

A CONTEMPORARY JEWISH REVIEW

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RESPONSE welcomes articles, fiction, poetry, artwork and letters. Contributors should keep a copy of everything sent, as we cannot be responsible for lost or misplaced material. Unsolicited manuscripts should be sent to RESPONSE, Editorial Office, 415 South Street, Waltham, Mass. 02154

RESPONSE is published four times a year: September, January, March and June. Subscriptions are \$5 per year in the United States and Canada, and \$4 per year for students. Subscriptions outside North America are \$6 per year. Single copies \$1.25 © Copyright 1971 by RESPONSE: A contemporary Jewish Review, 415 South St., Waltham, Mass. 02154. All rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions.

Application to mail at second class rates pending in Boston, Massachusetts.

Printed in the United States of America.

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The Making Of A Jewish Theater

Like all contemporary experimentation in Jewish creative life the development of a Jewish Theater in America suffers from a lack of models. The lyrical tradition of Avram Goldfaden, Rumanian founder of Yiddish Theater, as well as the unimaginable brilliance of the Moscow State Jewish Theater, 1919-1948, seem unreachable through holocaust screens. And what have we left—T.V. specials on Sholem Aleichem and Oy-Vey-vaudeville remnants of a Second Avenue our generation can not remember. Looking to Israel we are offered an Habimah Theater which periodically turns out its museum pieces and a few municipal and campus theaters which are neither particularly Jewish nor experimental.

Bringing an extensive experience in campus theater and a newly-discovered interest in things Jewish, I founded the Brandeis Yiddish Theater in 1969 with the encouragement of the Hillel chaplain and a Yiddish professor here and there. The first performance, *Shalakmones*, was billed as a Yiddish Happening, a potpourri of song, modern dance, dictionary improvisation and Sholem Aleichem. We played successfully more than once to standing-room-only audiences.

The production this year was a children's play written by my husband, David Roskies, based on a book by Josef Ziemann. The play, *Di Papyrosn-Hendler*, concerns the true story of a band of Jewish children who managed to survive the Nazi occupation of Warsaw by posing as goyim and selling cigarettes to German soldiers. The events of the story include the constant harassment of older Polish children which the Jewish papyrosn-hendler had to deal with, the hysteria of their somewhat comical Polish landlady and her psychotic little girl, close-calls and escapes, and potato-Menorahs put together for Hanukkah. An unresolved theme of the play concerns the discovery of the children by an adult member of the Jewish Underground who, amazed at the way in which the children have been able to find each other and survive, promises to supply them with Polish citizenship papers.

Half of the cast of *Di Papyrosn-Hendler* were children. The play, the first Yiddish play for children ever presented in Boston, was attended during its 3 performances by over 800 people, a third of them children. The reactions to the play ranged from puzzled 9 or 10 year old children who could easily follow the action of the story with the help of a printed synopsis but who had never heard of the Holocaust; to embarrassed parents, embarrassed for the reaction of their children; to grandparents who cried in pairs from the opening scene to the final curtain regardless of the action on the stage. Nu?

The frustration for the artist working with reactions such as these leads to the realization that it will be impossible for a single Jewish art form to thrive unless there are complimentary strengths in Jewish education, Jewish media, even Jewish cultural and community service. With regard to the latter, it might be pointed out that support for the first production of the Brandeis Yiddish Theater was requested and denied by every single existing Jewish



cultural and Yiddish organization except Bnai Brith Hillel at Brandeis. For the second production each of the organizations offered a small sum, but only after it had been confirmed for each of them that every other one of them had already been tapped. (No small trick for me!) In addition, the script of *Di Papyrosn-Hendler* was submitted for consideration in the only (barely) existing playwriting contest for children's plays on Jewish themes. The script was rejected because it was in Yiddish and this group had never supported a play in Yiddish in twenty-five years and how could they possibly now after all, "one of the contest judges isn't even Jewish!!"

It should be noted that the Brandeis Yiddish Theater does not exist completely in a vacuum. Thriving troupes of Yiddish players exist in Montreal supported in the past by the Jewish People's School and under the dedicated direction of Dora Wasserman; in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the only Yiddish Theater in western America—directed by Moishe and Chanele Rosenthal; in New York, in Israel and in the Soviet Union, apparently. Also, the smattering of Hebrew Theater in Day-Schools and summer camps is encouraging, although I am not familiar with it. Jewish themes in English productions ranging from Tevye to the Rosenbergs to Yale's Gimple the Fool remain just about that—Jewish themes in English production. Guerilla theater, particularly mock trials, mock beatings, coffin-chain publicity stunts for Soviet Jewry, has been notoriously and embarrassingly bad.

The future of the Brandeis Yiddish Theater appears strong. A core group has been formed, including a few non-Jewish members. And I hope and trust

it will continue after I have left in a few years to start a Yiddish Theater in Israel. The goals I see for Jewish Theater include an attempt to pick up the threads of our artistic heritage that were so cruelly snapped and have lain dormant so long. A modest start might be trying to discover just how the eerie surrealist sets of the Moscow State Jewish Theater were ever conceived and ever executed. Who even knows the carpentry of Yiddish Theater?

Even the Montreal Yiddish Theater group which lies historically, but apparently not psychologically, in line with the Moscow Theater has failed to regenerate the search for the "new Jewish actor" and uniquely Jewish Theater set out by founder Alexander Granovsky. Specifically, with regard to stage design, the total-theater-environment once conceived of by Marc Chagall for the Moscow group in the unprecedented '20's has been pseudo-adapted in the Montreal production of *A Khasene in Shtetl* with the construction of *nist-ahin-nisht-aher* haphazard sets and actual reproductions of Chagall-like tableaux on stage flats. Chagall's experimentation with the Moscow "Kammer" Theater, as it was called, took the form of a painter's theater, a theater in which frescoes hanging on the walls were inseparable from the stage setting and the actors who appeared to be Chagall characters coming to life. The design of *Khasene* did just about the opposite—what was meant as a dissolution of the proscenium became an even greater separation—placing contemporary Chagall in brackets and plastering him on stage flats, on costumes and beards.

Another question *A Khasene In Shtetl* raises is the degree to which the "Musical" is an adequate artistic medium for Jewish Theater, regardless of its value for Theater in general. The musical format as it now stands, from overture to rehearsed curtain-call, seems to be the product of both Broadway and Laugh-In, a format in which the task of director becomes one of coordinator of events. Can this medium be a training ground for actors wishing to develop a unique style for Jewish Theater? Does it have anything at all to do with the developing direction of the other Jewish arts, literature, painting, dance, film? Is it really the best extension of the little bit of theater heritage we are aware of? The answer to the above questions is No. However, does the Musical format attract bigger and better audiences? Sometimes—but this is only a factor for one with an every-little-bit-for-Yiddish-counts attitude, or a view of the audience's lowest common denominator as the starting point for Theater.

The objective of this critique has not been solely to clobber the Jewish Musical but more importantly to bring up the question of nonverbal—or better, non-dialogue—techniques in Theater. In fear of the fact that most of our audiences would not understand Yiddish, I also tried to rely heavily and also artificially on dance and melody. In fact, almost one entire act of *Di Papyrosn-Hendler* consisted of ghetto-mime. For the most part it was confusing if not boring—except one small scene of a Jewish Movement Choir. The short dance consisted of a selection and stylization of the movements of Jewish life: shuckling, likht-bentshn, 'al khet, birkat kohanim, etc. This scene was very exciting to choreograph. The small group of dancers came up with an almost endless list of elements of Jewish movement with potential for

stylization, i.e. the creative distillation of Jewish phenomena proposed by Granovsky of the Moscow theater. It was very interesting that this same theme in dance was developed independently in *A Khasene in Shtetl* with a band of yeshiva bokherim brilliantly dressed in caftans and tights.

The conclusion appears to be that no element of the Jewish Theater—dance, dialogue, medium, design—is free of the necessity for re-evaluation, redefinition, and recreation specifically within the unique constructs of Jewish life and tradition. Jewish themes plugged into the format of contemporary theater is not Jewish Theater. Ballet and song as cribbing techniques are not even theater.

Other areas of possible exploration in Drama include the use of theater exercises combined with sensitivity training in havurot and kibbutzim; the reintroduction of Temple dance and theatrical expression into Jewish liturgy; non-verbal interpretation in the study of Jewish texts, i.e. choreography for the dance of Miriam, etc. An important challenge for those interested in Jewish Theater is the examination and evaluation of the most contemporary and radical experimentation in drama, the Polish "Theater of Poverty, Holy Theater" directed by Jerzy Grotowski and the complimentary movements in Eastern European film. The notion of an atheistic Holy Theater has unpredictably erupted in a country wrested both by Communism and Catholicism. In creating the Holy Theater, The Polish Laboratory has stripped drama of every "Rich Theater" trapping: proscenium and script, make-up and medium. All that remains is the actor and occasional spectator and the subconscious stratum of passion which they share in myth, in the concentration camp experience, in religious ritual, and in confrontation. It is difficult to describe the presentations of the Polish group; only one book and one film have reached the West. However, the ideas are inflammable, and the notion of a



Holy Theater that could be preceded by a covenant, by G-d; a theater stripped and begun again might be the model necessary for the beginning Jewish Theater.

Two other areas that are open to Jewish Theater are Education and Social Change. In Education particularly, the use of theater as a tool for facilitating psychological and ethical development is just beginning to be explored. A long-term research project has been undertaken at Harvard University centered on the study of the development of ethical behavior in children. The earliest results of this inquiry have suggested not only that there is a universal, developmental sequence in the evolution of a child's morality but also that this sequence may be systematically facilitated, if desired by participation in a program of moral education. The nature of the program is still being explored. To date however, techniques in specifically designed moral discussion groups as well as improvisational drama have been attempted. Biblical and Midrash themes appear particularly suited as material for a program of moral education, and the possibility of introducing new, research-oriented methods of instruction into Jewish education would be a welcome one.

With regard to social change, Jewish theaters can and should be vital media, not as isolated cynical statements, but as vanguards for the Jewish Community. And I would certainly hope that provisions are being made for a Partizanisher (guerilla) Theater at the 1971 national meeting of the Philanthropies.

Of course, there are more aesthetic goals for Jewish Theater: to become the most sensitive, skillful, pure expression of our people. However, we can not afford to neglect the ties between theater and the other fronts of the counter-culture. The notion of "art for art's sake" has never existed as part of our tradition. There are those among us who have even tried. The "In Zikh," or "Introspectivist" Group of American Yiddish poets (1920's) were deeply committed to producing a literature, written in Yiddish, free of cultural thematics, a worldly, intellectual song. In 1938, Jacob Glatstein, one of the founders, closed this poetic era with "A Gute Nakht Velt," and by so doing, became a poet of Judaism.

THREE CALIFORNIA POETS

NEELI CHERRY

meditations of rabbi ben ezra
when he said

"good morning"
and continued walking

like he was in warsaw
like he never was a skeleton, eighty one
pounds

HOLY SEPULCHRE POEM

(for todd and judy endelman)

the holy man
sprinkled water
on my head
and read a blessing.
"do you love your
savior?" he asked.

"we are his lambs" i
answered.

he gave me a candle, long, thin,
and i lit it, placing it in a gold
candle-holder, only
four inches from the calvary stone.

"it is customary to leave
an american dollar in the brown dish" he
said. "Poetry
is stronger than armies and presidents" i
told him.

"think of the olive trees on Gethsamene
or Coney Island custard stands, with a skinny
young sailor . . . pimples on his face and a pack of
rubbers in his left pocket . . ."

to feel the stony surface, the trembling
of sunflowers or hawks—

could Christ raise a flower from stone?

I remember a foto of Hitler and Benito Mussolini, standing
on a cliff—so much has happened since—

They were watching the sun
and seagulls and the color and the contrast.

LOWER EAST SIDE/NYC

watching the puerto rican girls
with their brown babies
move in waves
thru tenement mass transit problems
and plastic radio hallways
doors
parking lots and onions.

how can i tell them
that a man named hart crane
used to look at brooklyn bridge
and write poems?

and that the red chinese
drive by
in secret limousines?

how can i tell them
that the rabbis went to heaven
in blue chevroleets?

where are the huge
jewish mamas
with their sweaty laughter
and lusty cures?

they shrivel
and sit motionless
in suburban
stainless steel rest homes.

an orange peel
falls from a precinct window—
it is old man rosenberg or donahue, the
liquor store men; like in
babylon

JOSHUA

joshua i said why don't you
pull them down
like a house full of chicken bones
and he laughed at me
and i sat with my thin book and i read to him
about birds and armadillos and roaches and
he sighed and yawned and i told him
why don't you cave their chests and split
their bellies and i told him i said
joshua i am behind you and he eyed me suspiciously
and laughed and gave me another drink
and we made it that night
with some slave women
and we were too tired next morning
to slit anyone's belly, not even a mother
with child—

i said lets burn down the walls
and poison the water and desecrate their temple
and he winked at me
and he gave me another drink of wine

Church Of Holy Sepulchre/Big J, 1970

one shows
regions of stone another
has his hand out and
it is groping the
towers ascend the meaning

of poetry is to end
things to un-
learn, to leave books
behind, to feel the stony surface,
the wet paint of what is behind the trembling, say,
of a van gogh canvas; the death of christ itself on
this mountain under the grey dome of this
church is enough fire is enough
for me.

national past-time

two out,
bottom
of the ninth

pilate draws
a walk

barabbas gets
a single
and steals
second

men on
second and third

christ,
misses the sign
and lays down
a sacrifice bunt

it is not
whether you win
or lose
but how you
slaughter
the seed of europe

poker face

that i might have

my life

and
thirty-six for
the honey

say
we split
the difference

80 days
to complete

forty for
the desert

giving me
a grand total
of 84

and
i die
on monday

crack

two gravel
to
one sand
hair

its your
turn
to play sidewalk

EIGHT YEAR OLD CHARGED
WITH BREAKING THE BACK
OF OLD WOMAN

classified

god

puts
razor blades
in eve's
apple

and
women
forever

more
speak
with forked tongue

i love
you
some

times
ad man

stars and tripe

to go

1 sioux

2 hurons

½ yagnee

(scout for the cavalry)

1 mohawk

sorry sir,
without
a reservation
we can't fill
that order

JOEL ROSENBERG

*"We had a 'king' whom we found drunk in the road. . .but afterwards we came to
a man who stood by a sea of wine. We asked him to be our king."*

—Nahman of Bratzlav

THE DAY THE WORLD TURNED TO ICE

Winter moon. Clear skies,
a map of paths, from world to world,
brittle and shimmering,
drunk with ice, this world
sings against the clip-clop of chains.
Latter-day horses rear their frost-
shagged manes behind
the gleaming frames of bushes.
From behind a tree is dripped
a swan, its crystal wings
beating a world-long silence.
Sons of men are struck forever
in their most recent love or crime.
Horses' heads bob and bray
from hardened lakes.
I have seen a fugitive fall
to shatter in a thousand pieces.
And a wind runs ranging
through this nighttime world,
polishing its beams
to untold brilliance.

TEMPLE OF THE MOON

This man I watched was a Jew,
a survivor, you know,
a madman who told about the people there,
the rabbis, poets, and beggars
in pajamas in the mud.

He is an honest man
with a long finger and scars,
with black eyes and a hollow voice.
He stands in marble reform temples
with rabbis and heads of rabbis,
sits out ten speeches meant to frame his words,
this one who studied Talmud in the camps,
a kid who sat with living books,
whose Talmud choked on watery soup,
whose Commentaries sweat and stumbled in the mud,
he talks to camp counselors and Hebrew teachers,
sits out symposia with his thoughts.

I have gone to hear him
taken dates to hear him,
sat amid thousands,
Florsheims brushing carpets,
thousands of shoes, and hats,
and listened to what his black eyes saw,
saw him point at the moon
and say a hallowing for a dead kid,
for himself, for you, and me, and our dates.
And a great renowned rabbi
with Talmuds in his office
thanks him for his "message of faith."

A MADMAN WITH A BABY

Tonight, on Ocean Park walk,
I saw a madman running with a baby.
He galloped past the head shops and *shuls*,
and stared at me with burning eyes,
with a baby in a pastel blanket,
a man freaked out and frothing at the mouth,
giggling and running up Ocean Park Walk,
with the dogs howling at him.
I knew what to do. I had presence of mind.
I calmed passers-by and ran to get help,
and I lost him,
and no one knew what I meant
when I told what I had seen.
They smiled and said they hadn't seen it.
I hailed a cop and told him.
He nodded and drove away into the silence.
And I went looking for a madman with a baby
into alleys and lavatories,
until I wasn't sure what I had seen.

Maybe the baby was the madman's.
He belonged to him, and they were out
for their foaming evening gallop.
He would grow up a madman, too,
and the two of them, snickering and drooling,
the two of them, praying to the moon,
with the howling dogs of Venice,
the two of them and me,
running to get help for them,
the three of us, gurgling and burning,
guarding the mad beaches of Santa Monica,
the yew trees, the moon,
and the people inside their houses.

Venice, California
1968

ADMISSION TO GRADUATE STUDY

Indicate your plans for study for 1971-72.

(Did the sun grow out of the earth?

Did the earth grow out of the moon?

Where are we going? Where are we?

Do you notice how people are beginning

to carry bones, teeth, candiru,

bells, and clappers,

to manage the unknown?)

*Please include any additional information that will assist
the graduate Division in evaluating your application.*

(I do breathing exercises, I am

a vegetarian, almost,

I do not have a research project,

but I am worried about the world,

and I want to have more knowledge.

I am nauseous, also.

When I was little, I used to get that way

when the schoolbus came.)

Aug. 19, 1970

Santa Cruz, Calif.

IF

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A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID SHARIR

The following interview with David Sharir emphasizes the importance environment can play in the making up of an artist's style. Although his academic training was primarily western, he is clearly a child of the East. Jaffa alone, where he lives and works, provides the key to understanding the elements which go into Sharir's work. First under Mesopotamian control, then Greek under Alexander the Great, and in the succeeding centuries Roman, Moslem, and even Christian during the Crusader period, Jaffa displays a diversity of biblical, historical, and artistic traditions offering a wide range of influences all based on Oriental culture. Sharir shares with the people who shaped Eastern civilization a splendid sense of color and pattern, a love for richly decorated objects, and the decorative use of animal motifs in an abstract and imaginative manner; and to this he adds his own personal interpretation, which involves a spiritual as well as visual synthesis between man and everything around him.

—Marjory Supovitz April, 1970

Marjory Supovitz: It is two years since your last exhibit at the Pucker/Safrai Gallery in Boston. You continue to surround us with your joyous visions, which seem even more intense, for the most part. Would you elaborate on your philosophy?

David Sharir: I must tell you first of all that it is difficult to answer your question because, when I paint, I try not to consider philosophy. I try to paint as unintellectually as possible because I do not think that I am an intellectual painter. I have no system—no technical system. It's all a part of my attitude to life, but I don't think my attitude to life is philosophy in the classical determination of the word. I try to paint and to consider it as I do every other action of my life—for example, my family life, my social life, or anything that I like to do—because for me painting is a great pleasure and a tremendous opportunity to express things. It makes me happy as my family makes me happy. What is important for me is the action of the realization of things. And I think that is my "philosophy." I only paint because it is a normal action of my life.

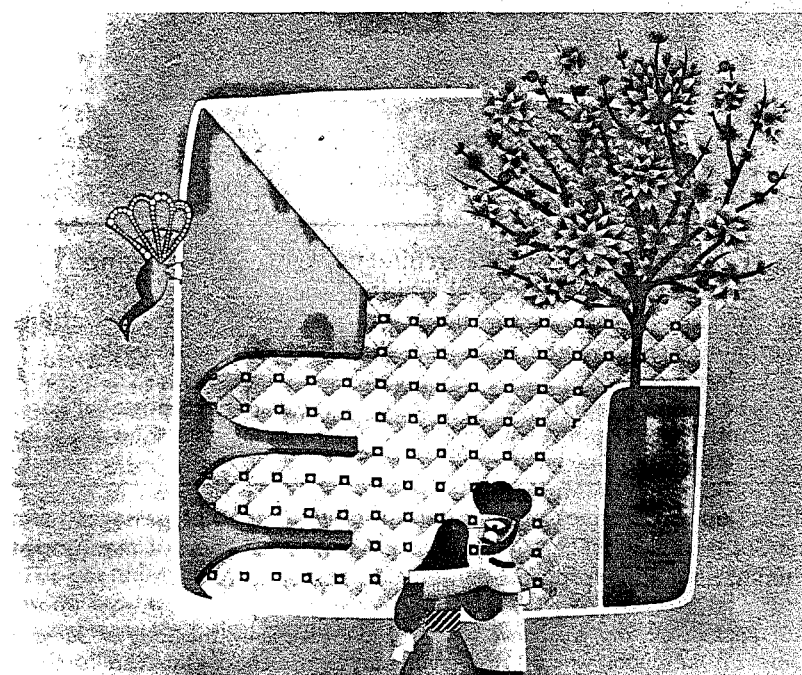
M.S. Are you painting life as you see it or as you hope it would be?

D.S. I try to consider life as a celebration. I don't paint life as I see it, for it would be very nice if life were as my pictures are. Yes, I think I paint life as I hope it would be. For me every creature in the cosmos—and I speak about my personal cosmos—is celebrating with all the other creatures. They can be insects, birds, persons, and even angels. I see all these creatures equally, concerning their

behavior. I am their director, and I decide for them what they should do and which kind of feast to choose, and I treat them all the same.

M.S. Your new oils are stylistically the same, but I see changes in your works over the past two years, dealing with a more sophisticated play with perspective variations and simpler compositions.

D.S. Yes, I agree with you, and I can explain it because I am a little outside of these things, and I can see all of them together. I think that this is the result of our residence in Jaffa over the past four years. Only now am I beginning to understand just exactly what it means to live in an Oriental city and to be a part of it, and what the spatial perspective is because I am inside Jaffa. In Jaffa or any other Oriental city the streets are narrow and buildings are close together, so that you don't have a point of view for getting a deep perspective. So you see everything flat. For instance, in *The Blue Courtyard*, which is the courtyard of our neighbors as seen from our balcony—looking from there, downstairs, one sees it more or less as flat. The line of perspective exists, but I do not paint it to the depth of the picture as it should be according to European rules of perspective. I paint it as I see it, flat on my eyes. And that is the reason you say it is sophisticated. Maybe it is a sophistication, but for me it is the only way to make it.



