buying there a house. Shulamith bore a son, Meir; then they left for Israel. In the meantime, Ruth and Sidney moved to Princeton from California.

From November 1953 until the death of Einstein in April 1955 I had with him a series of long and exceedingly interesting debates. We also exchanged many letters. My debate with him centered only on one point, namely whether the sun and the planets and other celestial bodies are charged or not. From his marginal notes on my letters it is seen that he firmly opposed the idea of a charged earth and celestial bodies; he thought that I did not realize the largeness of the problem, until a month before his death, in two long sessions—till close to midnight, he read with me “On the Four Systems of the World,” agreeing that the fourth of these was well thought through. He read several of my manuscripts. *Worlds in Collision* was left on his desk when he went to hospital where he died. In the beginning he rudely rejected my work, though he, too, believed that some extraterrestrial (later he changed to terrestrially-caused) catastrophe took place. Nine days before his death, at our last meeting, he said to me—“I read much in your book [*Worlds in Collision*] and I find it very important” (previously he would say he thought it wrong that scientists do not read it and give their own explanation)—“but I would not oppose Newton—all in your book could be explained in the frame of his system.” In my books I left this chance standing (Epilogue to *Worlds in Collision*) but I claimed that in case the Earth and other celestial bodies are electrically (and sufficiently strongly) magnetically charged, the theory as conceived about 1666 must be re-examined. But when Einstein died, his name was used to degrade me. His death and the new attacks caused me much aggravation. In the fall of 1955 Doubleday published “Earth in Upheaval”; it was unfairly attacked by the same group, the soul of which was Shapley of Harvard.

In the fall of 1955 Shulamith came to Princeton with her two children—Rivka was born in Israel. Abraham came and made his Ph.D. with distinction. They spent 17 months with us. They left in the spring of 1957.

In the summer of 1957 Elisheva and I left for Europe, spending almost three weeks in England, Holland, France and Switzerland. There we spent time with Schaeffer, he came to the same conclusions as myself about the catastrophes, their number and times, and we contemplated to write in two volumes a common work. I have postponed for very long this trip but was happy to have made it. Elisheva’s sight became weak due to a cataract, and I wished to show her Europe. I analyzed myself—why was it so difficult for me to go on a trip. Finally we went and enjoyed it. From Switzerland to Italy, to Greece, again Schaeffer, and to Israel. This we added to the original plan. Twelve days after we came I knew that I was sick. I was operated and under similar conditions as in 1949 became depressed and went through once more the “Valley of Tears.”

\* \* \*

Elisheva was before me in the night air before our house and I entered our home. Over five weeks we have not seen one another, only spoke occasionally on the wire. Warm and loving she met me and I had to be grateful to God that he spared her and she was before me not broken in spirit or body. How awful were the days and nights alone for her, pacing the floor. We started the life anew: we loved one another even more than all the years that passed, in soul and in body.

But I was not free of my depression. The great humiliation that I experienced by “quarantening” myself I felt keenly, and twice I broke down in loudly reproaching the Providence for what passed over me, whereas I gave my life to work and research; my position in the defense of my scientific stand was now immeasurably more dificult. How, for instance, could I publish *Stargazers* with Shapley’s reference to “keepers”? I felt that I did not deserve the punishment, having led a life of devotion—years of wondering in Ukraine and the Caucasus, years of publishing Scripta, years of dissolving Sheerith Israel and protecting my parents to the best of my ability, years of writing *Worlds in Collision* and *Ages in Chaos*. Psychoanalytically my outburst could have been interpreted as a protest to my late father for being punished for not having done the filial duty in time to his memory at the cemetery, though so much I have done tohim and for him in his lifetime.

Time is a healer; Elisheva wept with me when I spoke of my experiences. Neither she nor I could read without crying the letter I have mailed to her from the sanatorium, with words of love.

A month after my return, I offered Dr. W. Federn to assist me and though he was prepared for a while to work without pay, I named the sum that I could pay monthly, and this was a little more than he had from another work for a relative-doctor in translating from late Latin. For the first time in his life he could make up his budget by earning it.