THE BLUE COURTYARD

M.S. What are the functions of color and shading in your works?

D.S. For me, colors are a natural thing. For instance, if I painted only with black (and such a thing has never happened yet) it would not mean that I wished to create a sad, melancholic, or evil mood. It would simply be that the black had a certain value of pigment that entitled its use, which I feel from the "eye" point of view. I use shading to create more variations of coloring. I am not looking for an atmosphere or mood. One could compare it to the utilization of shading in Japanese woodcuts—without the intention of creating a sunset or sunrise, just part of the work of art itself.

M.S. It seems to me that the *City of Angels*, which I really like very much, is an extremely important work in this exhibition. The architecture takes on the botanical forms of the figures in the sky. Would you talk a bit about the conception of that painting?

D.S. I would not like to talk about the conception of this painting, because I leave the philosophy and all summaries to the experts. But I can tell you what I see. There is a mixing among birds, insects, humans, plants, and architecture; and when I arrived at the opportunity to paint a house as a plant or man as a bird or insect, I really started to understand my own world better. Everyone has his own world, every boy and every adult. Only when you have the capacity to see it for yourself, and after that the talent to express it, you are an artist. Or better still, a complete man. What is important is to understand yourself, and I now know much better after doing this picture what is more or less my fundamental search for form and line. Now, when I can transfer completely house to insect, insect to bird, and bird to plant, and determine all of them in the same combination, I know this is a part of me. That is the importance of this picture. After this picture I have done the *Song of Songs* series and the *Paradise* in which these elements are more mixed.

M.S. I am fascinated with the architecture in all your paintings. I see very direct references to actual architectural styles. For instance, in *City of Angels* there is the dome of a mosque or of a Byzantine church like Hagia Sophia, with its arched windows at the base.

D.S. There is much more. You can see here the cupola of the baptistry of Lucca or Pisa, or you can see, if you want, Chinese or Japanese pagodas. This shows the many influences that my pictures are based on.

M.S. You have done seven watercolors which depict passages from the *Song of Songs*. They certainly are in the tradition of manuscript illumination. What prompted you to do this series?

D.S. First of all, my great love for the Bible—especially the *Song of Songs*. I know it from school, where I read it and sang the Israeli songs that are based on



CITY OF ANGELS

phrases from *Song of Songs*. Also, I prepared this series after I did the set and costumes for the Inbal Ballet group, an Israeli folk ballet entitled *My Sister, My Bride*, which was based on customs of marriage taken from the Israeli tribes of North Africa. I dedicated to this production a complete year of research into the sources. That is, what you can still find in Israel. And after a certain amount of time, I tried to forget everything and create from the beginning; for this spectacle was not an exact copy of the ceremony of marriage, but instead a modern interpretation of the old customs. And I researched the marriage contracts of Jewish tribes and based my set on a large gate which was represented—the Garden of Love. In the last moment of the performance, the gate closed and became a contract of marriage with all the traditional phrases and classical ornamentation interpreted in my own style. And from this came a double scope. For one thing, I created a new interpretation of the folklore. For another, my world became wider and wider because many new elements came into it. For example, all these elements of fantastic plants in *Song of Songs* came in after my interpretation for the Inbal performance because there are so many phrases and

paragons for the bride as perfumed plants and the Bible mentions many plants that we do not know at all except by their botanical names. This is a wonderful thing for the painter. If you don't know the thing, but the color of the world is so beautiful, you can start to use your imagination.

M.S. Is there anything in your work that can be identified as an actual plant?

D.S. Maybe something that I was accustomed to seeing near me. For example, in our neighbor's courtyard there is a pomegranate tree, and I have seen it for years, day after day, and I can't help but be interested in it. There is also the orange tree, which is typical to Israel. To me it is the most beautiful tree, especially in springtime when it makes fruit and flowers together. However, most of the things I invent.

M.S. Now let us discuss some of the sources that inspired you, beginning with the Sienese Trecento.

D.S. I love these things. I identify with them. Jaffa and Siena are completely different cities, but there are also similarities. They are cities which were *built*, not planned. The people always were adding something. It is like steps, like a pyramid, and in each surface you feel another generation. Jaffa is a very old city, one of the oldest in the world. One cannot live in a city without feeling the history of it. When I think about Jaffa, I cannot help but think of the central part of Siena, or San Gimignano, or other little cities in Tuscany and Umbria exactly as they were in the Trecento.

M.S. What about Persian miniatures? Are there direct references, or is this something more spiritual?

D.S. When I was a little child between the ages of five and nine, my drawings were not far from what I am doing now, and that was before I could have had any influences. The personal forms and personal attitude to color are the same, as is my personal attitude to ornamentation; that is, using ornamentation as a texture, blending flat surfaces with chiaroscuro surfaces and ornamental surfaces. Now I am completely conscious of my antecedents. I like Persian miniatures very much. I consider Persian and Indian art no less valuable than European pictures. I don't know how and why, but I feel that I continue a certain attitude toward painting which is almost forgotten in the West. Although my education is a western education, my origin is the East.

M.S. Your work opens up many different worlds for different people. I bring my visual experiences to your paintings, and I see Persian miniatures. Someone else may see Russian masterpieces in your work.

D.S. Doing these things, I feel myself connect to something that I am a part of. When I started to work on the research for the Inbal Ballet on the Jews from

North Africa (and my family is not from North Africa), I felt at home. It is a wonderful feeling to "belong to." Doing these things, I feel that I belong to generally all the painters, artisans, calligraphers, and jewelers who have done all these things in the East and in the West, but especially for my people, the Jewish people. Doing these things, I feel much more Jewish than I felt before. Not in a religious sense, but I feel an identification with a whole culture, with a civilization.

M.S. Does the work of contemporary artists such as Klee and Miro influence you?

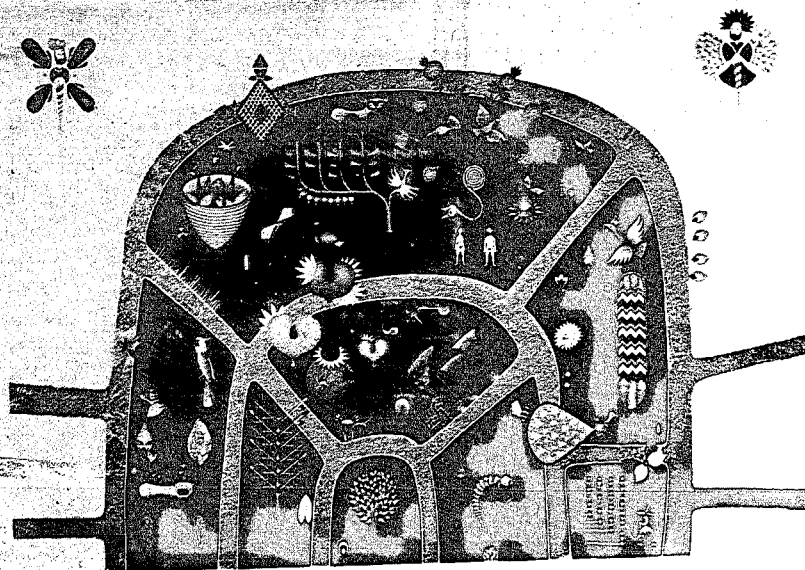
D.S. I think Paul Klee may be the greatest artist of the 20th century. Paul Klee has many sources, as many as pictures that he has done. For to be a man of the 20th century, you must be a man with "big eyes." Otherwise you really are a primitivist, and I am not a primitivist nor am I naive. I am a man of my time. I mention Paul Klee as the best example of an artist of today who could not create his own world without seeing many other things, but I do not think that he influenced me. I don't think one can be influenced by Paul Klee, one can only copy him badly. Miro, Klee, and all the painters, especially the painters of the surrealist and metaphysical movements, who have tried in the 20th century to express their own fantastic worlds and have tried to find their own mythology. I am a part of them. I could not paint like I do five hundred years ago. If I lived in Persia at that time I would have made miniatures like all the other painters did then. But only in our century can I do what I am doing with all the sources I have mentioned.

M.S. What about Israeli-artists specifically? You studied with Paldi.

D.S. I can tell you that his sources are not far from my sources. He is a very old master with a great deal of experience. But his way of expressing himself is very far from my way. He is not afraid to show all the things that he loves in life. His eastern sources are not from a romantic point of view of the East, but involve a real sense of color, composition, the real microcosmos that you find in Eastern art, the intimate relationship between the artist and every little piece of the picture. There is a dialogue between the artist and every inch of the picture. This is typical of Oriental art. And this can be seen in Paldi's work as well as mine.

M.S. How do you go about preparing to paint a picture? Do you make any preparatory sketches?

D.S. I usually make one sketch, which is a very technical sketch, but I don't make a preparatory sketch. I have an idea which is not clear to me, and to make it clear I make just one sketch, and during the preparation of this sketch the thing becomes clear to me. If my idea was right, it appeals to me, and this sketch is the base of the oil. I don't think about colors. When I have a good linear composition, I also have a good color composition.



PARADISE

M.S. I would like to sum up by quoting to you from Dr. Haim Gamzu's book, *Painting, and Sculpture in Israel*. "Artists in Israel should view themselves as continuing the tradition shown in the wall paintings of Dura Europas, illuminations in Passover Haggadas of the Middle Ages, and the artistic gold and silversmiths and metalworkers who devoted themselves to ritual objects which have preserved a specific Jewish note through the ages." You have already explained how you reflect your Jewish essence, but what do you think is your contribution to the development of art in Israel today?

D.S. My contribution to the art in Israel is (by being) a big contradiction to all that is being created now in Israel because the artists of Israel feel that they are provincial. This is not right, for when you feel yourself to be provincial, you begin to do provincialist work such as copying the novelties of Paris in the last ten to twenty years or those of New York from last year. I don't do that. When you feel yourself mature, and when you are sure that your world, however limited, is your own world, you can do masterpieces. I think that what I am doing in Israeli art is continuing that Jewish tradition which has been quite forgotten in Israel today. I am a Jew, and I want to be a part of my tradition. That's what I hope I do.

— Boston 1970

The Particular Grammar of Art

"Where?" is, almost always, a word for foe
(not just *ayfoh* but *oyev*)
not just what is some place outside us
— which "Where" is—
beyond us, unknown
possible shipwreck, foundering, fear.

The paintings in the barracks of Zahal
(I have seen a military post HQs at Navi Salih
which was a museum of enemy shells & "*oyev*" bullets"
and also of Japanese flower arrangements, zoological
trays of dun desert & mountain moths,
and a wall of Israeli painting), the Zahal paintings,
the Van Gogh blooms of a flaming love which is also
— always — hatred for what is not strongly loved,
those paintings, these paintings, are never "Where?"
but simply and—always—the meaning, the joy, of "Because."

Israel 1970

EXPATRIATE YID

"The first stone hit her in the fleshy part of her face, directly below her eye, seeming momentarily to become embedded there, but then dropped suddenly to the floor, releasing a slight trickling of blood as it fell. The second punctured her breast, and the third was such a huge boulder that it took three men to hurl it. The fourth split her skull open and thankfully delivered her from the excruciating pain of the first three. We were not being overly sadistic, but a proven adulteress has to be dealt with, particularly when the man who puts the horns on her husband is a gentile peasant. We suspected that she was taking advantage of her husband's nightly visits to the Talmud study, but we had to make sure. So one night, three of us—among us, the rabbi's son-in-law, a learned boy from Prague—the three of us went to the house, calculated when they would be lying with one another, and then burst into the room, bearing witness to her infidelity. The twenty-three oldest and wisest men in the community were appointed judges, I gave my testimony, (I was the best in the Yeshiva so I was chosen to be one of the witnesses. They wanted to give me some practical insights into the mechanics of our law.) and thirteen of the judges voted to find her guilty. The sentence was carried out the very next day.

"One time—I was very young then myself and heard the story from my father—one time, one of the men in the community, a wealthy boor who could hardly read from the prayer book, decided that he wanted to occupy the seat in the synagogue closest to the rabbi. Naturally, that seat was already taken and the occupant himself was a wealthy man, but he was so pious that he gave half his income to charity and spent six hours daily in the study house; a truly remarkable gentleman. At any rate, the boor decided that in some way he could dispose of the pious occupant then the seat would be his. He then informed the government's tax collector that the pious man was withholding money and that he was involved in a plot to assassinate the governor. Within two days, the pious man was incarcerated and hanged. Of course, the townspeople knew who was responsible but were frightened into inaction since the boor was now one of the governor's feared informers. The rabbi, however, came up with a solution and one Friday, when all the men were in the ritual bath, he personally drowned the boor. Which is why he was rabbi, because not only was he the most learned but he was the most courageous as well."

He has hundreds of stories like these—this old withered man with gray beard and sidecurls—which he tells to me, Caleb, his nephew, while he, uncle, lies there, strait-jacketed and strapped into bed—strait-jacketed because he has degenerated so, that he was found scouring the corridors of the old age home for assholes, and even offered to buy for mine on a recent visit. But he was offering to pay with old yellowed Talmudical volumes, so I didn't even consider, though it might have been interesting to see what he would—could have done had he the opportunity. But for antique books it doesn't pay to

take the trouble of unbuckling my pants in an old age home room where, at any moment, an attendant could just walk in, and myself, with pants dangling around my ankles and only yellowed book leaves to buoy me up for embarrassed explanations. . . It's not worth it, so I said, No.

He will die soon, poor uncle, and then I will have to accompany the body to Israel where it will be buried on the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem. He wants to be buried there so that when the dead are raised, after Messiah's coming, his old man's body won't have such a long trip to make—because legend has it that the skeletons of the pious dead will roll underground until they reach Jerusalem. And why should such an uncomfortable and probably painful roll be necessary when he could be buried just three hundred yards from the main center of activity, assuming, as uncle is of course, that he is among the pious who will be raised.

I'm a bit worried, though, that the plane might fall into the ocean, drowning all the passengers and the casket with uncle's body. And when the dead are raised, uncle and I will be raised too, but only to drown again, because we are being raised from the depths of the ocean, from beneath thousands of fathoms of water, and unless some provisions are made, no drowned man will ever reach Jerusalem.

What is most strange about my accompanying uncle's body is that uncle has a son and a wife. But the son won't go because he's a prick who hasn't been to visit his father in three years and the wife won't go because uncle won't let her. She's the one who turned him from religion to degeneracy and I know because it is one of uncle's favorite stories.

"Imagine, Caleb. A young man studies Talmud for almost an entire lifetime. Even his very young boyhood is spent in preparation for his life's work. And finally, after middle age, he begins to decipher the secrets of creation, delving into the mysteries of the Cabbalah. Yet he is still a man, but his wife refuses to give him access to the one way he has of relieving his physical tensions. Suddenly, she refuses to be a wife, though she still sleeps in the same bed as he does, and in the middle of her husband's sleepless nights, she inadvertently, or advertently, drapes her leg over his, stretches a hand out so as to land on his body, and thus heightens his fever and desire. And then, finally, after many weeks of abstention, she frenziedly relieves him, but not naturally. They spend days in bed together, discovering new and more devious ways of cohabiting. But the man is no longer young and is driven to sick bed, where he remains until his death, surrounded by the antique volumes of Talmud, which he loves but never opens. Imagine, almost an entire lifetime devoted to holy work only to have it spoiled by becoming too conscious of one's own body. God most certainly does not shine on such a one."

Naturally, aunt denies the story, saying that the old man just became too feeble-minded and stopped his studying because he couldn't concentrate any more. And his perversions? 'Just to keep him busy,' she says. 'He's only fooling around and doesn't expect to be taken seriously.'

Since uncle has been sick, aunt has moved in with me and I've heard her explanations quite often, though I never speak to her because uncle says it's best not to bother with women and uses his own life's story to prove the

point; but I *do* drum at her, on the table, in a code that she doesn't understand, and which she will never understand since I use a different code all the time, only the drumsticks remaining constant. But even though I never bother with her, the bitch is scrappy and has ways of getting at me, ways that always work: 'When your mother was sick and dying, Caleb, you never visited her and so you think that by pampering your uncle you will redeem yourself.' Which is bullshit because I never left my mother's bed, never left her, never. It was aunt who never visited even though it was her sister, her sister who was dying, who died. I never left her. It was her, aunt, the sister of the sister who died. Uncle explains it like this.

"As I have told you, I was the best in the Yeshiva. When it came time for me to marry, I was naturally given my choice of the finest, most beautiful girls from the wealthiest families. And your mother, Caleb, was exquisite. But, as Laban did to Jacob—I do not want you to misunderstand; in no way do I mean to imply that the situations were equal, neither was I a Jacob nor was your grandfather a Laban, however this is the only analogy I can think of at the moment—so, as Laban did to Jacob, after I expressed interest in your mother, the younger daughter, I had committed myself to your grandfather's family. And, as was customary, the younger daughter could not precede the elder in marriage. So I was wedded to your aunt, much to your mother's and my consternation."

When I'm gone from the house and visiting with uncle, I worry that aunt will discover the box that contains dirt from my mother's grave and which I keep underneath my bed to hide from aunt because she's liable, from what uncle tells me, to piss on the dirt from mother's plot and will piss on uncle's too, when his time comes, squatting and pissing on alternating boxes of dirt. And then will piss on me, like she does every day, when I get home: 'You didn't even say the mourner's prayer during the year of my sister's death.' And I drum at her: I did so, did so, screw you, I did. With drumsticks on the table: I did so, a year, a whole year, and you piss in my box which you can't deny because I can smell your filth, bitch. Constant drumsticks but she'll never learn my code because I alter it every day: Bitch, I did, a year, and you piss. But I won't for you, not a year, not a day, because of what you did to your sister and to uncle who is dying, who died. In code with drumsticks.

Since aunt has been living with me, there have been some radical changes in my room's structure. My bitch aunt is an obsessive candle lighter. Not a day goes by that she doesn't light a candle for some dead relative or friend. And always, the candles are set up on the floor where we've been getting massive accumulations of wax, some of which I take now and then to uncle so that he might construct something from the material and he has, in fact, already constructed a fantastic set of wax genitals with which he can work wonders. And the room has to be dark so we can get the full effect of the flame and sometimes I feel like I'm in a tomb, what with the grotesque wax piles, the darkness, and the flickering of the candles: 'You don't have enough respect for the dead,' she says. 'Or at least you don't understand the gravity of the persecution our people have undergone.' Which translates itself into her

mourning style: 'You could light a candle a day for twenty thousand years and still not have remembered all the dead of the past few generations. The number,' she says, 'Is awesome and the thought of so many murdered dead should be sobering and thought provoking.' So what she does is she mourns the number but never the individuals. She can't say for sure which of her relatives died because they were *our* people and which were run over by buses, or died of cancer, or in their sleep of old age. For her parents (my own grandparents), though, she's got some sort of evidence, or at least believes, that dad was turned into a purse and mom a bar of soap, and so she carries a bar of soap around in her pocketbook to commemorate the certainty and lights candles for the number, every day, to mourn the uncertainties.

But I've been on to the mourning thing for quite a while, keeping the box under the bed, the box with the dirt from my mother's plot, which I drag out once a year, on the anniversary of her death, and light a candle on the box's lid. And all this before aunt came along to trouble me with her daily ceremonies. When uncle dies, a box will be set aside for him, but not for aunt because of what she does and did to those who are dying and who died. And each box will be labelled, so that there will be order; labelled, each with a name and date for easy identification, and maybe a chart on the so no one will be forgotten. Everything orderly, with a system. There's no reason why tradition should be haphazard so I'm starting one of my own.

"I am very pleased to hear that, Caleb. Every generation has found the need to establish its own tradition; the generations of the diaspora, that is. When I was young, we were still able to administer our own laws, as I have demonstrated to you with my story of the adulteress. Afterwards, when the government became more strict and all judicial matters were supposed to be referred to them, we deal with our sinners by excommunicating them, which was quite an effective punishment in our ghetto community. After the war, when our people were spread out over the four corners of the earth, and there was no longer any autonomy, our tradition manifested itself in ritual. The generations are weakening, you can see that for yourself. The Talmud tells of a man so holy that he was able to convince the river Jordan, in a give and take dialogue, to divide itself so that he might pass through without having to waste the extra time it would take to go around the river. You see, Caleb, what is possible. We must strive, strive."

I visit in uncle's room and tell him about my tradition decision which he finds gratifying enough to honor with a speech, but he doesn't appear to be paying much attention to what he's saying, keeping himself happy, instead, by playing with the wax genitals and staring out of his window into another window across the courtyard where a girl is undressing and, seeing him stare at her, who begins to rub her tits against the glass until you could actually see the nipples turn hard and red, when an attendant comes in to pull the shade.

"I have been thinking, Caleb, and it has occurred to me that perhaps the trip to Israel will not be necessary. The really great men from amongst our people never actually died and, indeed, their remains have never been found. What has happened to them is that they have been translated directly from this world into the next world. You remember the story of Elijah for whom a

blazing chariot descended from heaven to carry him, still living, to meet the holy Presence, face to face. Or Moses, who was put to sleep by a kiss from God and was then raised to a level even higher than the angels themselves. That is what I would like for myself, not a blazing chariot or a holy kiss, but a translation, so that even my physical body might transcend this world, leaving nothing for burial. Why should I burden you, dear nephew, when I have already been too great a burden. I have led a holy life and mine should not be too impossible a request. All I ask for is a mere translation."

And all the time playing with the genitals, poor uncle, but imagine the colossal joke; a dead old man, bearded and sidecurled, with an immense skull cap covering whatever traces of hair there might be on top of his head, laid out on the coroner's table because the law requires that a certificate of death be filled out. And the coroner, in the space on the certificate provided for cause of death, fills in, Kiss from Presence. And maybe, because the body is supposed to be transported by plane to Israel, a little embalming fluid has to be injected and so the coroner stands over the body, with hypo poised in hand, when suddenly the body just begins to rise, as if filled with helium, and passes through the ceiling, just like that. So he tries to explain it to whoever is in charge, that the body just floated away. But of course they won't believe him, thinking that maybe coroner, in some strange state of frenzy, devoured uncle's body and is now trying to lay the blame on supernaturalism. The poor guy loses his job because of you, poor uncle.

What I would really like to do for the old guy is to get him away from here somehow, secretly, so that aunt will never know exactly what happened and won't be able to play the mourning wife, the bitch, for which she's been practicing, with her candle lighting, for years. Once he dies, she will come along with me and the body, even though he doesn't want her because of what she turned him into, but what can a dead man do to prevent. And if she acts like she's grieving, gathering pity from all around, then what could I do, even if I wanted to, and since I'm not talking to her, there's nothing I can say anyway. So either I leave now with a live uncle or do something to the body once he's dead so that no one will know that he's dead, like what he told me about Francis Joseph.

"I spent the duration of the first war in Austria because the emperor Francis Joseph, kind benevolent Francis Joseph, was partial to our people, having recognized our intelligence and acumen. And believe me, Caleb, he was loved not only by our people but by *all* his subjects as well; loved as a noble and magnanimous individual. It was the assassination of his nephew, you remember, that brought on the war and his subjects fought bravely to help the emperor revenge himself. At the height of the war, however, in late nineteen sixteen, he died. Intelligently, the heads of state realized that if the death were publicized, the Austrian armies would cease marching immediately, since in truth they were fighting only as a tribute to the *live* Francis Joseph. Therefore, they concealed the death by cleverly placing electrodes on the dead emperor's body and had him seated for several afternoons on the balcony of his palace, reviewing troops, and waving to them by means of electrical impulses. It was a magnificent stroke of brilliance. But, of course, after his

death, our people were no longer as welcome as before."

And not a bad idea for me either, if I could only sneak in to apply electrodes to uncle right after he dies and have him waving and kicking so that the attendant will think that what he thought was death was only a coma of some sort. And then I'd have to sneak the wired body out of the home, probably late at night when no one pays attention. I'll have to remember to take mother's box out from underneath my bed without aunt knowing and then, with box in hand, I'll board the plane to Israel, wheeling uncle up in a wheelchair and having him smile lecherously at the stewardess by fixing some electrodes to the insides of his mouth. And then we'd be in Israel, waiting for the dead to be raised, just me and mother, with aunt still in my room, still lighting her candles for the deceased, and uncle with mother and me, electrically working wonders with his set of wax genitals until the very end.

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Listening to J., What J. said, or may have

Listen to this story:

When Rav Kutler came to America,
he drove
a strange suburban route.

teaching, as he was, to open inside,
he pulled away the curtains in new jersey,
raise blinds. which reminds me,

in Vienna, Reegner says,
they threw him out
university windows.
some said they weren't
until fallen
silently cursing the perfect gardens,
while only dormitory away,
the orchestra plays Bach
in a straight line
through stained glass.

teaching to open up a soul,
as he was,

driving, j. says, from lakewood
to brooklyn,
he wanted to shift lanes

in his mind he glanced quickly
from Hanasi to Ravinah.

as they were closer to toll
than to messiah, a disciple
warned (oi, he may know Talmud,
he no traffic)

Rav, we'll back the cars up
from here to Philadelphia.

Never mind, he decided,
and it was law.

Later on,
as was their habit,
they pressed him for a story.

Later, he explained—
I saw that in our line
one hands the change
to a machine.
While in the one we rode through
a man's rough hand
outstretched over this diaspora.

It was better,
was it not?
that the man should not feel
a machine can do his work.

They say we learn from this
the traffic of a tzaddik.

Some say, (but very few believe),
the hudson parted when Rav Kutler died.

Stephen Levy

Oh God, Now What, Dad

I am driving around with my father
on the Lower East Side, doing
business. It is late
Saturday morning. Going down
Orchard Street, he points out
a bordered up storefront, a
synagogue with the word
Sephardic on the door. "That's
where I used to go with my father."

PUTTING NAPANONEE DOWN

A Lobster in the Dark

For Steve and Nancy,
Après le cauchemar
Le matin embrasse les yeux

Listen, my name is Evan Wexler and I'm Jewish and I write. What I write usually is speeches for guys like the President of the Toronto Kiwanis Club, or the Chairman of the Kentucky Homophile Society, or the Chief of the Gravenhurst Fire Department. Why I write for guys like these is because they'll pay me. I once asked a guy like this why he paid me to write for him and he said it was because I had a knack for phrasing things in a fine, catchy way. I guess what he meant was I had appeal. For instance, once he wanted to say something to the effect that young radical thinkers are so idealistic they can't see what's going on in front of them. He wanted to make the point that ideals are lovely but not sufficient to support life. The way I put it was this: "Living at the height of idealism is like trying to navigate a course using only a perfect roadmap of the universe. Picture a guy driving his car with a perfect roadmap pasted across the inside of his windshield. Picture everybody doing that. That's the height, or the pit, of idealism."

I really like getting people to picture fine, catchy things like this.

I learned about fine and catchy from a friend of mine named Pugel Karnapovich. Pugel is his nickname. His real first name is Palyerin. Most people who meet him think he is sloppy and queer. He always wears his pants baggy, for instance, and his teeth are off-white and he's one of the literati. I like him anyway, because he always has something enlightening to say about New Jersey or Miami Beach and because he and I keep coming to the agreement that everybody else is crazy. Also he knows a lot about the gradualness of inevitability and the inevitability of gradualness; this impresses me. Also he knows a lot about modern, mass, technocratic society.

He learned everything he knows about modern, mass, technocratic society by flying around from one part of it to another with his eyes and ears open. He calls modern, mass, technocratic society by a very funny name. He calls it America. We think it is funny that modern, mass, technocratic society should be called America because we realize there is nothing intrinsically modern, mass, or technocratic about America and we realize there is nothing intrinsically American about modernity, mass and technocracy; we think the union of technocracy and America is nothing less than a matchmaker's wet dream and the fact that it's so real and so absurd makes the universe seem like someone's hilarious joke. I mean, what could be *funnier* than *American Airlines*? Pugel used to make a practice of flying on only American Airlines because they had only one flight and it was always the same, no matter where you were going; this made it both easier to memorize the system timetable and more feasible to learn about the environment. Pugel once said, in fact,

that there was no better way to learn about America than in the air; the American way.

Pugel told me one night at Camp Napanonee that the most important thing a writer must know about writing in America was that it should be fine and catchy. Fine, he said, means you'll be sufficiently proud of it to want to show off. Catchy means it'll sell. That's where I first met Pugel, by the way, Camp Napanonee. It's a big, poorly kept summer camp with frogs, just for middle class Jewish kids, in the Vermont mountains, and I both loved it and hated it, if you know what I mean. Pugel and I went there every summer for ten years, and we talked about it all the days of our lives, as the guys in the Haggadah used to say.

It got to the point where we needed something to talk about besides Camp Napanonee and American Airlines, so Pugel started a magazine for bright, sensitive, alert and spiritually potent Jewish college kids so they could pretend their friends were dull, defensive, stoned and spiritually famished and write for them. And so he could sit back and say fine, catchy things about them all. He called it *The Renaissance Review*. I quickly wrote him and said he might as well have called it *The Perfect Roadmap* and he answered that my suggestion was too abstract, too imaginative, to sell; and besides, what the hell did I mean? It hardly mattered, of course, because Pugel and his rebirths—he published four of them a year for eight and a half years—quickly became what trusty dope peddlers everywhere call a hit. I gave him several film reviews to print ("Talmudic Influences in Fellini," "Jean Luc G-dard and the Apostles," "A Brief Expose of Gertrude Stein, Martin Buber and Akira Kurosawa") and he took me for fancy lunches I paid for. One autumn Sunday, while we were reminiscing over *crepes framboises* and coffee cake about how the magazine got started, he leaned over to me with his eyes turned up to twelve and said, "Meanwhile, Wexler, when are you going to share your rubies of sociological wisdom with our readers?" I was really a sociologist, which was why I had been writing movie reviews.

"When I can think of something sociological to write about that's fine enough for me and catchy enough for you," I said. This was off the cuff, like a drip of salad dressing; I had not thought of my mind as a jewel before, I liked the image, the image stoned me. "Rubies of Wisdom," I continued, "I can't even think up anything as catchy as that."

"Well, anything will be catchy and nothing will be catchy, if you get my point," he said. I couldn't get his point of course, because I was waiting for him to finish swallowing the wine and make his next point, which was exactly the point, I suppose. When he saw me waiting he said, as though from a script he'd been learning for years, "Why don't you do something on Napanonee?"

"Shit, I hate even thinking about the place," I said. "Bluestine is such an incredible prick, do you realize what an incredible prick Bluestine is? Do you realize what she's been doing for all these years?"

He realized. Bluestine, Pearl Bluestine, was the director of Camp Napanonee. The first year I went to her for a job she kept me waiting an hour and a half in a board room with one copy of the last issue *The Saturday Evening Post* ever published. I read the advertisements. She called me into her room as

I was contemplating having any woman of my choice if I came up to the taste of Kools and, after slumming through my file—she had seen me come and go through every summer since puberty and apparently her agents had seen me come and go and their supervisors had seen them see me, and all these people had somehow managed to record what they had seen inside this folder, this folder like a private Torah—and after staring at me, and taking three long distance phone-calls, and staring at me again, she spoke.

"Smoke pot?" she said.

"Oh yeah, oh yeah," I said. "Yeah," I said again, to cover the smell of my brain cells undergoing fission, "I tried it a couple of times last year." In my left coat pocket was three and a half grams of the sweetest, the mellowest, the all-time most destructive Syrian hashish ever inspired, or expired, by a Jewish boy, and I didn't feel like an enemy sympathizer, either. "Don't smoke it now," I said, being as absolutely truthful as I could at the moment. Her eyes became hyphens.

"Yes," she said, and her face was full of a thoroughly titillated disgust, "Young people have to experiment, don't they. Well, I don't like pot in my camp!" She said "pot" the way your mother said "nocturnal emission."

"Can you do a piece on them?" Pugel wanted to know. "Sociological but abstract? Really hard hitting? Can you put Napanonee down on paper?"

"I don't know," I said. "I think so, I'll certainly enjoy trying."

Never has human self knowledge fallen to a more humiliatingly low level than when I smiled at Palyerin Karnapovich while he ate the coffee cake I had paid for and said, "I'll certainly enjoy trying." I did *want* to enjoy trying, but it turned out that I was *in fact* to enjoy trying about as much as I enjoyed Camp Napanonee, which was about as much as Pearl Bluestine enjoyed smoking pot, though I'm sure she wanted to, badly.

For seven months and eleven days, I worked on what I thought would be both an obliteration and a revelation of Camp Napanonee in thoroughly innocuous, metaphorical language. My duodenum pulsed, my ruby mind honed itself into a poisoned dart. My venom steeped like Shropshire tea. My fingers became bayonets, my soul was Kaiser Aluminum. Pointed, sharp, metallic, venomous, I eventually submitted a simple but poignant description of the procedures utilized by adolescent male Kenyan baboons to establish the harems of five females each in which they normally spend adult life. Among young baboons, I said, there are about as many males as females; male baboons live their adult lives happily only as the masters of harems containing at least five females. Somewhere in the process of growing up, I said, the male adolescent baboons have to put four-fifths of their friends out of the action. I described in my article several interesting ways a boy baboon might eliminate four of his friends, and still have time to keep his women occupied. I said at the very end of my paper that I had researched the subject at the Nichols Zoo in Cambridge, Massachusetts and done field observation at a place called Camp Napanonee, which was a big, poorly kept summer camp with frogs and with people who resembled Kenyan baboons as closely as any I had seen in America. I wrote in a very fine, catchy style and I spent a whole week thinking of a fine, catchy title. Finally, I came up with one which seemed to

encyst not only the business, art, and spirit of Kenyan baboon culture but also the business, art, and spirit of Camp Napanonee.

What I called my article was, "The Baboon Mafia or Bacon Before Wampum." I wanted to imply that there are some people who, with respect to friends, lovers and the social process, would rather fight than switch. I sent the piece along to Pugel with a note that said he should publish it next to a picture of a teenage boy with a black eye eating a banana in front of something middle class Jewish kids dig enough to hoard and preserve, like bacon or Hebrew schools.

Two weeks later, I got a note from him. It read:

Dear Wexler,

Can't use your piece. No Jewish content. Besides, it's too much like Philip Roth and Kurt Vonnegut to be unique and not enough like Philip Roth and Kurt Vonnegut to sell. Try again.

P.

P.S. *What's this bacon before wampum shit?*

I called him up and asked what he meant by "No Jewish content."

He said, "I mean there isn't anything in your piece you have to be Jewish to understand."

He asked me what I meant by this bacon before wampum shit.

I told him I meant it was possible to care more about eating bacon or about not eating it than about trading wampum, and that I found it rather interesting he thought of it all as shit. "Beads are really important," I said but I knew he was sleeping. "And I really don't know about trying again," I said. "I haven't the faintest idea what to say."

"Don't worry about that," he said. "Trust America. You'll get the faintest idea what to say."

He was absolutely correct.

I submitted my faintest idea about Camp Napanonee a week later. It was a rather straightforwardly opaque description of things in my mind referent to me and the quality of my experiences at camp during the summer Pearl Bluestine threatened to fire me for making out with Heidi Freivelt on the steps of my cabin when I should have been on guard duty. She said guard duty was an absolutely vital part of camp security, in case one of the kids got sick in the middle of the night and couldn't take care of himself, for instance. My kids were sixteen and half years old. So was Heidi Freivelt but she was a C.I.T. because her father was a rabbi and Pearl Bluestine always catered to those. Heidi Freivelt had a broken arm that summer.

I gave my faintest idea of Camp Napanonee a fine, catchy title which I hoped would convey to the reader the essence of the writer's feelings about the subject, since there was more plain objectivity in the piece itself than I really wanted. Sometimes, when I cannot help myself from being plainly objective in a piece, I give it a fine, catchy title which has no objectivity at all. I think this habit of mine is something like drinking chocolate milk with my kosher roast beef and I like it very much. The fine, catchy title I gave my

faintest idea of Camp Napanonee was: "Once There was a Way to Get Back to Camp Napanonee But it was Obfuscated in the Impending Gloom, or Bacon Before Wampum."

The best part of my faintest idea for pure subtlety and impetuous sarcasm was the first one hundred and twenty-nine words, five commas, one semi-colon and four periods. They went like this:

My name is Jake Infarb and I'm Jewish, of course, and I never had braces on my teeth. Either physically or telepathically, I spent the entire sixth decade of the twentieth century at Camp Napanonee, me and three hundred other Jewish kids. Camp Napanonee is located on the southwestern fringe of a small lake which branches off a bigger lake known as Lake Khachabrisk which itself is a mere puddle in the collection of ponds and pools known as the High Indian Lakes of Vermont. "Napanonee" is an old Iroquois word for "slimy rope," or "blue tube"; the Iroquois used it to refer to the part of a pregnant woman she must throw away and forget about if her newborn baby is ever to grow up on its own.

The rest, as I said, was straightforwardly opaque and Pugel Karnapovich couldn't see through it any better than I could. He wrote me to try again, to be more open with my emotions. He said to hurry, and to make it about twice as long. He also said I should tell some stories that would be relevant for the general reader.

I spent some time thinking about the general reader.

I could think of only two stories about Camp Napanonee that a general reader might find relevant and neither seemed to capture more than the bleakest, most dilute surface quality of Napanonee's thoroughly unctuous deprivation.

One I remembered from years ago when I was a camper and a fellow we nicknamed Alvin the Asshole was in my bunk. It wasn't that Alvin behaved like an asshole, or looked like one, or anything else in this line of thought you might care to imagine. It was that one guy was the brain and another guy was the armpit and Alvin was the asshole, and so we conspired to initiate him into the cream-puff society one rainy afternoon when virtuous activity had been called off in favor of what was called "bunk time." The initiation to the cream-puff society is performed as follows: the group encircles the novitiate on his bed; the novitiate is presented with the alternative of either jerking off or getting the shit beaten out of him; the novitiate makes his choice and behaves accordingly. Either way the novitiate gets into the society. Needless to say, Alvin the Asshole was the first human being to whom membership had ever been offered.

He chose to masturbate, but in vain. No sooner had he pulled down his pants than our counsellor entered to bring us to services. We were always praying at Napanonee, when we weren't cream-puffing somebody or jerking off or planning raids or just decaying. At services I prayed that somebody would enlighten Alvin the Asshole and right afterwards, at dinner, he threw a handful of pepper in my face.

The other story was about Frederick Proctor Lilithstein who was a camper of mine a few years later. One rainy afternoon, his bunkmates decided they wished to urinate on Frederick Proctor Lilithstein. They encircled his bed, on which he was enriching himself with a Batman comic book, and proceeded to tint his underwear with their excess bodily fluids. He said not a word, but an hour later practically murdered one small fellow from Peoria who had been outside necking with his girlfriend during the ritual and had asked the victim whether he would lie down again so he could have his turn.

As I said, neither of these parables in the telling represented to me more than a watery hint of the actual experience of Camp Napanonee. As with all high quality degradations, so with these: you had to be there to believe them.

I was getting increasingly frustrated about the article anyway. It was making me think of my best friend Dorfner, whom I had met at all places— Camp Napanonee, and to whom I had taken an instantaneous and deep liking because of his pleasant and uninhibited dignity and his quick, goofy laughter. I was remembering how we played in Napanonee together and managed to survive to talk about it, and how we tripped up to Vermont one fall but never quite made it to Montpelier though we wanted to. Vermont in fall we loved like a deep cold pool. Dorfner.

Now it was Yom Kippur and I had very little to meditate upon but the deep cold pools of Vermont in fall, laughing in my mind like Dorfner and like water over stones, and the useless thick nostalgia from Camp Napanonee tugging from behind like a traffic cop in Trieste. Trieste hates you, so you speed; "What do you want with me," you say to the traffic cop who has tagged you from behind, "Leave me alone, I'll take it up with the judge!" "On the street," he says, "*I am the judge.*" And the useless thick nostalgia.

"Listen," I sat down and wrote Karnapovich for redemption, "Listen, I can't even get up the balls to *atone* for what I did at Napanonee, or to *laugh* about it, let alone tell the story. When I conceive of what I witnessed and tolerated there, and of how I chose to stay to witness and tolerate more, I am made as dust in the road of human sacrifice, I am made to blow in the wind like dust. If you really need to print something, tell the story yourself. Tell the story of how I tried to tell the story. Tell them I can't even go to shul and cry. Tell them I played at Napanonee for ten years and survived to remember, and all I want is to find my best goofy friend Dorfner and trip out to Idaho with him. There are bald eagles in Idaho, and high black mountains, and very few Jews and no summer camps. Tell them I'll be standing in the high black mountains of Idaho, not trying to remember Napanonee anymore. Tell them I told you all this. Tell them I told you trying to remember Napanonee is like trying to enjoy a fine, catchy lobster in the dark, and anyone who's really lived and learned there will know exactly what I mean."

I went outside to find a mailbox and it was as though some imaginary fire had caught the borders of the leaves, and there was a yellow light through the bottoms of the leaves, and the sun and the wind and the leaves dying made me think of slow time or listen in my mind to a piano. So I heard a

piano touched by sun as sun will touch polished wood and touched by wind
as wind will touch opened surfaces and touched by leaves as crackling things-
dull and singed will touch fine, live strings.

Walking and thinking then about where I had been tranquil and where I
had gone I realized that even American Airlines gets to Idaho, and that I had
writer's cramp.



Alternatives

The question is, Amnon
whether the vegetables
shall grow over the edge
of the space designated
garden
until the roots
of carrots
hang like threads
into the shelter

Or whether
the shelter
where the children sleep
every night of their lives
shall have the land

Or to say it another way
whether we shall think
of oxygen and hunger
and alternate escape routes
below the ground
or this shovel, these seeds
this ripe fruit
this bit of earth
under our feet, Amnon

SARA, Zev Shanken LAUNDRY WORKER SINCE 1935, KIBBUTZ NADIV

The nature of her smiles
Against the folding shades of afternoon,
Strengthening hues like collars' frayed
And put against a candle light,

Reveal the final radiance
That need not mock its youth
But like an aging pioneer
Re-marks the trail and laughs.

TOWARD A POETICS OF FAITH

Dedicated to Professor S. Ralph Harlow

If I were not profoundly convinced that esthetic experience is connected with authentic religious insight, I would probably stand outside the frontiers of faith, isolated and silent in the wilderness of disbelief. But through poetry I have been able to imagine some of the emotions of those who have been touched with a love of God, and my doubt has grown into an abiding and powerful yearning, a desire to extend my contact with the superficial Judaism of my youth. As did many American Jews, I understood Judaism as simply a system of concepts and ceremonies. I attended synagogues in which sanctity was often replaced by sanctimoniousness and dignity, and heard people reaching to God through oratory rather than prayer. A poetic approach to the texts of religious tradition, and to the problem of faith, I believe, can replace the unquestioning and secure creed of our ancestors, which the modern mind finds too simple. A poetics of faith can confront the complexities of doubt with a positive commitment to seek the presence of God in human life.

For most modern readers removed from traditional faith, religious words represent only a dry archeology of belief; they are merely picturesque and not to be taken seriously, these dead relics of archaic modes of thought. For the overly rationalistic and literal-minded, the words of tradition are not "relevant to modern life and thought," to use a cliché which points to the plight of many contemporary theologians who cannot understand poetic language. If we consider the relative permanence of religious texts, and the transiency of current trends of thought, we should see that the fundamental religious problem is not one of intellectual relevance, but one of spiritual presence. The strength of religion has always been its capacity to challenge corruptions of social life from the perspective of eternal values, to judge reality with a feeling of how the God of the prophets might function in our lives. A poetic approach to religious language — especially to that of prayer — should provide us with such an intimation of the eternal.

One important task of the synagogue is to keep active our responsiveness to the sacred, to educate our receptivity to the holy. Unfortunately, many modern religious services are emotionally crippled, intellectually drab and monotonous. The synagogue is too often a theater, the altar a stage for praying demonstrations, and the rabbi a salesman demonstrating a familiar gadget. The absence of vibrant religious belief and spiritual commitment is only emphasized by the comfort and architecture of the edifice. Perhaps our rabbis are victims of the routine and conventional demands of their jobs: they must show happiness at weddings, grief at funerals, and a sense of wonder

before the Holy Ark. How many of us are experts at silent meditation? What importance do we attribute to the inward truth of worship, to the private and secluded feelings of our silent world?