He read my draft of *Oedipus*, and he wrote: (22.IX.58): “Ich habe ... den Eindruck dass Sie mit genialen Intuition wirklich das richtige getroffen haben, als Sie den Ursprung der Oedipus-Sage in historishcen Vorgängen der ausgehenden 18. Dynastie suchen.” Yet he tried to change my scheme, and to make not Akhnaton, but Amenhotep III, to Oedipus. It was a strange offer, since all personalities of the tragedy were without similarity with the changed prototypes, Ay had no role at all in Federn’s scheme. But for some reason, my work on Oedipus and Akhnaton provoked in Federn an eruption of new ideas. Three days later (Sept. 25.58) he wrote again: “The fertility of your idea is almost frightening.” and on Sept. 30, he wrote: “Ich habe Ihnen folgende geradezu welterschütternde, jedenfalls mich selbst erschütternden Mitteilungen zu machen.... und das Allerwichtigste: Ich bin jetzt der festen überzeugung, dass “Ages in Chaos” richtig ist, und habe eine fast unüberschbare Fülle von Beweismaterial.” He twice underlined “richtig”; and he wrote that the second volume of Ages must be reworked.

This came to me seventeen years and eight months after first telling to Dr. Federn of my reconstruction on a snowy night near the Public Library, in January 1941, when for two hours we walked forth and back on the sidewalk of 42nd Street, Library side. Since then innumerable times he assured me that I cannot be right, yet he gave me all the constructive criticism and supplied me with bibliographical data. (*Worlds in Collision* he did not read before publication, but *Ages in Chaos* he read and supplied with many useful remarks). On May 31, exactly four months earlier, on his only visit to Princeton, he was completely declining my “Ages,” and telling me that I could not be right in my reconstruction, not even the smallest chance was for that, and the, I repeatedly interrupted him, saying—how does he say this to me, so harsh, when he sees me in depression. Then I needed only one “success,” only one achievement, and possibly I would have been able to straighten myself, if he would have told me on May 31 what he wrote me on Sept. 30.

Yet soon I saw that he intended to change drastically the scheme of 8-4 centuries, and to me it appeared entirely unsupported; then also he wished to change radically in vol. I of Ages, claiming, on the other hand, complete agreement. He started to call my scheme “New Chronology,” and many letters followed.

When I was away came a long letter from Claude Schaeffer, and it was so completely negating my reconstruction, that Elisheva spent many sleepless nights, not being able to face the situation: How will she ever be able to let me see Schaeffer’s letter. In that letter he was intemperate; and instead of giving arguments, invoked his own and his colleagues’ authority, even more his own position in learned institutions, than authority. Cannot be, is not, impossible, with these words he strafed all my identifications. Schaeffer asked Elisheva to show me his letter only after I shall recover, because he was by then acquainted with my break-down. But his letter almost broke completely Elisheva and she cried in the night and kept the letter hidden under her mattress. To me she would not show the letter, saying she misplaced or destroyed it—but finally, upon my insistence, about a week after my return home, showed it to me. I took it, to her surprise, very calmly, and then I wrote a long answer to Schaeffer. He was probably also personally hurt because his work in Alasia was not accounted by me (he forgot that I had my mns of Ages 2 set in 1951). “I beseech you” not to publish my work for the sake of my reputation and his friendship for me. But I was not disheartened.

Should I be given a chance to live and work, I have to publish “Ages” vol. 2 and other books. But I would also like to write an autobiography, “Days and Years” or “At Evetide.” Should I not be given the chance, I thank my Creator for the life I had, for Elisheva I met, for children and grandchildren, all very fine and cordial, for the three years in Caucasus and Ukraine, for two years with Scripta, for defending my parents in Palestine, for the discoveries it was my luck to make. Actually God let me know of the past of the world and possibly of its architectonics, more that it was disclosed to any other person, if I am right in what I found.