Our inner world of imagination is a place of infinite possibility, for our thoughts and dreams are not immediately challenged by the limits of the material world. Although inwardness can be a refuge from the tension and restlessness that pervades our daily lives, it is also an abode of richness, strength and inspiration. It is within the depths of our solitary mind, amidst calm and repose, that an ideal vision of reality is conceived. Dreaming is not always escape: it can be creative vision. The passage from contemplation to action, from idea to fact, is stimulated by an emotional pledge to the content of our visions. With this vibration of love for an idea, we are more likely to fulfill a cherished value.

Poetry is one means of turning dreams into deeds. Few of us are capable of uniting our deepest desires with words, of expressing our unformed and inchoate yearnings. Reading poetry helps us to connect words with hidden insights and carries us into new universes. A sense for the power of words can only be stifled by an exclusively rationalistic and utilitarian view of language, in which language is subservient to reality as we already know it. Words have values as well as meanings; they suggest emotions. Words can signify several things at once: the poetic word always says more than it means. Poetry speaks to our inner lives, and carries into a creation what we have wished. In poetry, an inward reality threatens the outside world with transformation.

Poetic imagination applied to religion, for example, is a means of suppressing time: we can imagine ourselves in another civilization, in a culture that responds to God. We live in the twentieth century far removed from the faith and love of God which characterized prophetic consciousness, the awe and amazement which electrify the atmosphere of the Bible. Our dilemma is to regain the immediacy of God's presence to which prophets and mystics have testified, and whose experiences provide the groundwork of subsequent religious practice. Without a personal search for truth, our ritual can become meaningless routine. We can imagine sharing the feelings of our ancestors by an act of sympathetic historical imagination, through an inward contemplation of religious texts. Through the poetry of tradition we can abolish the time span separating us from the intuitions of the ancient prophets and partake of their righteous anger and faith. In this way, God's presence becomes manifest through us, and the potential of our religious heritage, dormant in sacred words, can be applied to life as we now find it. Poetic imagination is a manner of reviving the eternal spirit of old words.

The writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel probably best exemplify the poetic approach to religious tradition available in our time. This great religious philosopher and poet writes with an intelligence sustained by loving piety, and his often incandescent poetry conveys to sensitive readers the passion of his experience of Judaism. The most mystical and morally committed of modern Jewish documents, Heschel's books seem rather unappreciated by most rabbis. Too few of us have studied *Man is Not Alone*, *God in Search of Man*, *The Sabbath*, *Man's Quest for God*, or *The Prophets* in synagogue schools, or even

in seminaries and colleges. Our relationship to Heschel's writings may be said to reflect the quality of our inner participation in a Jewish experience of religion. For the pious reader privileged with traditional faith, Heschel represents an example of the wisdom of accepted observance, for the believer is blessed with a preestablished power of empathy with the sacred content of religious writings. But even the reader deprived of solid faith may still find in Heschel a spiritual ideal to be pursued. Both require an understanding of poetic language: the former, to project his intimate emotions into traditional behavior so often desiccated and rendered unconscious by habit; the latter, to enable him to experience empathically and imaginatively the emotions of faith contained in written prayers. The harmony of religious language and spiritual experience is attained when both such individuals can meet in a tacit awareness of how God might function in their lives.

Endowed with an intimate interest in primary texts of religious insight, a modern Jew can therefore participate in their words, opening himself to an actual experience of the sacred. A poetics of faith — a study and actualization of the evocative power of religious language — could render us more receptive to ultimate theological issues and situations. For traditionalists, poetry could nourish their intellectual assent to *halacha* with the inner joy of *agada*.

But it is the individual who is unsure of the existence or of the nature of God who can benefit most from a poetics of faith. The doubter, unlike the nonbeliever who is certain of what he rejects, is open to all possibilities; if he is bold, he welcomes the unheard of, the unproven. The doubter, in fact, possesses that treasure of intellectual humility without which we cannot appreciate poetry. For the poetry of religion speaks to our spirit in a tongue we can barely understand; it speaks of what we do not already know, of what we cannot completely know: the involvement of God in the life of man and nature. A poetics of religious faith can help us to imagine the essentially unimaginable.

The force of prayer, in particular, arises from a longing to know what we cannot; prayer can nurture our desire to love God when we cannot adequately love our fellow man. A poetics of faith is built on the abyss that lies between belief and desire. It requires a theology of doubt, poised on the tension between man's aspirations to divine understanding and the frailty of his intellectual lust. A poetics of faith must emphasize the element of yearning which nourishes man's quest for God. Such a poetics is a temporal ladder to the Eternal, though it is not a substitute for faith. A poetic experience of religion, like the Sabbath, is a foretaste of Heaven, a cool encouraging drink for the weary traveler.

The language of faith is both a challenge and a seduction, however, for its beauty often satisfies as it awes; it can lull and sweeten our dark moments of doubt and aloneness. I believe that if we can face the distance between doubt and solid mystical faith, we can overcome the spiritual aphasia which plagues modern religious practice. Our commitment to Judaism, as to any religious search, can only flourish as we confront more fully the disparity between man's need to know God, and God's most mysterious presence in human life.

QIRYAT SHMONEH

Bible men walk
with beards
and green young daughters
through new stores
filled
with beds of beans and nuts
and winter oranges.
I watch them,
carrying the Galilee
in cotton nets with Sabbath bread.

They are all neighbors;
they hide their knees
with Persian flowers
they sit in the sun
and pound their stones
to seeds of dirt
to Persian flowers
for their knees.
Once on Shabbat,
I watched them
eat soup
all together
with a small golden spoon.

In school the children are dark and strong
their eyes hold the sun
while they laugh in their chairs.
Always they question,
tell me the Beatles
tell me the hippies
tell my why
you don't live forever
with us and the land and the hills and the sky.

Soon I tell them, my hair will reach Persia
my skin will smell oranges, my eyes will hold sun,
and I will become the Galilee and live on a mountain
on top of the sunrise and we'll eat soup together
with one golden spoon.

GOOD CHAOS

Some time ago while discussing the implications of music with a fellow musician, the fundamental inconsistencies between the Jewish experience and that of a musician crystallized for me. We were listening to Bach's fourth cantata and at the close of the second movement the conductor chose to pause, ever so slightly, between the final dominant and tonic chords (just before *the* final resolution of the music.) After the final cadence my friend, who classifies himself as a neo-pagan, turned to me and with all the honesty in his being, exaltedly proclaimed of the sudden and overwhelming silence, "That is my God." That is not the Jewish God, and therein lies the essence of this paper.

What is to be suggested here is not a revival of the bans on the study of science, music, and other "goyish things." Neither is it a restatement of Halachik positions or sources. Rather, it is an attempt to relegate to its proper place the musical *qua* aesthetic experience (in which the divinity is the dynamic of tension and release), remaining within the stance of a Jew who is committed to authentic Jewing.

The extraordinary effect that music produces ranges from the story of David and Saul to our own experiences in the supermarket where muzak subtly induces us to buy more and more. The individual today, isolated as he is from his roots, increasingly finds himself existing rather than living. If the Fear is overcome, he then seeks a framework more communicative, more meaningful, and a language more expressive than the purely verbal which, with its precision, often becomes more of a mask and a place of refuge than a vehicle of communication.¹ Moreover, for this soul, the experience of feeling honestly acquires an aura of divinity, which indeed it should, in part. Music is a source of honest feeling especially in its rhythmic impulse, and finds sympathetic responses in the body's pulses.

The young Jew who feels little during T'filah, *kul va chomer* unable to sustain meaningful prayer, often finds a great deal in the singing of these same prayers. (I am not referring here to the inane tune we have learnt to *Sh'ma Yisrael*, or to that marvelous German march to which we proclaim His Uniqueness, but rather to the nigunim which, repeated until internalization, and of higher calibre at least insofar as treatment of text is concerned, are capable of taking us further. It should not be overlooked that much of the effectiveness of these nigunim is derived from the participatory and communal nature of the singing.) What is important here, is the music's power to uplift the soul.

When a child is deadened Jewishly it is proper to entice him into the heavier aspects of Judaism by "hooking him" on the beauty of Shabbat, of

¹ This, in part, is a basic attraction of the psychedelic experience which less escapes "reality" than rejects it in the search for something more real. It is out of this need to actually participate in life that the attacks upon certain foundations of Western civilization have been born.

Havdalah, for example. But when this is as far as it goes—when all the young adult can finally say about the experience is "Wow, it's SO beautiful," then we are in trouble. Shabbat is certainly beautiful, but Judaism is doomed, moreover simply not worth it, if it is nothing more than that.

Similarly there is a great danger in the beauty of music, and here we must be careful to discern the different levels. The non-musician (i.e., someone who can effectively concentrate on reading while listening to Beethoven and/or "The Chairman of the Board") will probably be somewhat uplifted by either the communal singing or the performance of a composition in a Temple (in which the performers become almost intermediaries for the masses—the *hazzan* has already attained this position in many Temples, as has, of course, the rabbi.) If the listener is an *am-ha'aretz*, he goes no further, and like the man who celebrates Shabbat simply by wearing his good clothes to shul, experiencing more *kavod* than he does during the week, he is living only a partial existence. This is fine as long as he follows *Halacha* and continues with the *mitzvot*, for via *dor l'dor* his son might make it. When the Halacha is no longer felt to be viable, however, the danger of identifying this uplifting experience with *the* Experience constitutes a danger to *Am Yisrael*.

The same is true for the more intelligent non-musician who will undoubtedly have a deeper experience and in his sophisticated cosmopolitan manner might easily claim that this is *his* ultimate experience—which it might actually be, of course—but it doesn't necessarily have to be yours. On a certain level his claim could trigger dangerous manipulations and intimidations and perhaps even enter the realm of *Hotey U'Machti*. He is, of course, the greater loss.

Our main concern here, however, is with the musician who is capable of actually becoming his music. When the musical line rises and falls, he does, and when the part includes a suspension at the critical moment, the performer is on the brink of chaos.

Music, powerful though it may be in its expression of the various resolutions of the tension-release dynamic can at its best be but a representation of such statements as *Sh'ma* and *Mema'amakim* and as such is a falsification of them. This is because we are dealing in two different frameworks corresponding to the dialectical nature of man himself, which cannot be translated one into the other.

The question WHY to which *Sh'ma* is a response, if not an answer, is asked by that part of man driven to despair by the awareness of his ontological loneliness. This question is simply not asked by him who is involved as a creative aesthete.

To be fully Jewish is to affirm both man's majestic pose and his retreating stance²; the musician uses his talent in the realm of the former. But the use of music in the case of the latter is dangerous. First, the performer cannot hope to enter into the silence out of which the covenant may be created, for, being totally involved in a performance, he must finish the music and is therefore confined temporally, unable to follow up any thoughts to their

² For a full and the original explication of these two prototypes see "The Lonely Man of Faith" by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in *Tradition*, Summer 1965.

ultimate conclusions. Even if he has been able to understand *T'shuva* in terms of Sonata Allegro form, if he is performing he cannot act upon it and at best can make only a cognitive gesture towards it.

The instrumentalist is further burdened by the unnaturalness of his instrument. To face Him in His Aloneness is to be totally alone oneself, and no matter how much of an extension the instrument has become it is nonetheless still not part of the human being. Vocally speaking, the words of the nigunim make it easier perhaps to initiate a stance but while the performance is actually going on, the musician cannot address himself to God for he is involved with other things.

Indeed, if music is used as a means of beginning a dialogue or even beginning *The Search*, before the musician can get beyond the music into the silence out of which he might be commanded there is the temptation of the beautiful, of the beauty of the formal and the lure of an immanentist experience waiting to snare him, and if he isn't a contemporary Avraham his mistaken perception of the divinity might easily lead him to worship a false god. (This is the case even when the musician isn't performing and is able to follow up his understanding.) If the music is meant to praise God there is the danger that it is the music that becomes the praised and as time passes, *Nishtakah hashem hanichbad v'hanorah mipi kol hayakum umida'atam v'lo hikiruhu*.³

Music validly enables man to fulfill himself creatively—half of God's command, but is not a proper vehicle for fulfilling himself totally. From the point of view of Jewish survival half the dialectic is worse than none, though, of course, in any individual case only God knows.

³ "The revered name of God vanished from the lips and minds of all human beings and they knew Him no more." *Yad Hazakah, hilchot avodah zarah v'chukot ha'gevam*, chapter 1

SERIOUS ABOUT CREATIVE TEACHING?

A Jewish day school, liberal in outlook and traditional in content, under auspices of the Conservative Movement, in large English speaking cosmopolitan and Jewish center, in Toronto, Canada, is seeking out regular and specialty teachers for the Hebrew and the general studies (integrated with Judaica) departments. School ranges from Kindergarten and includes high school grades. If you are planning for exciting and dynamic teaching as a career, whether you are interested for now or the future, tell us about yourself and let us send you complete and detailed information as this space is too confining for what we have to say.

United Synagogue Day School,
1700 Bathurst St.
Toronto 10, Ontario.

BOUNCING GRANDMA: A MEMORY

Hurray for fat old Grandma (now dead)
Bouncing like a cowboy on her iron bed,
Banging on the ceiling with her red broom,
Slapping, crazy, at her thighs, boom boom.

The ceiling cracks and down fall chunks
Of plaster of paris, yellow-white hunks.
Live cockroaches, ants, and even a mouse
Tumble down with the plaster in that house.

The sodden landlord, red as a ripe tomato,
Snoozes upstairs, near the blaring radio.
The neighbors through the window, from outside,
Cheer Grandma on her iron mattress ride.

"Go get him lady!" those people shout
"Your landlord is a no-good lout.
He hoards steam like all landlord drunks,
He needs from you a few more klunks."

Grandma, hopalong cassidy of my dreams, you yell
Yiddish curses like a bouncer out of hell.
Your "choleria," "Pox," and "son of a bitch"
Are strong as those of any a witch.

The neighbors gaze, marvel, and clap
While you dance fandango with each zap.
Till, mistress of the crash, smash, swipe,
You bang the plaster through and break a pipe.

Crazy grandma, cowboy, sailor, daughter.
You're sopping wet in all that water.
Get out your pails, your rags, your mops
Or the landlord will call the chicken-fat cops.

No! With duckfoot gall and fishwives' sass
You swim into the kitchen for a candle-glass
And float out on a blackened kasha pot
Thanking God the pipe was cold, not hot.

Water-Color (after Chagall)

Morning
the sun rises
a red cow

Day
spills out of a bucket

Evening
the blue horse sleeps

Night
snow splashes the world white
Lovers press tight.

1. "A GARDEN SHUT IS MY SISTER, MY BRIDE"

*A garden shut up is my sister, my bride;
A garden shut up, a fountain sealed.
Thy shoots are a park of pomegranates, with precious fruits;
Henna with spikenard plants,
Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
With all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.
Thou art a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters;
And flowing streams from Lebanon.*

Chapter 4:12-15



SONG OF SONGS

WATERCOLORS
BY

DAVID
SHARIR

2. "... THE KING HATH BROUGHT ME UNTO HIS CHAMBER..."

The King hath brought me into his chambers.

Chapter 1:4

3. "BY NIGHT ON MY BED I SOUGHT HIM . . ."

*By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth;
'I will rise now, and go about the city, in the streets
and in the broad ways,
I will seek him whom my soul loveth.'
I sought him but found him not.*

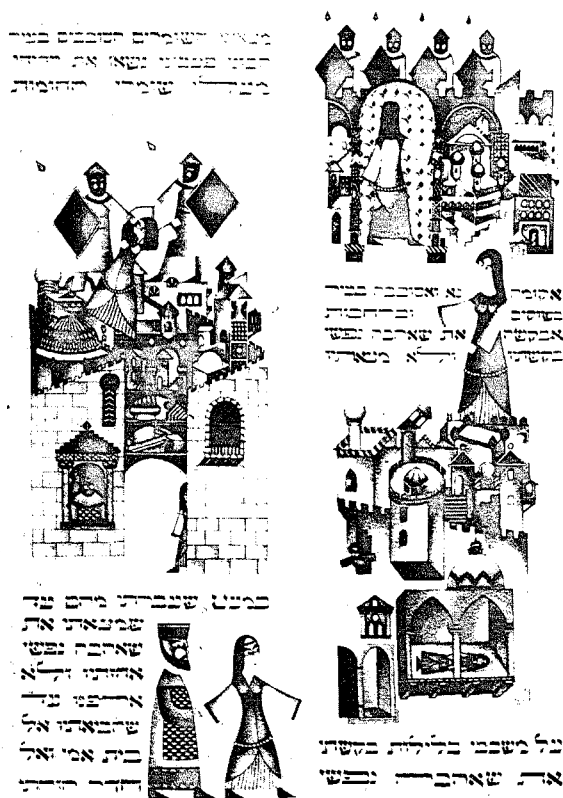
Chapter 3:1-2

*The watchmen that go about the city found me,
They smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my
mantle from me.*

Chapter 5:7

*Scarce had I passed from them, when I found him whom my soul loveth: I
held him, and would not let him go,
Until I had brought him into my mother's house,
And into the chamber of her that conceived me.*

Chapter 3:4



4. "BEHOLD IT IS THE LITTER OF SOLOMON"

*Behold, it is the litter of Solomon; threescore mighty men are about it, of
the mighty men of Israel.*

Chapter 3:7

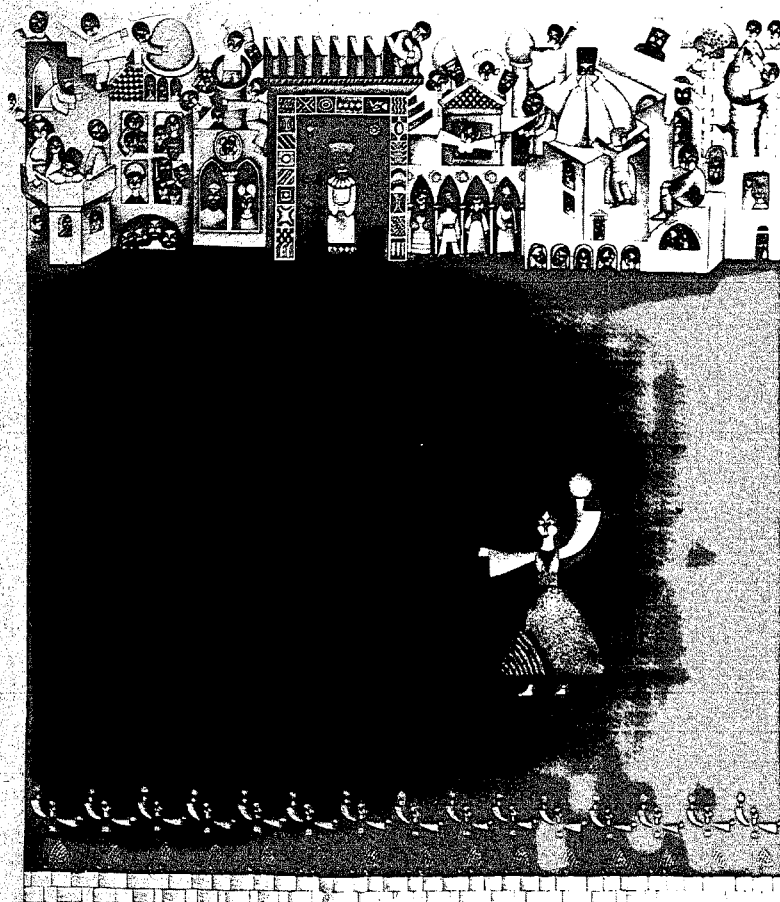
*King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood of Lebanon. He made
its pillars of silver, the top of gold, the seat of purple, the inside thereof
being inlaid with love, from the daughters of Jerusalem.*

Chapter 3:9-10

5. "RETURN, RETURN, O SHULAMMITE"

*Return, return, O Shulammite; return, return that we may look upon thee.
What will ye see in the Shulammite? As it were a dance of two companies.*

Chapter 7:1



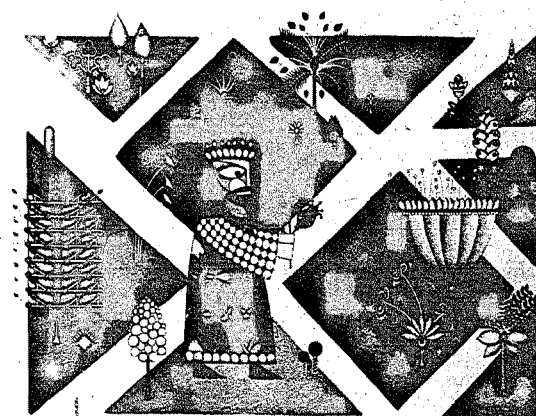
וְהָיָה כִּי יֵרָאֶה הַשְּׁלָמִיטָה בְּחֵן הַחַיִּים



6. "THE MOUNTAIN OF MYRRH, AND TO THE HILL OF FRANKINCENSE."

The mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

Chapter 4:6



וְהָיָה כִּי יֵרָאֶה הַשְּׁלָמִיטָה בְּחֵן הַחַיִּים

7. "MY BELOVED IS GONE DOWN TO HIS GARDEN"

My beloved is gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

Chapter 6:2

Second Beginning

From the unpublished novel *Breaking Through*

1.

The first time I saw Rachel I didn't really see her. I was too busy seeing her friend, or rather, her friend's ass. It was an exceptional ass. High slung and firm, it erupted from a straight back and an erect walk. The shape of a children's slide, the sound of my sliding hand against the smooth metal of the car Jonesey and me were getting out of.

Rachel was next to the owner of this exceptional ass. But she was unnoticed. Short blue coat, short black hair, an indefinite shape next to a very definite ass. That was all I really saw, that ass. I stood there, watching it, door handle in hand, as it backed, assed, out of another car. I thought, *God, the sweetness of that*, and tried to quiet a deep, yawning want inside my guts. I had to go get that, I promised myself and wondered immediately if I would ever keep that promise.

"Who is she Jonesey?" But Jonesey didn't answer, though I yanked at his arm. "Leave me alone," he said, "I'm watching a beautiful little tail."

"That's the one I mean. Who is she?" Pushed at him, making sure he was in front of me. The perfect position for him to reach back and perform magic. "Meet my friend Jason." But my push only sent him against a hydrant and then on top of it.

"A nice piece of ass," Jonesey whispered and closing both eyes, began to stroke the top of the hydrant. "Nice an' easy honey, nice an' easy." Then suddenly laughed and got off, patting his zipper.

"Think the Orthodox Jewish Congregation inside can match the charge I just got?"

Talking of Jonesey. My friend. Of what he is and his effect on me. Of his laughter, the usual rolling laugh that starts deep and keeps on rising till it ends in a squeek or a hiccup, laughter that ignores my words and lets them hang like old clothes on its hook and bite. Red, round headed Jonesey. His freckled nose, poised for a moment in the black round bands of the dart board that hangs from his door, begging (but differently than the way I begged) for the thud and smash of darts into the welcome targets of freckles and face. Of his job at the Gulf Station. Pumping gas which puts permanent grease stains on the inside of his fingers. Playing with cars and laughing at me, calling me a pencil pusher and not trusting in the smell of my sweat because it's from my forehead and not hard-earned, underarm sweat like his.

But why talk of Jonesey? Talk of me. Jason Kole. New blue sports jacket, white turtle neck, hair grown long and defiant, freshly trimmed at the moment but only trimmed, not cut, tiny hairs like Father's anger, biting my back. Jason Kole. Twenty-one and a junior in N.Y.U. Never having made use of the Trojans that was Jonesey's present for my decision to move out for the summer. "You finally getting some balls. Maybe you gonna learn to use 'em too." Jason. I. Ready to work on Saturdays, ride in a car, hit the bars Friday night, be lost in a crowd without a skull cap on my head to give me away, to yell, LOOK, I'M RELIGIOUS, LOOK, I'M ORTHODOX, LOOK, TWO MONTHS OF PUSHUPS HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING FOR MY PHYSIQUE! Ready for all but instead, about to enter a religious house-plan party, in pursuit of one religious ass, equipped with the knowledge that any time I want it, I can get it from Jean, the whore, that my buddy knows on Thirty-eight St.

Jason Kole, complete with his buddy, his yarmulka on his head. *Yar-fear, mu-from, kah-God*. The fear of God on my head.

But why talk of either of us separately? If we weren't one then, we became one and the same two months from then, in June. That was when I moved out of Father's house, prompted by Jonesey and Rachel, crawled out snail-like and like a snail too, carried my home with me to Jonesey's apartment. My home's emptiness that couldn't be replaced by Jonesey's laughter, its Jewishness that lived in custom when I thought it dead in law, in my mother's constant presence which hadn't kept me at home and followed me there, visiting until she stayed too long one day.

There was so much I didn't know about then. I didn't know that my mother and Dov were already learning the steps of their final, intricate dance, that Jonesey would violate my circle of love, that Rachel was waiting inside to replace them all.

I knew of nothing. I was aware only of the present. Of being with my friend Jonesey, of following an ass that had beckoned, of my friend's brave words. "Think the Orthodox Jewish Congregation inside can match the charge I just got?"

I could answer only the voice I heard. "Think you can get any of them to try?"

Then I reached back into the car, into the glove compartment we called the pickle jar and took our skull caps out. Threw him his. "Here. Wear it." He laughed. "What for?"

"You never know."

He was not looking at me. "Jason, I swear that ass looks familiar."

"You saw it in a wet dream last night."

"Cut the shit. You know her?"

"No."

"O.K. I do."

The confidence you hear is the confidence of Jonesey, the only one among us to dare walk into a drug store at age seventeen and ask for Trojans. Jonesey at seventeen; five feet eleven, two hundred pounds and horny. The rest of us, I, Dov, whispered "Trojans" but when the clerk said "Whadja say?" we wound up asking for bandaids. And the first time, when we went to the drugstore around

the corner, one look at bulgy eyed Mrs. Alten and we asked for bandaids right away, eventually glad we bought something we would use.

On the way up the stairs he was still muttering. "Goddam houseplan parties you drag me to. Bet not a single one of them goes down."

"Maybe not. Maybe they don't even talk to boys." Turned and shrugged. Freckles spun into shadow, one flaming side lit by setting sun. "Wouldn't be surprised." Turned his back and walked up. Still five-eleven, two hundred. So wide. "Shame to waste that ass, no?" And then he was inside.

My steps much slower up the steps, my mind opening the door for Jonesey way ahead of him. *Not even talk to boys.* So why the party? And Jonesey's answer, flipped from not caring shoulders. "They're all queer you see, all of the broads, but the house is getting a bad name so they have this party with boys every once in a while. But all they'll be doin' is running to the little girls' room all the time. Imagine making one. Or trying."

I imagined. *Talking to someone, definitely a girl, light flip of hair.*

Smile, bow, touched fingers, theirs.

"Excuse us for a minute, we have to go powder our noses."

Giggle covering the hot urgency for feeling the smoothness of breast, the bathroom: Pressing against one another. Familiar fingers unlocking clicking bra then burying eagerly hair, slim smoothness. All of it theirs. Kissing deeply, tongues in antiseptic Colgate at first but the warmth rising, forward, up. Do lesbians say I love you to each other?

Bumped into Jonesey who was watching me. "You asleep?" Had to answer. "Yeah an' dreaming of one prime grade Jewish ass." His laugh. "Good thing we got god on our side," and patted his head. I extended my shadowed hands. "I now pronounce us religious Jews." And suddenly we were inside. Pulled in. Jonesey was gone. I went after and caught him as the room registered in dark and light alternating negatives because of the sudden brightness inside. The dark of the walls first turned into the light of their own reflections, the light of girls' hair into darkness. Contrast to their white dresses. The room itself, carpeted, someone's home, a table in one corner, bare and brown and white with paper plates of pretzels and potato chips, was again like a negative of dark freckles on a pale face. I remembered to think of Jonesey. Where was he?

Still in quest of the beckoning ass, facing her and in front of me, the darkness of him suddenly reached back and pushed me forward, straightening and patting and chucking me under the chin with his words.

"This is my friend Jason. He's dying to know who you are." And I found myself lifting one arm, defense perhaps, not toward a longed for ass but toward the other girl whose laugh was ignored by Jonesey toward whom it was directed and was caught by me instead, by my open, defensive palm.

I smelled the room, the deodorant, the chicken soup, the floor wax, the comfortable smell of a religious household filled with religious people at the end of the Sabbath day. Still dressed in Sabbath clothes, determined to continue the Holy Day. Then I stopped myself. This was Sunday, the Sabbath had ended too late for a Saturday night party.

"Hi," I said, dropping my arm and looking into brown eyes that seemed to

have changed sunshine and laughter into a question mark that hung at the end of her "Hello?" Clearly a question and I had no answer for it. I was unprepared for the unnoticed girl.

Why bother talking to me if you don't want to? her eyes asked and I could only answer, *Because you asked, because your nose is not Jewish, you little Jewish cunt, putting me up tight as if it's no big thing meeting a new guy.*

I just looked at her. Small ears, slim hair and soft chin. High-necked dress with ruffles at the breast. *The only other boy she knows is someone named Yitzchok who her father told her about. He is a fine Jewish boy, with a nice square chin, believes in God and wears a black hat and a tie even when he goes swimming. I could see him standing behind her. The square chin, not to be shaven. The side curls, never cut. I looked at them. He was filling her with square chinned little babies, year after year, bloating her with controlled Orthodox sperm that is never wasted and never spilled, only utilized.* As I watched, her hair became shorter and then was hidden by a kerchief. *DO NOT entice other men.* Of course, her own man would never kiss the full breasts hidden in the ruffles. Her own man wouldn't even look at her, not openly anyway, perhaps a peek just before he lies on her because Orthodox people are supposed to do it in the dark, secretly and quickly, purpose (like Father's) never punctuated by play or laughter. A Jewish fuck should be very serious. What right did she have to question me?

But all I said was "Hello Rachel." The name spilled into my eyes off the gold name plate around her neck, splashed upward, each letter, drops of high cheek-bone, bob of hair, full wave of Jewish breast covered by her hand covering the name plate. And as her hand touched her breast I felt a sudden tightening in my pants, the self-sustained excitement of a fourteen year old about to say "yeah" to his blanket, an unbearable gathering that had to be released, that suddenly made me touch her sleeve and hold it when she didn't pull away the way Orthodox Jewish Girls usually do.

"My religious name is Yaakov but I left him home. Tell me your English name so that Jason can talk to you."

She still held her name plate and I remembered that along with small noses I had also always dreamt of small breasts too. She smiled. "Tell Jason that when I'm not religious Rae is the one that does things but Rae stayed home tonight and only Rachel came."

And she turned from me, a slim girl whose ass existed but didn't exclaim like her friend's did, turned and laughed Jonesey in the face. "And how many of you are there?" and left, walking through the arch of the kitchen, into the sound of a slamming refrigerator and the ring of bottles and didn't come back.

When I turned from the empty arch Jonesey was gone. I knew where he was. In my car, with the girl with the ass—still not having seen her face, he was by now pulling her panties softly down, that thin sliding sound again in the backseat of my car, in left-over cigarette smoke, in the radio's static, the ripped back seat, the stained floor. *Jonesey's big come, multiplying on the car roof and the seat, like millions of T.V. dots forming a clear, white on black black on white picture of Jonesey and the girl, his sperm flooding my car.*

I took the bus home, into the silence of my sleeping house and before I

slept too, I decided to call her Tuesday. Tuesday because it's long enough before Saturday night and long enough after Sunday, making my call polite enough and not too anxious. I didn't think of the fact that I didn't have her phone number.

2.

The next day I told Jonesey that I really liked her. He laughed at me. "Her *what* did you like?"

"Her personality."

He flipped the hood of my car open and I watched him. His face was already creased by dirt. Blue uniform, darker blue where sweaty, dirty too. Even the *Jonesey*, printed in red above the heart, smeared with the designs of labor.

"Man, you never gonna stop humping your own bed!" he said and shook his head. Twisted mouth and nose. Snort. "Her personality! Shit. Didja happen to notice she didn't have no ass?"

I shrugged. Jonesey was an ass man. Let him look for whatever he wants to look for. "Yeah, but did *you* notice she had a real nice pair of tits?" And I felt guilty as I said it, even turned to see if maybe she was there, listening.

Jonesey laughed. "Didja get her number?"

"I can get it."

"Didja get her name, her last name?"

"No."

His head went under the hood. Above head, midday sun jumped off car's accident-blunted nose. His voice from the sun spotted blindness. "I changed the oil and I'm gonna fill the tank." He came out from under. "And your carburetor is OK too."

Payment for renting him, lending him, use of car, one portable bed, one body flattened seat, empty now and chaste looking. "She is nice though, isn't she? And Rae's a real nice name."

"Yeah. Look, it's all for letting me use the car last night."

"Yeah. How was it?" No real interest. No, that was a lie. A great deal of interest. Details. *What did you do first? Did you ever find out what her name was? How far up does she shave? Did you smell her?* "Did she give?" I asked.

He rubbed his hands into overalls. Same hands that searched that ass. The one I wanted. Were his hands clean last night? Jonesey smiling, teeth-counting smile. "Going over to her house Saturday. But don't take my word for it. I left the inside of the car for you to clean. And I left my jammie in the pickle jar. Did the old man grab you when you got in?"

"No. Everyone was sleeping. He snores."

He went around the car, away from me and began to pump gas. "Come on man, you don't really wanna start with that Rachel broad, do you?"

"Why the hell not?"

"Aw shit man, you wind up with a religious chick an' you're screwed, only not the way you think." He looked at the meter. "Hey, three bucks worth enough?" Without looking at me. Five cents more ran up. "Like I was saying. Religious chicks. Ritual baths, you go to synagogue every day. Hey Jason baby, can you see having kids with side curls? Or daughters in black stockings, growing

up to shave their heads when they get married. Jesus, imagine getting into bed with a baldie broad." He stood with hose in hand, putting his picture into a frame.

"I'm not getting married to her. I just want to go out with her."

"See that? The same bullshit. You don't even *think* brave. *Make her*, that's what you want, not go *out* with her."

"All right. I want to make her."

He waved the hose high up. "Nah, they can't be made till you promise to marry 'em, then two or three dates an' her old man is getting into touch with your old man and they start discussing stuff like family background an' dowry. Your old man would dig that too."

Then gasoline spit out of his waving hose and darkened some more of his clothes but he just stood under it. "Think it over kid," he said.

I thought about it. I put what I had side by side with his adventure, both spread out like competing book covers. His was filled with naked thighs, mine was empty and chaste. His book, filled with stories, with the sound and feel of back seat humpings, of midafternoon handjobs upstairs while the girl's little brother hollers for lunch downstairs. Tongue swelling sweetness of his stories, so clear, so real, I could taste them. And my book, still empty.

"I want to go out with her," I said and tried to think of her breasts, but I saw only my mother in the house on long dusty forgotten afternoon, saw her in a mirror opposite my room, watched her standing in two green strips of bathing suit, her hair loose, lifting her arms in a Hollywood embrace, eyes slowly closing, I behind the frilly curtain in my room. My god it was my mother standing there like that, in a bathing suit, a bikini, the cloth swallowed into two by her ass and a dark brown beauty mark on one thin shoulder. My mother stood there like that and I stared into her opening eyes, into mirror reflected eyes, and she smiled, her embrace became a stretch, her smile a yawn, but everything in silence. And it remained silence. We never spoke about it and when I went home, much later, after her lonely dance had ended and she was tangible only in the objects she left behind, I found the two softly folded rounded strips in the bottom of a drawer Father never touched.

"I want to go out with her," I told Jonesey and finally remembered Rachel's breasts and the name plate, but he started laughing, Jonesey, my friend, who's always wanted quickies, quickies, always wanted me to go to that ten-dollars-a-night-and-all-the-beer-you-can-drink whorehouse, with special regards to Jean, and I got into the car and drove off but not before his laugh relaxed into chuckles then suddenly stopped and he yelled, "You ain't gonna get her anyway!"

The events before the call to Rachel didn't lead up to calling her, so they were hardly steps or even obstacles and then not even events. They were only things then, the moments marked before the call.

First: A name, written on the window's dirt, written by a long nailed finger, a thinly scraped *Sheila*, and under it, a number, 678-1414, name and number made clearer by the breach I outlined them with, neither name or number mine or for me. Jonesey's invitation and Jonesey's message. My car, Jonesey's bedroom and office.

Second: A call, made with suddenly too thick fingers, to the tingle of coins in a public phone.

"Hello Sheila you don't know me but my name's Jason and I'm Jonesey's friend, you know, from the party. Remember?"

Phone booth thick and blue with cigarette smoke, not mine, left over and smelling like my car, pressing eyes closed against it.

"Mnnh. Hi."

Her voice thick with food or sleep.

"Hi, Yeah. I hope I didn't wake you up but I found your number I mean I got your number from my car from Jonesey I mean I wonder if you could help me."

"Sure. Hey, it's not Jonesey's car?"

"No, I mean we share it." Protecting him again. No time for that now. Sweat beginning to line my face. Dead fan, so I open door to chase heat and smoke and store-voices rush in. "I really wonder if you could help and give me your friend's number, you see I lost it."

"Why don't you just look under mine on the car window. Your friend asked me to put Rae's number there for you. Are you gonna double with us?"

Jonesey and me, Rachel and Sheila. Jonesey and Sheila, Rachel and me. Jonesey and Rachel. "No, no, I just want to talk to her. Would you mind giving it to me now?"

"Sure. You got a pencil?"

"Yeah."

"Wait, oh you dumb Sheila. Can you wait a sec? I'm looking."

"Sure Sheila, sure." Sheila, the name now attached to the ass and Jonesey's hands. Getting off her bed now, shaking hair loose from the phone, bending for phone book. Thighs flash, high white from under a house shift, all pink and blond Sheila, back seat, Jonesey's Sheila.

"It's 9123234 but she isn't home now."

Not home. With a boy of course, the father chosen boy, the square chinped boy. Out with him on a safe date, an afternoon date, a nontouching date at the museum or the airport, not to eat because nothing is kosher enough. A talking date, a getting-to-know-the-chosen-one date.

"How come?"

"She's in school till one and then she goes to work so you'll have to get her later. How's Jonesey?"

"OK. Hey listen, will I get her after eight?"

"Probably."

"OK, thanks a lot Sheila, thanks. Just one more thing. This is dumb I guess but could you tell me what they call her at home, you know, just in case her father picks it up. Is it Rae or Rachel?"

"Well, her father calls her Rach and I call her Rae but it makes no difference because she has her own apartment so she'll answer the phone. By the way, were you the one in the blue jacket?"

At any other time the awareness that I was noticed and remembered. Now, nothing. Aware of the dead fan in the booth. "Yeah, that was me."

"I knew I remembered you. Did you stay long?"

"No, no, early, I had a headache and had to get up in the morning. Listen, thanks again Sheila."

"Sure. Say hello to Jonesey."

Third: An empty afternoon, not left behind me in school. Lost English, History and Anthropology.

Fourth and Fifth: Decisions. To call her Rae, then to call her Rachel.

Sixth: Idiocy. Practiced dialing her number and hanging up after the first ring.

Seventh: Father at seven o'clock. My room. Staring at the ceiling and watching his face preparing itself above me; the veined neck, the angry but ineffectual little beard that defied his insistence and care that it become thick and majestic, the unlit blue eyes that contained anger but froze its flame with the coldness of the voice.

"Were you in *shul* this morning?"

"Yeah."

"Reb Weizman told me you weren't."

The chess game began but ended. "Oh yeah, I forgot. I didn't go but *davened* at home."

The flame was beginning to burn. "I left a dollar bill in the prayer book and it's still there now. You didn't use it."

"Didn't need the money. In case you didn't notice I put another in there too. Go check the serial number."

"It's Monday today. They read the Torah in the synagogue. Why weren't you there?"

Shrinking and shriveling into my couch, only my voice rising and that too a sign of weakness. "I woke up too late and had to go to *Yeshivah*."

Yeshivah, Hebrew School, religious studies. Continuing what began when I was three years old. Yeshivah, where I've sworn to become a rabbi, a Jewish man of the Cloth so that the Army shouldn't take me and clothe me in green, disguise me in leaf and vine. Where I sit staring into wrong way script and listen to Rabbi Schoen talk of *our* calling, *our* heritage, *our yiddishkeit*, Jewishness. Where Father thinks I learn but only learn to hate.

"Did you learn for my father?"

"I'm too busy learning for myself. Why should I anyway?"

The flame bright now, the blue lit, even the voice unthawing and bending. "It's my Father's *Yahrzeit*, may he rest in peace. It's fifty years since he passed away."

"What am I supposed to do about it?"

His fist clenching. My mother's shadow sound in the doorway, her shadow whisper, "Menachem please, we eat?" Father's beard white, thin. "You should be learning for his soul!"

"You told me plenty often that my learning ain't worth nothing anyway." Said it determined in mind, said it apologetically in sound.

"Yes. It's your filthy philosophy that is precious, your *trefene* learning you explain to your mother all the time." Pillow quickly from under my head and I fell deeper into unwilling couch. "*Bist ah goy*, mama's *kind*," and he was out of the room.

"You're telling me I'm a goy." Not sure if I said it out loud, not wondering about it because I was thinking of Rachel again, of the call, the familiar anxious breathing of my stomach, the remembered displeasure of her voice, my mother's soft, "Was it good Menachem?" from the kitchen, then it was time to call. And I began to dial, wondering at my anxiety but fully aware, fully conscious that I was in my own hands, that I was *choosing* to call. Wasn't I?

3.

I dialed her number again (does the same operator make the connection every time?) fingers still thick and clumsy, dull in spite of the practice.

Three times her phone rang and I made ready to hang up because no apartment is more than four rings large. Then it rang the fourth time and I decided to give it one more chance and this time there was a click and her unfamiliar voice answered and said "Yes." A tired voice but a confident one, factually stating existence. No question in the voice but of course, I was looking into her eyes last time.

"Hi," I said, "My name's Jason and I'm the one who was nasty to you last Sunday night at the party and I called to say I'm sorry." And because it stayed quiet, I asked for reassurance. "Remember me? My friend is Jonesey, the one with Sheila."

"I remember," she said. No rejection in her voice yet discouraging all the same because it contained nothing. Even rejection would've been preferable to indifference. Later, when we had been together long enough to identify myself on the phone with "It's me," and even later than that, when I called her suddenly at three in the morning to whisper "I love you" into the cold but breathing phone, her voice was still the same. A flat "Hi," a quiet "Good," but the understatement hiding both anticipation and joy. Only I didn't know that now and so I tried hard to ignore the flatness and said, "I'd like to see you," extending my legs on the couch in an almost conscious bracing for her answer.

Silence from her, a long pause. "To apologize?"

"No, no," I said eagerly. "To see you, just like that," and my legs began to relax and curl under me.

Sudden short laughter. Not funny. "You figure if it didn't work for one of you, it's gonna work for the other?"

Legs tense again. "Are you gonna explain that or make me guess?" And she laughed in answer, longer this time, but then the humor curled out and left only its shape and sound. "Your friend Jonesey called me before. To apologize for not paying attention to me Sunday."

No answer. *Jonesey!*

"Hey, are you there? You do remember Jonesey, don't you? Big, tall, wide mouth. He was the one with Sheila. Your friend. Remember?"

"I remember," and I remembered better than she had remembered me. Remembered his speech, his concern, then his shout as I left him. "Son of a bitch," I whispered, "Son of a bitch. You know he asked Sheila for your number and said it was for me. That's what he told her." Forgot I was talking to Rachel, saw only Jonesey, drowning, the gas pump gushing.

"Aren't you guys supposed to be friends or something?" Beginning of warmth flooding in pity.

"Supposed to be."

"So how come he called if he knew you wanted to. Thinks he's... a self-appointed John Alden here or something."

Woke me up, the confidence in her voice, so sure that I was going to call, but the concern too. "Hey, you're not going out with him?"

"Are you serious? Sheila is Sheila and her men her boys and I never want to meet any of them"

"Yeah, but how come you're not going out with him?"

Real laughter in her voice now, a little high pitched and cut off too soon, but still, real laughter. "Hello John Alden the second."

"Very funny." Sitting up now, almost singing, rocking back and forth with legs curled under me, swaying in the attitude of prayer. "How much of a John Alden should I be?"

Laugh again. Game like with Father but no losers in this one and no anger. "How much would you like to be?"

Boldly now, furiously swaying. "Well, if you won't marry me, how about going out with me? I'd like to see you."

"And talk to me about Jason?"

"Can I?"

"All right. When?"

Not prepared for that either. Should have practiced talking to mirror instead of dialing her number. "Well, I don't know. How about if I call you Thursday?"

"Why don't you come over now? I'll meet you outside. Do you like to walk?"

"To your apartment?"