# Postscript

When in 1940, in the early evening after a day in the Public Library at Forty-second Street in New York Emanuel and I walked to Central Park and sat down on a bench, I said to him life was not always easy with him, but it was certainly an adventure. This sums up in some way my life with Emanuel. In this autobiography of his this feeling of adventure comes through. Almost every day, especially since we came to the United States, unusual things happened.

He was always on a hunt for more knowledge, following roads into different directions to look for and find more clues to his intuitive thoughts and expectations. He was like a hunter on a trail—though he would never have hunted an animal or gone fishing, he respected life too much for such sports—but as a man of a vision, who looked into many directions, he was driven by a never ending urge to know more.

He was humble and proud at the same time, and before all he was a great fighter who never took no for an answer; who went to the authorities of the past as well as to the great living to ask for explanations. He was never discouraged. When one of his expectations was not fulfilled, he went into the next direction to find the answers he looked for. He abandoned one way and went to the next without losing confidence in his search for what he hoped to be the solution and the truth. All in all, Emanuel was a man of a very unusual character. As I said, pround and humble, courageous, never to give up even when the odds against him and the personal attacks on him would have overwhelmed many a man. Of course, the strain showed through his life. There were times when he felt depressed as in reaction to the difficulties found in his way. And no wonder, I lived with him through very trying times and I understood when the load became too heavy.

He was a very gentle human being, he cared for his parents, family, friends, and for the plain and simple. He lent a hand to people, he found time to comfort and advise and help, never being too busy to listen to the unfortunate, adults and children alike. He was a great optimist who believed in the goodness of man and in the purpose of life, and he also had a fine sense of humor. He was a great raconteur and would tell anecdotes and stories. I would ask him to cheer me up when I felt let down, and he would say, let us count our blessings. And we would count. And that helped every time to make us feel positive and happy again. He gave this advice also to his friends, who still remember him for that. It was always “the cup is half full and not half empty.” He called me Shevik, and when he was in a sentimental mood I was Shevinka; but when he called me Elisheva, I knew that something was wrong, that he did not approve of me at that moment. I, however, never had a nickname for him—he always was Emanuel for me, also Aba. Some of his family called him Monia, but to me it sounded too much like “money,” and this asociation did not fit him at all. He could have gotten rich many times, but it was not written in his stars, and certainly not in mine. And when he was sometimes sorry that he did not take advantage of an opportunity to buy land and enrich himself and his family, I would say, never mind, you bought the sky. And he would smile.

He wrote about his first 6½ years in several but similar versions and in several languages: Russian, German, Hebrew and English. He made lists how to divide his life into different epochs, but wrote only sporadically, and some parts are missing. There were also letters, correspondence with his father, with friends and scholars, which are biographical. There were no letters between us, because we were almost never separated. All the trips to Europe and Palestine we made together, and I went with him across the United States to campuses to be with him when he lectured.   
  
A few sentences of friends after his death:

S. Vaughan wrote me a poetic line: “So Velikovsky has left this fragile ship, but he is sailing the seas of space.”  
Walter Kaufmann quoted Fulton Oursler, “Do not mourn that he has died, be glad that he has lived.”

And a recent note to me from a reader I don’t know: “May I . . . tell you how admiring I am of your matchless memorial to this great man—the publication of his unique works.” And that is what I have been doing these past two years, and that is what sustains me.

There is a saying which dates back to older times—Herodotus records it of Solon speaking of Croesus, the richest man, whether he was lucky. Only after his death do you know whether a person was lucky.

In this sense Emanuel was a lucky man. On a Sabbath morning, lying quietly on his bed after a rather restless night, speaking softly to me—I was sitting next to him, on the edge of his bed, and touching his shoulder asked him to repeat his last words I did not hear clearly; he turned his head a bit to the side, he did not answer—he had died—without a gasp, without a murmur. He was a lucky man in many ways because of his strong character, his honesty with himself, his total devotion and integrity, a man of vision, of commitment with belief in his work.

— Elisheva Velikovsky