"Now you sound like Jonesey. I'll meet you *outside* and we'll walk, OK?"

"Yeah. Sure. I'll leave now."

"See you."

And had to call back a minute later, car keys in hand, to ask for her address. She picked the phone up after one ring and said, "Ocean Avenue and Foster. In front of the house, an apartment house. And don't bring Jonesey," before I had even finished my question. "OK, ten minutes," I said. "See you," she answered again, "and wear blue, it looks nice on you."

Saw her, first time again, up front, leaning against house post with glittering numbers on it, saw her smile at me leaning over to roll down the window on her side. "Park it and let's walk," still smiling, without a handbag, tall now, tall enough to make me want her hair to go and lap around her neck. "Hey stop staring!" Light blue belted dress and sandals, soft brown of her eyes and skin. "I've never seen a girl without a pocketbook before." Then stood next to her. She, smiling, didn't cover her breasts this time but held her hands out, both of them, and I took them, wanting to say something witty and unforgettable and managing only, "You don't shake hands like an Orthodox Jewish Girl shakes hands."

"Why not?" she said, still holding hands.

"They don't shake hands." I said and she really laughed, the movement lifting her face and nose, so I touched that and said, "You don't look like one either," and she bit at my finger and said, "Boy, you really haven't seen a girl without a pocketbook before."

"Let's walk," and took her hand tighter now, fitting palms and even brushing thighs without once thinking of telling Jonesey about it. "I wanted to ask you. What else did he tell you? Jonesey I mean."

"He used your dumb line. He said, 'Can I speak to Rae or Rachel, whichever one is home please? It's Yossel—Jonesey speaking.' Deeply mimicking Jonesey voice, much nicer to look at."

"What'd you say?"

"Told him they were both out. With Yakkov and Jason." Stopped and looked at me. "You look nice in blue." Her face very serious now but clear and unfrowned, the skin stretching tightly between cheekbone and cheekbone, too tightly for either smile or frown. "Are you still taking me out or did you just come to apologize?"

"Of course I want to take you out."

"How about Friday night? No, wait, I'm having a housewarming Friday. Come to that."

Housewarming. Party scene. Strangers line-casting, biting, fishing, smelling the wind for drifts, silent guppy observable existence, involvement. FRIDAY. "I can't make it Friday."

Even tighter face. "Busy?"

"No, it's just that I can't make it Friday nights."

"Oh. Friday nights you're a nice religious Yakkov, not a Jason, right?"

"Yeah." Still looked into eyes. Wide apart, deep. Girls in dreams usually have blue eyes. Brown eyed Rachel.

"I'm not religious Jason."

Didn't try to look away. "So? I don't discriminate." Brought a sudden laugh out of her and warmth too, direct, focused warmth on me, Jason, not on Jason-who-is-Jonesey's-friend. "Some other time, Jason!"

"Do you lead when you dance?"

"Yes," she answered. Happily said.

Later, the two of us squatted on the hood of my car, bedecked little ugly green Valiant, on the still warm metal. Cool night that night of no formal date. Talking night, walking night. Resting finally.

"I really hated you Jason for that religious introduction you gave me Sunday night. Did you think it was going to turn me on or something?"

"I hated you too."

"Why?"

"Because you smiled at Jonesey."

"You mean you noticed things other than Sheila's behind?"

"Are you kidding? I notice everything."

Her hand suddenly closed over my eyes. Imperfect blindfold, the street-lights peeking through the space held by the glasses. "Did you notice the girl who just walked by?" she asked.

"Sure I noticed her."

"What was she wearing?"

"A tunic and skirt, yellow, with little designs on them that look like Chassidim with wide brimmed hats."

She took her hand away and laughed. "She was wearing shorts and a sweatshirt."

I shrugged. "I thought you meant the one across the street. I notice every girl."

She smiled then and touched the ends of her lopped off hair that bristled in the back. I wanted to prove to her that I noticed she was uncomfortable with its shortness and also that her left dimple was deeper than the other, but I didn't say anything. That was a new thing for me, not saying anything. With every other girl I used to violate silences, destroy quiet by naming it and assigning to a particular place. . . Why are you so quiet? or isn't it nice when nobody says anything? or You look nice when you're thoughtful. . . I was always talking before as if words were a reassurance, a comforting continuum, one word drawing forth another in an unending link that bound me to whoever I was talking to.

Not then though. I stayed quiet, connected by silence and when she finally spoke, there was no break, only new connection. Her questions touching me, melting, her words and mine getting to know each other in the dark. "Do you like the beach?" she asked me.

"I don't really get the change."

"How about olives?"

"I like radishes better."

"The park?"

"Yeah. Wanna go bicycling?"

She laughed. "That's cute. Everybody always suggests it but I haven't actually gone since I was fourteen."

But I did notice that she didn't say yes and she didn't ask when. I checked anyway. "What do you say. You wanna go Sunday?"

"In the morning?"

"No, I'm in Yeshiva in the morning. How about in the afternoon?"

She shook her head. "I'm going away."

I didn't say anything. The night seemed furry, the wind rubbing softly then flicking away. Why shouldn't she be going away?

"How come you go to Yeshiva. Are you going to be a rabbi?"

"No, of course not. It's to keep me out of the army. I'm a student of divinity. A man of the cloth-to-be as far as they know. I study though, sometimes."

"Doesn't it bother your conscience?"

"Everybody does it. The guy who runs the place is making a mint. Besides, it would bother me a lot more if I had to go kill somebody."

She didn't answer and I was quiet too for a while. Then I broke silence, its tight skin, my questions bursting through. "What do *you* do?"

"When?"

"When you're not doing anything else."

"I write."

"What? Poetry?"

She smiled. "You could have asked if I wrote essays or short stories. Or is poetry writing the only feminine pursuit?"

"Could be. Women are not good at novels most of the time. They don't write good sex scenes. There's too much of heavenly and electronic displays in it. You know, stars bursting and all that."

She was looking at me. "What a thing for a Yeshiva boy to notice. What would your rabbi say?"

"Nothing. I'm not sure he can read. Father would ask me why I concern myself with such *shtissim* when there's the Torah and all its infinite wisdom to talk about."

"And what would you say?"

"I would ask him what Rachel wrote about."

Her brown eyes very steady. Much more trustworthy and serious looking than blue eyes. Or my washed out gray. "She writes down her own thoughts so she can look back later and see how silly she was. That's why it's not written for anyone else to see."

"Nobody writes not to be seen." I said, not sure of what I was saying but determined to disagree because she was busy Sunday afternoon.

"I do," she answered, and the forward thrusting chin speaking belonged to independent Rae or Rachel who had her own apartment and decided when and who she wanted to go out with. The liberated Jewish girl with the non-Jewish nose who forgot her parents subsidized her because they got along so well that they never had to remind her of it. "I do whatever I like," she said.

"So what?" I asked, and her chin remained out. "How come you live at home?" she demanded.

"Why not?"

"Because you're old enough to move out and be yourself."

"My father can't afford to let me move out and help me *be myself*. Besides, I do what I want."

Her chin again. "Are you doing what you want to be doing Friday nights?"

"Come on, that's different. I want to do it to keep peace in the house. To keep my mother happy."

"Does it keep your mother happy if you only eat kosher?"

"Kosher is a matter of habit. Ever since I was a kid I've been trained to look at other stuff like it was disgusting. It's a matter of habit not religion or doing whatever Father wants me to do."

"That's like saying it's tradition. What's the point of doing something that makes no sense. Why can't you break away?"

"If I tried, my stomach would break away from me. It's hard to reason with a runaway stomach."

"That's a terrible pun Jason."

My hand suddenly over her eyes. "What kind of pants am I wearing?" Her eyelashes tickled my palm.

"Blue shorts. And your legs are too white."

I let her eyes go free. "You're not observant, just nasty with a good memory."

She laughed and as soon as she touched my hand, I forgave her. "I'm kidding. Actually, you're built very nicely. Most Yeshiva kids have those learner's bodies. You know, bent shoulders and wide behinds from sitting so much."

And because I forgave and forgot, I asked her again if she can get away Sunday afternoon. She held my hand but said, "I'm sorry, I made the date a long time ago," and then she said good night.

I walked away angry, drove home imagining her with whoever it was. Someone more confident than me, without a yarmulka and not worried about Fathers and Friday nights. He walked her upstairs and kissed her in front of her door then taking the key from her hand, invited himself in, for coffee or something, but held her again inside, her soft breasts against his chest and his hand creeping under her skirt. And she, letting him do it because she's liberated and she's been going out since she was fourteen and figures it's no big thing making out even on the first date if the guy's aggressive enough, and I hadn't even tried to kiss her goodnight.

When I got home I ripped a page from my history notebook and on the other side of notes about the Restoration Period, I wrote in block letters, KEEP YOUR COOL, KOLE, and after hanging the page above the calendar, went to sleep, dreaming of a faceless boy's searching hand and hearing a laugh very much like Jonesey's, and hating Father for making me unable to compete with a *Goyish* confidence.

4.

Of course the laughter I heard in my dream was Jonesey's. He told me I had blown the whole thing. "She's not like all those little religious broads you've been going out with, the ones that just hold hands and talk. This one's a live one, man. With her own apartment! You gotta show who the boss is with these independent broads."

We met in a cafeteria near school. He surprised me by being there, had appeared next to me near the counter and asked for coffee. I waited for a coffee and English muffin and he smoked a cigarette, watching me through its smoke. The fan behind us mixed hot air, cigarette smoke, its own cool air. We didn't say anything to each other.

When the coffees came, he took them to a table and I watched my muffin being readied. Swich-swack of butter, slap of muffin on plate, scratch of plate sliding across the table. The toast felt warm through the bottom of the plate as I carried it to the table he waited at.

He drank his coffee. Didn't sip, but drank. Always said he had a fur-coated throat and wasn't affected by either hot or cold. Finally looked at me.

"Hear from your Jewish friend lately?"

"Dov?"

"No, the Pope. What do you think?"

"Got a letter last week."

"So? What'd he say? Is he comin' to my place for the summer or not?"

"He's not sure his father will let him."

He finished his coffee and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Dieting's a pain in the ass," he said. I shrugged but didn't say anything. "Man, all you guys," he said suddenly, "so hung up on your parents. What are they gonna do to you anyway?"

My coffee burned my tongue. Everything would taste like fur or paper for days, I thought but then butter melted and slid on my finger and when I licked it, I tasted its warmth and saltiness. No fur and no paper.

"He better make up his mind in a hurry," he muttered and stood, wide and thick, still in his station uniform. "How's he like it in Boston anyway?"

I looked at him. "He's been away almost a year an' you finally got around to asking?"

"Look. I'm asking. How's the little Jew?"

"He's O.K."

"Yeah. Too bad he don't know the difference between his pecker an' a drinking straw. There's a lot of free cunt floatin' around in Boston. I hear The Quakers or something."

I got up too and started walking out. Stopped at the door. "You didn't pay for your coffee."

He stared at me. Eyebrows climbed, mouth curved down, face grew a couple of inches. Horseface.

"So what?"

"You gotta pay."

"I gotta nothing. Come on, let's get the fuck out." He yanked at my arm. "Listen Jack, you ain't Lincoln," and pulled me with him outside.

Thick and warm in the street. Not like May. The afternoon, gray, rolled down the inside of my arm. Jonesey laughed. Thick laugh rose, ended finally in a hiccup. Father used to hiccup like that and say that one drop of blood falls off the heart with every hic, the Talmud says. Mother never laughed with me when I laughed at Father.

We went to shoot pool. He said he'll pay for time but loser buys beers and I went with him.

We shot for two hours and I kept on losing. I paid and he drank but I didn't drink with him. We didn't speak until he finally straightened and said, "So what's with your broad?"

"She's a busy girl," I answered, almost hating him at that moment as he bent back to the table and another ivory ball clicked and fell in for a point.

Still shooting, he gave me the speech about doing it all wrong with Rachel. I just looked at him, bulging over the table, hands black with dirt before and now streaked with blue cue chalk and finally said, "Why did you call her, you bastard?"

But he smiled and laughed and moved the cue stick with a short, precise stroke and said, "I was just doing you a favor man, you know, warming her

up for you, feeling her out. She ain't gonna be a sucker for your shy *boychick* approach. I can tell you that."

That was the first time he seemed only fat and not muscular at all. A roll of flesh on the back of his neck, the belly pushed against the table, the bulge of the pants.

And as I was turning from him, he walked over and put an arm around me and breathed beer into my face. "Listen. I mean it. Just listen an' you gonna make it. I guarantee it. Isn't this what we've been waiting for?"

And he was really right. This was what we had been waiting for. For this the new hairstyle, the long practiced, nonchalant way of holding a cigarette, the decision to move out of the house and defy Father. For this. *This*, was breaking through, getting away from all those who fear great darkneses and dead voices that spoke in crumbling words. *This*, meant making it, but not just with anyone. It meant making it with a *non-religious girl*. Forget the shiksas. Those who were not born Jewish can't help me kill a Jewish god and a Jewish hang-up.

That's why Rachel was what we had been waiting for. Or at least what Jonesey had prescribed for me long ago. Someone who had already crossed the desert and spit on the burning bush, not a cross bearer or a water sprinkler.

If Rachel would have me, accept me, want me, maybe I would stop jumping to the sound of the *shofar* calling for repentance and stand together with her, ignoring the trumpet call.

And if I actually—thought stopped, suppressed three quick images of naked bodies entangling near curtains swept by a breeze—if I actually *fucked her* I would have fucked a free will, would have seduced and captured liberation for myself. I would no longer be *imagining*, when Jonesey spoke to me of "cunt," I'd be remembering. But above all, free too, free because she is free.

"She was busy she told me," I told Jonesey.

"So be cool man," he said, and his eyes were bright and spittle, white and small, formed in one corner of his mouth. "Just play it cool. Don't give nothing away." His hands were stretched out and his fingers moved, pulling his head toward them. "This is a girl who kisses and feels and maybe even fucks too. Just play it right an' it will be all yours," and his open palms closed and the arms clutched the chest and his eyes were closing, his bulk, bending over slowly in the grip of a giant tugging at his groin.

"She's not one of your goddam whores Jonesey," I said and left him there to unwind and pay for the half finished game.

When I got home I parked in the garage but instead of going in, I stayed in the car. I lit one from a pack of cigarettes I had bought special for smoking in the car and held the flame of the match, watching my underlit reflection in the car window. I took long puffs of the cigarette, alternating between inhaling and not, between blowing the smoke through the nose and the mouth. Then I beeped the horn, just for the hell of it, two sharp bleats that stumbled against the garage walls.

The hell with Jonesey, I decided, the hell with him. All he's ever wanted

and gotten have been quickies quickies, whores and pigs. Let him stop giving advice and go back doing what he knows best—buying bags for the little kids on the block.

It's not like I've never been with a girl before. There was Monica at the New Year's Eve party on Staten Island where I had her laid out in the car and felt her nipples grow hard under my palm, little balls of dough I rolled and played *which hand?* with when I was small. She had nothing on and I could have done anything I wanted to but I wasn't even hard or excited but almost talking to myself, *come on kid, get up there*, but I didn't and didn't even want to after a while, just felt sorry for her, lying there, breathing hard with her eyes closed and I shook her and said "What's my name? Come on, what's my name!" but she just kept her eyes closed and my hand at her breast.

And there was Sarah who I always called Sue when I talked about her to Jonesey, making her name sound more swinging, more acceptable to him. I was the first one to kiss her, she told me and we went swimming at 5:30 one morning, both of us sneaking past sleeping fathers. She said she'd never forget me but was afraid her father would kill her if she ever met me again. And I came back home, hiding my hardness with a sandy towel.

There were other girls too. Met, wooed, and though never conquered, not by Jonesey's crude standard, still met, wooed and kept for a few dates, months even, by this same ridiculed "Boychik" appeal.

Yet Jonesey was right about one thing. They had all been religious. Every one of them an Orthodox Jewish Girl who helped me maintain my Orthodox Jewish Boyness, helped me remain a *Yiddishe Tarzan* to their untouched Jane. Only Monica wasn't an O.J.G. She was thrown out of camp for smoking on Sabbath, but she didn't prove anything either. She went down with everybody, everybody said, so whatever my appeal was, it made no difference with her.

Which left Rachel. The right one. Father always said there was a *zuvig* made for everyone up in heaven. I couldn't prove him wrong of course. If the marriage didn't work out, he'd just shrug and say, "Nu, so it wasn't her *zuvig*," Maybe here was mine. Rachel. Specifically non-O.J.G. And what if Jonesey told me to play it cool with her because that was the only way to get her. I had told myself the same thing in a note, hadn't I?

Two days of "coolness." Days of not calling pouring their contents into shapes I could present her with when I finally called. Hollow shapes, activity hiding spaces of self-doubt and loneliness. Still, definite shapes, anecdotes, jokes, sharp observations, neatly tied to startle and delight Rachel with. If I ever called her again.

Practiced. (Even in front of the mirror once, forgetting words to flatten profile.) *My English teacher, The Modern Novella, his name is Ellyn, writes articles so I guess he's big, kept us in after class today. Does it all the time, one of those guys who gets carried away, when the bell rang, just picture this, (hands, reflected in mirror, palms up, spread in size-of-fish gesture) he was up on his desk, trying to crawl like a cockroach.* (The legs that showed between slidup pants and socks were old and hairless. Yellowing.)

And of course, the Rachel I spoke to in the mirror would know I was

talking about Kafka and his *Metamorphosis*, and we'd just continue from there.

Or I was telling her about leaving the building. (Still filling Tuesday's emptiness.) The demonstration outside. *No, nothing big. Just a bunch of kids walking around (in a tight circle,) carrying peace signs.*

Yeah, I got into the line too. (Wondering why) Of course I feel strongly about it. My own ass is involved.

We would continue from there, leaving many things unsaid, (The smallness of the circle. The clear view across it that followed a girl who wore no bra and sweated bravely against her tight blue jersey. The two cops, shiny buckles and glistening badges, as young-faced as I was, frowning at the circle, intent on it maintaining a distance from the DO NOT CROSS police lines.) yet mentioning what hurt and had made me think of her. *These kids came over with sandwiches (sandwiches I tasted with my mind before I even smelled them). . . and I was going to take one but one of the kids from my Anthropology class recognized me by my yammie and to save me the embarrassment, started shouting "Pig meat! Get your pig meat here!" So I just missed getting bit by some ham.* (The cops' faces tightening in response, their eyes concentrating on forcing the circle of chompers off the sidewalk and ignoring the girl whose breasts stretched and spread with her raised END THE WAR placard.)

Leaving the rest of Tuesday alone (The yammie beginning to burn and sink in a ring on my head. The chant of "EAT PIG! EAT PIG!" rising louder. Leaving them all as all of the circle spilled in a flat line into the gutter) and noting what I noted Wednesday. The second day of not calling.

Sitting in Yeshivah. Long, nail-stubbed benches, out of proportion drawing of the Wailing Wall, windowless walls holding religion in airless room. Kids playing cards, quietly unconcerned by Rabbi Schoen. I listened.

"The Jew was first known as the Hebrew, which in the Holy Tongue is *Ivri*. How *Ivri*? From the word *ayver*, or side, as we'd say. Side. The Jew has always been prepared to stand alone, *one on one side*, though the whole world stands on the other."

Rabbi Schoen leaving eagerly when an OJG secretary he probably gooses in his private office, came in and told him he had a phone call.

Telling her about it. My DD place. Draft dodging, with unwilling arms embracing the Torah. An unbeatable combination. The Old Testament God and the U.S. Army. Legal, all legal, my sanctuary. Daily, four hours a day, attendance. Subjects: Law, Prophets, Bible. All legal, all. All the lies. Jewish History, Mythology. Behavior or *Chumash*, *Gemorrah*, *Dinim*. Pillars of the Temple, fenceposts of my shelter.

And Jonesey stays out, comforted by a cyst he describes delicately as "a pain in the ass," and cultivates carefully, pinching and rubbing if he wakes without its reassuring twinge.

But before I had a chance to fully rehearse, on the evening of the second day of my "coolness," Rachel called me.

5.

I was prepared to call, not be called. Sitting at my desk. . . Phone within reach of stretch out left hand. Textbook in other hand, footnoted and indexed history, realized I wasn't interested and gummed its pages or blinded me with light reflected from the lamp.

Then the phone rang. Time between ring and answer to notice creak of chair and smile at it for noting my slight weight. Then Father's voice, interrupted, late-supper voice, "For you, Yaakov."

And her voice. "Jason? Your father sounds just like you over the phone. Listen, I'm sleeping over at my girl friend's house for the weekend. Can you pick me up there Saturday night?"

"Saturday night?"

"Mmhun."

"You mean you're not busy?"

"Busy?" She sounded puzzled. "Did I say I was?"

But by then I had recovered. "Glad you fit me in." And for her it was easy to continue. "Always got room for a nice religious boy."

"In that case I better close my eyes."

"In what case?"

"In case I'm religious. You look so sexy there on the bed with the lights out, you may give me evil thoughts and make me unfit to learn Torah." The kidding around made me feel good. I felt recovered from the surprise that she called me. Why shouldn't she have called? Later on Rachel would call this the Kole Complex, and insist that I had inherited it from Father.

But she was laughing. "I'm in the kitchen Jason and I'm studying. You want to hear it?" And before I could say anything, she was proving it. "In industry the person becomes an economic atom that dances to the tune of atomistic management. J. J. Gillespie says this results in psychic regression . . . You want to hear more?"

"Maybe Friday night when there's nothing else that I could do."

"You could come and talk to me."

"Maybe. I like studying in the kitchen too." But I saw her still on the bed, in shorts and maybe the top of a bathing suit. A very different picture than I used to look at with the others—all of them always covered to throat, wrist and knees, even Sarah, with a bathrobe over the bathing suit.

"Why don't you try it Saturday night?"

"Try what? Studying? Can't. Got a date. I'm taking her to the Basement for fun and games and I bought a new pair of pants. Blue ones. Wanna come along?"

"Won't three be a crowd?" She was smiling into the phone.

"Not if you leave your girl friend home."

"O.K. I'm leaving her. Whose basement is it?"

"City College's. Its a kind of nightclub, with coffee and donuts and folk singers."

"Oh. I heard about it. But I've never been there. Nice."

Then we said good-bye and I tried to remember where I heard about the Basement. I didn't remember who told me about it. Still, so much for Jonesey's coolness. She didn't even notice I hadn't called.

Father came into the room, wiping his mouth with a blue napkin. My mother was always sneaking Israeli things into the house and the blue napkin together with white ones formed the colors of the flag. She kept them in front of Father who never seem to notice.

"Who was it?" Father asked me. To anyone else he would have looked ordinary. For a Jew at least. A long, oval skull, balding in the front and cropped short in the back, large black yarmulka, still black side curls pushed behind his ears. The face long too and deeply creased. I never remember it anything other than lined and creviced yet I've stood often enough in front of a mirror, looked at my face's smoothness and firmness and wondered if it contained flesh siphoned off his face. Then the thin beard, easily held in his stroking palm and finally, the man himself; black suit, no tie, the capable hands grasping beard and napkin instead of my neck. "Who was it? Who called you?" he demanded.

"What's the difference? You wouldn't know her anyway."

"That's exactly what I mean. What kind of *kurvahs* do you know who call boys?" He spoke English well enough but preferred certain expressions from the *Alte Haim*, the "Old Country." I didn't answer.

"What kind, I ask you? Whores, you understand me now? Whores. What kind of whores call boys?"

What was the difference, I wondered, between Jonesey calling her a broad who fucks and Father's description?

"Two kinds Father. Pink ones and blue ones. Rachel's a blue one." But by then my mother was behind the door and I was moving away from Father, retreating behind my desk.

"Menachem," came my mother's whisper, "I'm sure it's all right. I'm sure she's Orthodox, isn't she Jason?"

"At least as much as I am," I answered but Father's head flew like released water toward the door. "In my house you will call him Yaakov, you understand?" And he followed her away from my room, the lightning rod again drawing the lightning.

I left as soon as Father finished making *Havdalah*, the prayer that separates the Sabbath from the rest of the week. Because he knew I was in a hurry, he waited an extra half hour before saying the prayer, then after he finally said it, he yelled "I'm locking the door at one o'clock!" after me.

My mother stood watching us from behind the table which was still covered from the Sabbath. Nylon table cloth, pinched by my impatient fingers waiting for Father to finish eating. Candle sticks, slim and long necked, with icicles of wax still hanging from their lips. The iron bound prayer book that on the Sabbath stayed on the table all the day, the divine presence of God. *Because the Sabbath table is a Mizbeach, we are actually sacrificing to G-d on an altar, but we offer prayer instead of flesh.*

She came after me to the door and I waited for her to come closer. She was dressed *sabesdig*, in a dress Father paid for and therefore felt he had the

right to choose.

"Have a good time," she whispered and suddenly kissed me, my mother. She didn't have to reach far, just tilt her face a bit. And then she offered her cheek for me to kiss but turned it into a bit of mouth, a chink of warmth. One kiss, lightly, for her thirty-eight years that must have felt like fifty but still looked only twenty-five.

Then I was out of the house and she spun behind my eyes like an amusement park shooting gallery clown, presenting front then back. I saw her beauty marked back and then the smooth face, wide forehead and hair drawn tightly back under a *shaitel*, yet enough of it showing to dull the black of the wig in comparison.

In a few minutes I was with Rachel though, and the clown stopped spinning, shot right through the heart. And as I looked at Rachel, faced her with the car door between us before she got in, there was an instant of recognition. I had not done this before. Of course I had *felt* like this before, yet there was a feeling of doing it all differently now, a moment of knowledge that this was the beginning of my beginning.

She wore pants. I noted that and set it beside the knowledge that this was the first time I had ever gone out with anyone who wore pants. She wore dungarees really, light green, rough, flaring slightly at the bottom, and a simple white top that opened near her neck for an oval flash of tanned skin.

I almost touched the back of her head where her hair was so cruelly short but she took my hand and watched me closely while I drove and I looked straight ahead, forgetting even about the sharpness of my profile.

"I almost called you to tell you I'm not coming. I really have a cold."

I sneaked a look at her. "Your nose isn't red," I told her.

"My colds in May and June don't come with red noses. You're probably familiar with the April variety."

"I'm sure you look ravishing and all that in April too."

"Jason! A compliment?"

"To quote a famous American saying, there's something about May that brings the best out in everyone. Besides, I figured we should be friends. For tonight at least." Jonesey's words, the words on the note to myself, all nodding approval.

"Good idea friend." She moved a little closer in the car. "Tell me about the Basement."

"It's a surprise. For both of us. I've never been there before either. I do know they serve coffee and donuts."

"Great. Fantastic. All weekend I've been saying to myself. Can you imagine Rach, coffee and donuts Saturday night."

The light was red and I looked at her but she seemed serious, looking straight ahead with a dreamy expression on her face.

"You know Jason, I never told anyone this before, but when I was a kid and everybody else on the block was dreaming about working in a candy or an ice cream factory, I wanted to work in a donut shop. I imagined all those creamy things and cinnamon with sprinkles and glazed with sugar. And now, you're making my dream come true Jason."

"If you would work in one you'd be sick of the stuff by now."

"Who told you?"

"It makes sense."

But she was laughing at me, I saw that. Dimples deepening, eyes eagerly toward me, mouth still held. But it was too late to turn back. Maybe if she laughed alone, it wouldn't taste so good. But she was suddenly serious. "Just because something makes sense, it doesn't make it so. You can work everything out logically, not that it's so."

I almost hated her at that moment. The words were Dov's words, his answer to my logic when he packed his bags and went to Boston, to a "Yeshiva where people really learn." And as for logic, Jonesey wasn't a great believer either. I was angry when I answered her.

"Stop using words like 'something' and 'It' and be more specific. What's proven logically but isn't true in fact?"

"Well, God for instance," she said. "You can prove his existence logically day and night but that doesn't mean he exists."

I almost laughed. With Dov it had always been the other way around. I was always trying to disprove God's existence. I had been over this too often. "Listen" I told her, "let's not be so concerned with my religion here, O.K.?"

She leaned forward. "No no. I mean let's. I'm having a philo-test Monday. I can practice if we continue."

"Why don't you study tomorrow?" I asked, remembering she was busy, but saying it anyway.

"Because I have a . . . Jason!"

I ignored the warning. "Yeah?"

"Nothing. I'd much rather not leave things for the last minute. Want to help or not?"

"O.K." It wasn't a difficult answer to make. Her hand began to stroke the back of my head.

"That's much better, friend. Where were we? Oh yes, God. Hey. What do you mean leave *your* religion alone? You thing God's Jewish or something?"

"Father does. I think God's a she not a he, and she is blind, deaf and dumb. Maybe even black."

"Did you work that out logically?"

"Sure. You wanna know what she does all day?"

"Knits?"

"Close. She sits in the corner and hatches eggs."

"And what comes out of the eggs?"

"A yeshiva boy. A million eggs, a million yeshiva boys. Only reason there aren't that many is because God doesn't have the patience needed to sit in one place for so long."

"You're a Yeshiva boy."

"Yeah. Born under God. Let's drop this. Father should only know I'm talking like this."

Quiet then, her fingers still at my neck, goose pimples forming down my spine.

"Is that why you go to Yeshiva? Because of your Father?"

"No. To stay out of the army." We were finally talking about something I had anticipated we'd talk about. "I told you."

"Isn't there some other way? Being a college student gets you off too, doesn't it?"

"It's not as safe as a student of divinity is. You're talking to a potential holy man. I hope you realize that."

She was still serious. "Doesn't it bother you to sit there and listen to things you don't believe?"

"Sounds a lot better than HUT TUP THREE FOUR CHARGE!"

She sat quietly, passing judgement. Hand away from my neck, body closer to door than me.

"I've never gone out with a non-believing Yeshiva boy before."

"What a coincidence. Neither have I."

She laughed and touched my neck again.

Inside the Basement.

We sat at tiny tables and touched knees. Dim. Candle smoke making eyes sweat. The sound of a single guitar. A bearded negro boy, legs crossed, eyes closed, was singing "And you'd want to travel with her/And you'd want to travel far." A party dressed girl, white, frilly dress around her thighs, sat staring at the singer. Her hand was white with gripping her boy-friend's hand but she swayed to the singer's swaying and worked her thighs closer, grinding them together.

Rachel and me.

We held hands like the unfamiliar lovers we were beginning to be. Palms touched palms, stroked, covered hands. Fingers touched whorls and ridges of fingers and knuckles. Her smile as I pointed the girl out. Budding in the eyes but flowering hear dimples. The dimples deep and strange in her slim face.

The stage again.

Two men and a girl. The men, boys really but grown older in dark, in a uniform of sorts. Dungarees and blue-gray work shirts. The girl, wide and pleasant, spreading in a skirt and embroidered peasant blouse. They were singing square dance songs. Incredibly. About corn huskings, taking partners, waiting for a harvest. Yet pleasant enough, their words rising, disappearing in the fat odor of candle smoke.

I lit a cigarette from the car pack. She leaned closer, her hand still in mine. "Why are you smoking?"

"To impress you."

"You've impressed me."

"Not enough," I answered and dragged deep, without tasting.

She was near me again. "The girl on the stage isn't wearing a bra," she whispered and I laughed through the crescendo of a three guitar finish, through the smoke, through the feel of my skullcap in my back pocket, taken off and sneaked in there without her noticing. We forgot we had come in for donuts and coffee.

On the way home, neither of us hungry yet curiously tired, I stopped for a light. Her head was against my shoulder.

"What kind of Yeshiva boys *did* you go out with?"

"None really. The Sunday School type who never wear their yarmul-kahs. You're the first one who just takes it off sometimes."

"Well, it's nice to be a first something with you."

The car moving again. Rachel too, straightening and away from me. "You can really be nasty, can't you?"

"I've been trained for it. Father calls me an evil spirit so I've got an image to live up to."

"You don't look particularly nasty to me."

"But I really am. You just don't know me well enough."

"O.K. Be nasty again."

"How come you cut your hair so short."

"To look more sophisticated."

"You'd look much better in long hair. Less sophisticated maybe, but better."

"O.K. I'll grow it back for you."

"How come?"

"I like you."

I ignored the meaning because I didn't believe it and continued the banter, angry she would use affection so lightly. Her "I like you," fluttering to the ground, uncaught.

"You better grow it back by twelve Rachel. After 12 I really turn evil."

"I still don't think you look terribly evil."

"Good. I've got you fooled so far. But just wait when twelve strikes."

She was smiling, moving near me again, head back in warmed place.

"I'll just quote Maimonides or something and make you disappear in a puff of smoke. Or I'll breathe on you. Colds have a way of dealing with evil spirits."

I stopped the car, hurrying, afraid if I'm not fast enough, if I have time to reconsider, work it out logically, I won't do it. I stopped the car and turned so she slid off the shoulder and I said, "I want to kiss you."

"I have a cold."

"First time I've had a chance to choose a cold," I said, and kissed her.

Her hands stayed at her side but suddenly her lips opened and her tongue flicked in, around, out again and by the time my tongue moved, she was pulling her face away and sitting looking straight ahead. "Those donuts really tasted delicious," she said and suddenly we were both laughing.

We talked in the hall to her apartment. She had a *very* good time, she told me. Me too, I told her. Then I asked if I could see her in the morning and she said it'd be all right as long as I had her back early. She seemed happy at the idea, her smile a kiss on my cheek, so I left without kissing her again but by the time I got home I was thinking only about the fact that I had to have her back early, for another date and began to feel like a pimp. Then I had a plan.

THE MAKING OF THE RABBI*

David was a classmate of mine. We were ordained as rabbis the same year. We had nothing in common with each other, I, natural and spontaneous, he always uptight, but prepared for any eventuality. One day, he confided that one must always be prepared. "For what?" I asked. "For anything, for example," he said, as he pulled from his pocket a morroccan leather billfold. Immediately I noticed this round circular design bulging in relief from one side of his wallet. Holding it closer, he explained, it was not a design. Upon closer observation, I guessed. "Why you have a 'rubber' in your wallet, David." "Yes," he said with a grin from ear to ear, "you never know when the occasion will *arise*," and he chuckled at his little pun. "One always must 'be prepared'," he repeated, as I recognized it wasn't Talmud he was quoting, but the Boy Scout Motto. "That's not all," he continued, the broad grin still imbedded on his cherubic face. Then with a grand gesture, he proudly pulled from his wallet several sheets of carefully folded paper containing doublespaced neatly typewritten copy. "Guess what this is?" he asked, still grinning. "A letter from your MOHEL, certifying the job with a money back guarantee." "No, guess again," he said, still smiling broadly. "It's a letter from the TROJAN Company advising you to change the rubber in your wallet, every six months with directions for maintenance in case it breaks under pressure." "No," he answered, the grin to end all grins still plastered to his face. "Guess again." "Oh, I know, it's a release form in which you ask the girl you are about to make it with to sign, stating that you have her consent, she is over 18, desires you passionately, swears never to tell any member of your congregation you slipped it to her; then absolving yourself of all responsibility and liability, in case the rubber you've carried around in your wallet for years, dries out, cracks, and she gets pregnant." Thinking that would have wiped the cheshire grin off his face, I was mistaken. "That's not it at all," he said. "How many more guesses do I have?" "I'll give you one more guess." "O.K., I'll bet I've got it now. Those papers contain a resume of you; a copy of your Bar Mitzvah certificate, transcript; and a Dun and Bradstreet rating, in case some congregation is so taken by you, they must interview you on the spot." "Not exactly, but you're getting warm." "Alright, I give up David, what is it, tell me." "It's a sermon." "A sermon?" "Why a sermon? For what reason?" "Well, you never know when you are going to be somewhere and will be called upon at the very last minute to deliver a sermon, so I'm prepared." "David, do you really think anybody will ever call upon a rabbi to deliver an impromptu sermon; a few off the cuff words, perhaps, but a prepared sermon?" "A rabbi *always* has to be prepared," he

answered. "Wow, David, I can see it now. There you are visiting a strange synagogue, in a strange community; someone learns you are a rabbi and suddenly invites you to the pulpit to deliver a prepared, but impromptu sermon. Without a moment's hesitation, you rush to the pulpit, on the way, quietly slipping the sermon out of your wallet. Turning to face the congregation, you deftly unfold the pages, and with fire and brimstone, lay it on. Within moments, they are spellbound, moved to spiritual heights undreamed of, high and turned on, it is a monumental moment in the history of the Jewish People; the SHECHINAH herself hovering over the Sanctuary. The service over, the president of the Sisterhood, turned on from your inspirational thoughts, invites you to her home after the ONEG SHABBAT to hear more. You arrive at her home and she confides her husband, who is away on a three day business trip, hasn't satisfied her in 15 years. Moved by your deep sense of compassion, you whip out your billfold, tug at the rubber stuck to the inside of your wallet, and in your best pastoral counseling voice, ask whether you can be of help. Before you complete your sentence—she is stripped from head to foot, standing stark naked before you—still quivering from your *impromptu* sermon. She whispers, please rabbi, please! please! YES! YES! Confident, because as a conscientious rabbi you are always prepared, you slip it to her with the words—SHABBAT SHALOM, GOOD SHABBAS, MY SABBATH QUEEN', as she screams with delight how much she enjoyed your sermon." "Come on, Bruce, you know I wouldn't do anything like that." "Yes, David, I know *you* wouldn't. By the way, what is the sermon about?" "Here look, its on the SH'MA." A quick glance at the sermon convinced me that the president of the sisterhood was indeed as safe as was the president of the men's club. In fact, the first few sentences were enough to lay out the entire congregation, by putting them to sleep. It was the kind of satirical rhetoric that rabbis, when they imitate how boring other rabbis are—rattle off the top of their heads. Realizing that one of the chief complaints about rabbis is that they are unprepared I knew that with David the rabbinate would be more secure in having gotten a vibrant son who was always, *at least*, prepared. The future of the American Rabbinate as an 'Institution,' was now guaranteed. "Don't you think it's a good idea to be prepared like this," David asked? "Maybe for some people, David, but frankly, I refuse to deliver sermons at the drop of a yarmulke; and as for 'rubbers,' I never touch the things—they pinch!"

* (copyright 1971 © A. Bruce Goldman
adapted from his forthcoming book: *Up Against The Wailing Wall* to be published in October of this year.)



Abraham Goldstein



THE rebbe as P H - T - G R A P H E R

"As a Jew all aspects of life concern me. My attitude toward Judaism means total immersion and involvement in life. It is not surprising that I have attempted to translate ideas about God, man and the universe into a graphic reality. To be alive and human is to explore and discover the world around us, its glory, its creation, its beauty, its order, its chaos, and its sorrow, and its tragedy. With eyes to look few really see. The camera, an extension of my eye, helps me to interpret for myself and others, the human condition. Not only do I wish to explore creation, but to become a co-partner with its Creator."





poem to michael solomon

if you can find those who
whisper in the darkness
prayers of light
that drift over american
shores in the night

tell them
it seems as if the dreams
were smuggled in
and in the guise of
respectability — we no
longer listen to smugglers
of israeli dreams

tell them, their words are wrong
their hearts recording needs a
new record

we can not hear them
the static, the scratches
of centuries in travel have
changed the sound that once
made all the tribes
open their eyes
together

if you can find those
who whisper prayers
in the night
tell them
they do not understand
the conflict of an american jew

if they receive millions of dollars
they should not be fooled into
believing they are heard —
that money is sent, like traditions
some jews try to keep alive

a cover for weakness
some form of subtle insurance
rituals rather than turning inward
to face the light

They are trying to buy a dream
they are afraid to be
they want to pay \$2 at the box office
& call it faith
walk out if its a bad movie —

if you can find those
who whisper prayers of light

tell them, their holy cities
will not stand if built with
american money & the real jews
here cannot walk into a temple
without vomiting

the holy men here
will not use the traditional words
they are like empty tin cans
the holy men in this country
do not know if they are americans
or if they are jews

they dont understand
when you talk in their heads
at night, if you are talking
to them, or to some rabbi
raking off money from your
lost children

if you find those who
dream in the light
tell them
it is getting too close to death
for us, and we do not know who
we are or what they expect
us to do . . .

* This poem first appeared in *Quitoxe*, a poetry journal, in Madison, Wisconsin.
It was sent by the author to JEWISH CURRENTS who has made it available to
us.

A Review Of The Israeli Film

There are certain moments of truth which are inevitable and bound to appear sooner or later in every Israeli's life. A realization of how small Israel is must be one of the most horrifying truths. What other self-respecting film critic can sum up his country's film industry in one article? Could James Agee observe the American film industry in one article? Could Andre Bazin record the French film industry in 5000 words? Even a small nation such as Denmark has a great director in Carl Drayer, giving a film critic enough reason for writing a book.

Israel does not have a Carl Drayer, thus up to recent years the "criticism" of Israeli film has consisted of three approaches: One, the objective-by-profession approach; in order words, film-reviewers' criticism. Those gentlemen have traditionally held themselves as magistrates of merit and paid taste-consultants for the public, rarely failing to bury a new Israeli film. The "best" movie reviewer is the "toughest" movie reviewer; the more local films panned, the more honest the reviewer.

The second approach is the objective-by-self-proclamation approach. This approach is usually reserved to leftist film critics and involves a utilization of film as a social mirror, quite often forgetting that films are not shot by masses but rather created by a director who, though influenced by social and political factors, still creates his own reality.

The third approach is the objective-by-commercialism approach. This approach calls for the combination of a star, a synopsis of all of her/his movies, hundreds of pictures, and any other harmless piece of information, the final product being an expensive album, excellent as a gift for weddings and similar feasts.

Unfortunately, I possess neither the malice typical to the film reviewer nor the intellectual indifference typical to the album editor. As to the application of social criteria to film criticism, I am all for it as long as it is within the framework of auteuristic critique. On top of that I do not have the slightest intention of appearing objective, simply since I am not. If one would be objective, one would not bother himself with Israeli films; only someone who went to the first Israeli film five times just to hear Hebrew spoken on the screen can forgive the mediocre, condemn the opportunistic, cheer on the advancing and praise the achieving. A review of Israeli Film is in a way more than just a history of films. It is a review of a quest for an identity, both cultural and social. That is why this analysis will be presented on two plateaus, the chronological-historical one and the amateur, or personal one. In order to discuss individual directors and their films as complete units, we must first observe some directions in the history of the Israeli film:

The first full-length Israeli film was distributed in 1952, four years after the War of Independence. It was called "Pillar of Fire," directed by Larry Frisch and focused its plot, appropriately enough, on the Heroes of the war. The

film, being naive, primitive and technically atrocious, would be quite insignificant if not for the fact that it presented the theme that haunted the Israeli film for the next nine years, with overtones resounding even later. The theme, of course, was heroism as personified by the Israeli son of the desert. The pattern was continued two years later, 1954, with Thorold Dixenson's "Hill 24 Does Not Answer." (You can probably develop your own theories as to the silence of the particular hill, none of which I am sure will be too far fetched.) The difference, this time, is that the director and the crew were British, thus at least certain frames were clear and some of us could actually make some sense of the sentences uttered. This is possibly why "Hill 24" became the first exported Israeli film.

There was one attempt to break the pattern. During the 50's a Jewish filmmaker from Iraq, named Nuri Haviv, immigrated to Israel. Haviv, who was an experienced producer-director, tried to raise the film to the level of industry, thus opening the way for later establishing film as art. His first film was made in 1955 and was called "Without a Country," the subject being the Yemenite Jew's immigration. The production was huge (for the standards of those days) and the cost great. The film itself, incidentally the first shot in color, was quite simple. Still, it is assured a place in the Israeli film hall of fame as being the director's first film made in Israel. "Without a Country" just about broke even but Haviv's next film "Rachel" was not that lucky. Haviv lost all of his money and had to emigrate to America. His failure issued a warning to all other directors who strove for art, and made the issue clear. Israel is too small a country in which to fail without suffering total consequences. If one fails in America, one bows out by the system of double bills, selling films to television, etc. If an Israeli film does not win the audience's heart, bankruptcy is assured.

The next few years produced nothing but heroic films, the only note worthy one being Raphael Nosenbaum's "Blazing Sand." The plot revolves around an expedition of five Israelis, obviously carefully picked by the director to represent every segment of the population, aimed at the discovery



Topol (right) as "Sallah"

of the hidden scrolls. The film is melodramatic, the camera static, and the ending shamelessly plagiarized from John Houston's "The Treasure of Sierra Madra." Still, it managed to raise quite a stir, its plot being very similar to the then actual Patra incidents. (By the Patra incidents I refer to the groups of young men who violated the law, forming expeditions, penetrating Jordan and touring the "Red Rock," King Horodu's palace, often paying with their lives for it.) Another interesting fact involving the film was the appearance of Dalia Lavi, the femme fatale who, running around the Negev with her shorts and undersized shirts, seemed to be the greatest natural resource around, becoming a symbol for the tough Israeli female.

1961 brought the first Israeli hit film, Aharon Meged's stage comedy. "I Like Mike" was turned into a film by Peter Fry, becoming instantly a crowd favorite. The plot is simple: A mother is trying to marry her daughter off to a rich American. Naturally, the daughter does not love him. She loves a happy-go-lucky Israeli (portrayed by Topol.) The matter becomes more and more complicated until everyone marries his respective loved one and they all live happily ever after. This started off a new pattern, the peasant and middle class comedies. Israel, a country with strong socialist backgrounds, has no use for comedies of the high class, such as Minnelli's "The Reluctant Debutante" or Sturges' "The Lady Eve." The only reason a rich man might appear in an Israeli comedy is to show us how far superior to him the idolized peasant is, both mentally and spiritually. A rich man is never good, but then again, he is never totally bad. Let's just say he is a bit misguided and is shown the right way by the peasant by the time the film is over. As for middle class comedy, just imagine a Hebrew speaking "Make Room for Daddy" or "The Patty Duke Show." It is close enough.

The beginning of the 60's is filled with such comedy: "Only a Pound," "The Simchon Family," "Never on Saturday," etc. The flood of comedies and melodramas is disturbed only by Shimon Israeli's film "The Basement." Israeli was a well-known Israeli, close in spirit to Jacques Brel and George Brunsance. After acting in one film, "Shia", he decided to produce his own film, a one-man film. The hero, trapped in the basement with his memories and fears, is the only character in the film (which takes place during World War II.) Still, the spirit of the millions murdered was strongly felt. The film was way ahead of its time. It failed commercially and Israeli went bankrupt.

1964 is a key year in the development of Israeli film. It brings with it Kishon's "Sallah" and with it the old Hollywood notion that a film can be successful both artistically and commercially. "Sallah" will be discussed in greater length when we discuss Mr. Kishon. Still, historically speaking, "Sallah" contributed greatly to establishing a truer image of Israel in the world.

Up to then the world-wide distributed films concerning Israel have presented a rather twisted picture. Preminger's "Exodus" was the first and is possibly the best of them all. Mr. Preminger, director of "Laura," "Anatomy of a Murder" and "Advise and Consent," etc. is both an auteur and a warm Jew. Faced with Uris' big and vulgar script Preminger produced a big and vulgar film. Still, as I mentioned before, being a Jew and an auteur Preminger



A middle class comedy "The Simchon Family."

centered the film around Israel, not around Newman and St. Marie, thus making a whole world aware of the struggle. Films which followed later were not as noble in intent. Daniel Man's "Judith" is much more interested in Sophia Loren than in Israel; Ted Bergman's "Cast a Giant Shadow" included more shots of Kirk Douglas' chin than anything else. The last big-time foreign film made in Israel was Jules Dassin's "Survival 67," a documentary. Recently, since we revealed our true nature no one has made any films about Israel.

To get back to the Israeli film industry, "Sallah" did not stop the cheap comedies and melodramas but succeeded in encouraging film makers to dare. Uri Zohar came out with "A Hole in the Moon," an avant-garde film also to be discussed later. In 1965 Israel Becker presented his "Two Kunilemels," a film based upon the operetta by Goldfaden. After more than half a century of an unofficial ban on Israeli Yiddish culture, Goldfaden, the diaspora's source of entertainment, has been immortalized on celluloid.

The Zeitgeists of the old and the new began to move toward each other, but the real advances were to be made after the Six-Day War. The war has changed Israel geographically, politically, culturally and socially. The film industry reacted immediately to the victory, producing in a period of 10 months no less than 4 films capitalizing on the new heroes. Three of the films, "Mission; Tiron," "Five Days in Sinai" and "Operation Cairo" are the average commando-team-blows-up-enemy-base kind of films, borrowing freely from Aldridge's "Dirty Dozen." I must also admit that the fourth one, Uri Zohar's "Every Bastard is a King," baffled me. The first time I saw it, in Israel, and a few months after the war, I was quite excited and proud. Proud of the actors, proud of myself, proud of every person sitting in the theatre, whose emotional responses I could recognize as being close to mine. When the film arrived in New York, I saw it again and developed a negative attitude. The story was obvious, the spicy implications dull, the sex scenes uncalled for, the acting and staging sloppy (with the exception of the tank battle and Yhorom Gaon, Israel's beloved tough outside, soft inside actor.) Must one conclude that the movie's success in Israel and its effect upon me should be attributed to its ability to manipulate our feelings at that time? I think not.

That is much too simple an answer and besides, I am quite convinced that the same film shown to an all-Israeli audience today would repeat the same effect as it did right after the war. One cannot apply standard critical criteria to all films. There are films which hold their flavor only with a certain audience at hand. A film is an experience, not just pieces of celluloid.

The war which actually pitted the Jewish people against half the world helped totally to destroy the tendency to ignore the diaspora culture. Starting in 1968 the Israeli stage proudly presented "The Songs of Itzhack Manger," "There was a Chassid," Goldfaden's "The Witch," etc. The film industry, not far behind, came out with a well-meaning but still moronic version of Ansky's "The Dybuk;" later on a poor-man's version of "Fiddler on the Roof" was produced and named "Tevye and his Seven Daughters." 1969 brought us "A Miracle in Town" (nothing to do with De Sica's "A Miracle in Milan") and although the 1965 "Two Kunilemels" was the best production of that kind the future definitely holds more and better diaspora oriented films.

1969 also brought the War of Attrition and as always, film became highly responsive to the war, reacting in two different directions. One direction recorded the effects of the war upon Israel. An excellent documentary called "The War After the War," directed by Micha Shagrir, is built up around an authentic episode. The doctors in an Israeli hospital are trying to save the lives of two victims of a border clash, an Arab terrorist and an Israeli officer. (One false move and the film would have sunk deep in Kitch but no false moves are made.) The paradoxical situations of war in the area are masterfully and subtly drawn, the result is most unique.

A second film is Gilberto Tofano's "Siege," starring Israel's top actress, Gila Almagor, as Tamar. The plot involves the attempts of Tamar, a six-day war widow, to break out of the social siege set up by her husband's friends and intended at keeping her as a living monument for him. Almagor is excellent; the film shown in New York is quite good, shown in Israel it is heart-shattering.

The second direction is one trying to ignore the war, to ignore deaths, to show life goes on. This trend started with a David Greenberg cross between Lolita and La Dolce Vita resulting in a bastard called "Iris." Much better films were made by this current, but since most of them are auteur oriented, we shall discuss them after we discuss auteurism in the Israeli film.

An auteur is a director who shapes his film to reflect his personality, either by personally writing the script or by having full control of the production. Up to 1970 I could give the title auteur to only three directors: to Menahem Golan, because he fits the definition, for better, or what is more probable, for worse; to Uri Zohar because I still hope he will shake his hump; and to Ephraim Kishon because he deserves it.

Menahem Golan is basically an opportunist, cashing in on the trend of the crowd, giving it strictly whatever it wants to see. He is the king of peasant and middle-class comedies ("Fortuna," "Aliza Mizrahi," "Lupo," etc.) In my book he'll be remembered only for flashing, for the first time in 2,000 years, a pair of naked breasts upon an Israeli screen (in his "Dalia and the Sailors"), and for putting up the money for "Sallah."

Uri Zohar started out in an extremely promising manner. His first film, "A Hole in the Moon," was a cinematic take-off on anything from "8½" to "Morgan." The film was well received by film freaks, naturally not so well received by general audiences. Alas, no one minded when in 1965 Zohar directed a peasant comedy called "Moishe Ventilator" which covered his losses. In 1967 Zohar directed the second best Israeli movie ever made (The first being "Sallah"), "Three Days and a Child," a love story that was very Israeli, but in a subtle, natural way. The film won a prize in the 1967 Cannes Festival and Israel seemed to have a genuine auteur. Then after the war Zohar apparently changed. In 1968 he directed "Every Bastard is a King" and his vintage ever since has included the rather distasteful comedies, "Fish, Football and Girls" and "Getting High" (not that kind of high!). Many people have given up on Zohar but there is nothing to do but hope for his return to his brilliant, former self.

Ephraim Kishon is a very limited film maker but a true auteur. He is basically a satirist and a journalist yet he seems to be the only Israeli writer capturing the true spirit of the country. As a film maker one can compare Kishon to Pietro Germi ("Divorce Italian Style," "Seduced and Abandoned") in the sense that they are both excellent satirists and they are both limited to that field only. There is one difference between them, and a great one: Germi despises his fellow Sicilians, Kishon loves his fellow Israelis. He loves them so much he never feels a need to apologize for them, or to give their character a touch of morality. For example, Cayeyannis' "Zorba" must explain and moralize his quest for happiness, his love for all man; "Sallah" does not have to. He is lazy, he is selfish and he is wise just because he is a man. The only one he is willing to explain to is God, and even from Him he demands more than he is willing to give, just like any man. "Sallah" was Kishon's "Citizen Kane." The next films to follow were less successful though most amusing. His 1967 "Ervinkah" and 1969 "The Big Dig" both ridiculed, with lots of irony but without cynicism, the relationship between citizens and municipalities.



Security Council Resolution

How good to be counter-revolutionary
just this once
anti-progressive, immoral, with no view
towards the common good
and answer those charges dead-pan
with a tie on.

How satisfying to hear their voices squeal
in fury
the veins bulging from their temples
like bas-reliefs
and then take the cigarette from my mouth
with manicured fingers.

How luxurious to be detested right out
in the open
to be spared their ugly pity, the greasy
by-product of their vileness
and show my contempt with the most distinguished
of manners.

It is not the best but it is better than

Jerusalem 3

It does no good to point at buildings,
We are a people come from the desert
what use have we of these?
You do not fool us with your highways,
we have strewn them with peach-colored stones
that will rip your civilized feet.
Universities and parliaments are intruders,
temporary interlopers, dooming themselves
with their own self-importance.
Black earth, grey grass and the sun
drowning in its own blood.
Leave us alone in our hills,
we are hill people.

Teyku! or, Can a Nitwit Play Dumb?



A heavy prayer shawl hanging incorrectly to his ankles, huge phylacteries no longer in their precise places (one box at the tip of his elbow, the other at the tip of his nose), a thick private Talmud-size journal, spine down, in his left hand, a large container of cottage cheese in his right, slightly bigger hand, one shoe obviously missing, Leml Kopp hopped inside the bus singing a madrigal:

*The fish in air should fly with fin,
The fowls in flood should bring forth fry;
All things, methinks, should erst begin
To take their course unnaturally
Afore my friend should alter so,
Without a cause to be my foe.*

Nobody said a word; it was as if Leml had knocked everyone unconscious. Limping now along the aisle, Leml cried out in a high voice. My friend taught me that song. He poured it into my head. Don't you hate the moldy words? Where is he? On this bus? How many must I search? Ketsl, where are you? It's late. God, I've lost my only friend. Maybe I'd better forget him and find another. Yes, hunt another down in a hurry. The Talmud says, Lither friendship or death. And what if there's truth to the Talmud? Quick, help me out, I'm in trouble. Hey, psst, are you the one? whispered Leml. Are you to be my friend? According to all the authorities I need just one to survive. That's all. And he sat down on somebody's lap. Whoops! Leml shouted, almost immediately. My God the bad cheese! As he cantered to the front door the sides of his shawl swung upward like two gorgeous wings. Never mind, squeaked Leml, turning round on his bare toe. There's no time now, he added, as though a passenger had asked him for an explanation. Let that rotten grocer wait. He's an enemy. First I must make a friend. Otherwise I'm done, sunk, lost, washed up, concluded. Squeezing himself in between two fat women, Leml gasped, Go ahead, ladies. Chew the fat. Don't let me stop you, I'm almost a Rabbi, I've seen and heard everything, just give me a moment to finish my prayers. The two women rose immediately and, sitting down together elsewhere, conversed one wild face next to the other, their bosoms touching. However, Leml was certain he caught the main point. Stretching out his head, Leml put a question to the man who sat, hands in pockets, across the aisle. Did you hear that? Some poor woman, Mrs. Rell, I think, has dropped all her wits. On a visit to her son way on the other side of the country. Apparently nobody expected such a thing. What about you? Did you know her? Had you guessed her secret all along? Couldn't befuddle or befuddle you? Really? And you know just how to account for it? Sorry, fool,

wrong person. This Rell was a widow, to boot. O, I agree. She shouldn't have exhausted herself. That stuff stinks. The exhaust of a bus'd make anybody sick, just as sick too. True, Mrs. Rell was fine going; but not coming back, that's certain. What? Missed that? Well, don't blame me, dope, I'm only trying to share a secret, like a friend. Blockhead, don't blame Mrs. Rell's friend, either. I hate that. Ignoramus, is it the friend's fault that Mrs. Rell, half way home, turned her blabber-mouth to her and said, out of the blue, Guess we'll be there soon, I can't wait to see my boy's face wunst again? Not at all! But, say, what a terrible change there, what a twist, what a spoiling of wits, and altogether revealed by a single forgetfulness. Obviously, obviously, obviously. Don't need me to tell you where Mrs. Rell dwells this very moment. The asylum's famous, and right nearby. O, don't feel bad. The ladies couldn't recall the name either. One said, You know the place! the other said, Yes, what's it called? That sign, how many times have I seen it? Ooooo, just listen, sir, they're still at it, like birds!

Leml jumped up and galloped toward the two women, crying, Hey, what's the big idea? Why blame her for forgetting? What about you, eh? You're cracked yourselves. I'm her son. You thought I wouldn't hear? Please, how do you think I feel, women? No, don't go! I'm just joking. Can't you forgive a friend for butting in and playing dumb? Shake my hands! The ladies, after giving each other some signal with their painted eyebrows, got off the bus at once. I'm not stranded yet, Leml yelled at them from a window. There are others left. Adjusting the leather straps of his phylacteries, he ambled up beside two students who stood arguing, and listened for a while to the complicated song of their merging voices. Leml heard the tall skinny one repeat, in a quiet lethargic melody, a single galling sentence: O that subtle trick to pretend the acting only when we are very near being what we act. And he heard the short plump one explode loud fragments of disbelief in the other's distant ear. Watcha talkin' about? S'that all ya can do? Parrot somebody else's words? I've read Coleridge, too. And Hamlet, too. An' yarong! What, both be somethin' and make believe it? Go on. Could you preten' you were nuts if you really, I mean really, were nuts? Go dig yourself a grave, then, go ahead, man, get in it, die, then pretend you're dead and, marrowless, invite me to the funeral, Nitwit!

Determined to end the argument and bring the boys together, Leml grabbed the ears of both and hollered, Want to know the answer? Study the Talmud. That's where you'll find everything. *Teyku*, that's your logical answer. That tiny word means, Don't break your heads anymore, let the thing stand undecided till Elijah the Prophet comes. Be like me, boys, I studied the Talmud early and it gave me a head start in life. *Teyku's* the answer, not the Latin q.e.d. The two boys finally pulled away, tried to show respect by not replying, and left the bus. Nobody likes me! wailed Leml, head thrown back like a cat crooning for affection. What, am I the snake the Talmud speaks of? Am I the snake who has no friend? Somebody, anybody, give me a hand, quick, I'm dying. You! shouted Leml, and dug a finger deep into the heavy shoulder of a sleeping man. Excuse me, said Leml, softly now though the man still slept. I'd like to give you a few moments, or any information you might

need, but how can I? My hands are tied. It's absolutely against my Law, my Talmud, to converse with a dead man. Up, anyway. Enough dying. Perhaps you can help me instead? That's ok, a different story. Hey, must I beat you? My question is serious. No joke, did we just pass a *For Lease* sign? Yes, just this minute. Of course, the immediate moment's gone by now, by the time you answer. Did we? It may explain why I just now thought of my dear friend, good Ketsl Lebb. What other explanation do I have? Right, *why* I thought of him, not *what*. That's my secret, allow me my secret. If, my friend, you turn out my friend, I'll open my heart as well as my mouth. But not before. Get it? In my house I have to be careful what I say. Enemies everywhere. My reasoning, then, is this. *They* must have put up that sign, those two real-estate agents down the hall. See that man over there, him without a hat, he's one of them. And you're the other. Isn't it so? So my mind must have gone. Sign, enemies, friend. Thank God for my one friend that's his name? Corpse, wake up, answer, am I right? Care for cheese? Too stinky? What do you care? Give it to your friend.

The man burped and woke. Say, chirped Leml, have you seen my shoe? It's still missing. I think I left it this morning on this bus. The man, half dozing, picked up his lunch box from the floor and headed for the back exit. Leml immediately took his seat. For a while he quietly sat biting into his knuckles. Then he flung his face into the face of the woman beside him, but she insisted upon showing him only her profile. Hey, barked Leml, must I become brutal? Must I force you to befriend me? O, I'm sorry, I thought you were a man. Woman I know, she's no friend. Wait, wait, wait. I see that question slouching in your head, and I don't like it one bit. You want to inquire *why*, my fingers smell, don't you? Madam, please give me your eye. Something bit me this afternoon, downstairs in my cellar, while I sat thinking on my trunk. There, there, there, there, in between each knuckle. Know what? You remind me of my Ketsl, the way you goggle your face, turning your head to a side, showing merely one eye and approximately half a mouth. I do it myself sometimes. That's the danger of friendship. You forget your own nature. Each friend copies the other party, till finally they exchange souls. Ketsl and Leml, for instance. Poor Ketsl couldn't walk up a sidewalk, and for that matter down it too, without straying into the street itself or, if he were lucky, simply into a shrub or a garden. Just like a dog. Yes, sideways Ketsl strolled, like a dog. And now Leml's a dog himself. Did I just say Leml was a dog? Good. Thank God. Pardon the repetition, but I thought my voice went dead. Boy was I frightened! I saw you weren't listening, madam, and thought my voice went out altogether, like an old lightbulb.

Leml put his mouth to the woman's ear and whispered, Don't tell a soul. My own teeth caused the redness of my knuckles. I follow Ketsl's example now, he always bit his hands, bit them to death, until they smelled, smelled, smelled. For friendship's sake, would you shake my hand? What did you say? *Noli me tangere*? Who taught you Latin? My friend taught me. The woman excused herself, pressed past him, and dropped out of the bus and out of sight. My friend had pain, howled Leml, but nobody gives a hoot. Where will I find another? Can I turn to my neighbors? Dead wrong. Those fiends, last

night, they tried to scare me by yelling at me from hidden places: one put his mouth to my door, the other put mouth to wall, and both all night cawed and cackled and hissed. Who but an enemy, somebody worse than a wiseguy, would risk straining the voice, risk scratching the precious lips? My friend was otherwise, he had a mind. Hoo-hoo-hoo, had, not has, I admit it, that funny bird! Laughing, hiccuping, Leml got up and pranced in the aisle. See? he sighed, I'm no longer steady, see? no longer myself, I'm like Ketsl, a dog, saw? Say, have we hit rough waters? The deck is coming loose. Who's at the wheel? Some idiot? What's he trying to do? Drive the world crazy? You, run up and give him this from me.

The man whom Leml pinched in the neck simply moved to another seat. And when Leml followed after him, he simply paid his fare and was gone. Okay, sang Leml. Get out. Who needs you? I'll be friendless, then. I'll take a chance. I'll test the Talmud. Yes, everybody out! away! God's my friend. Right, driver? Lady, isn't this your stop? Better hurry. Haste makes waste. Scamper, scamper, but don't flop. I once heard that happen and the sound's terrible. Listen, I think there's a bee in this bus! Everybody, flee for your life.

The last passenger remaining stood up, searching in his pockets for change. However Leml seized him by his belt. No, no, no, cooed Leml, let me change your mind, don't leave yet, first advise me properly. Am I really the snake I mentioned before, the one without a drop of friendship? It's a pity. You've waited this long, why not help me out? Merciless, eh? Then here's a push to help *you* out! Leml did, indeed, shove the man out the door. Afterward, he held the door open with his bare foot and growled, I have another snake story, don't miss it. There was a man who healed an ailing snake, and the very itty-bitty moment its strength returned, that wicked reptile bit the man's hand, bit it in half. Why this asked the nitwit, dying. And what did the snake reply? Go read the Talmud. The door gasped shut, and Leml rushed to a window. Nitwit, don't you know my nature? he yelled. From now on, don't befriend just anybody. That's what the snake said with its eyes. Hey, is it a deal? You visit my grave and I visit yours? Let's both shriek as loud as we dare at the obsequies, and in unison.

To make certain that the bus was now empty, Leml searched under each seat. Then clapping his hands and humming a tune, he approached the driver. What? he asked through his nose. Empty? Who drives around an empty hearse? Back, back, they'll only mock you at the cemetery. Are you *mes-hugger*, driver? *Meshugger af tayt*? You think I'll comply and play the corpse?

The driver grumbled.

Leml grumbled back. Uuuui, don't get mad. Half mad, three quarters, but not altogether, from heel to chin. That's just like dying. I've heard, seen smelled, tasted, felt that happen, to another. Terrible thing. Worse than *rigor mortis*. Okay, okay, I'll help you out, I'll pretend I'm stiff.

And Leml began to weep on the driver's shoulder. God, help me, he sobbed. I need somebody's help. I can't remember what it was by myself, I can't. That's the stem of all my trouble, I swear it. A friend would sit beside me until I remembered, would ask a good question, a single exact query that would find the mark, save the day. The others dropped out, left me in the

lurch. Not you, not you. You remained. My God, I'm not asking from ugly neglect. I tried to help myself. God didn't lie in bed half the day, pulling at my hair, imagining I might, with a sufficient tug, tear out, uproot, or, extricate completely the necessary memory buried, trapped, underneath my skull, aching, aching, aching? But I failed, couldn't figure the matter out, not this morning, not this noon, and the nightmarish song is still within my head. Can it be serious and I not know it? Say something. I'm desperate. My excuse isn't lame. I'm absolutely stumped. Stung. Sick, God, you nitwit, don't let me down! In heaven's name, why play dumb? Don't be an unmoved mover, driver. Hey, haven't I moved you just a bit? Interrupt me, assist me, rescue me. Come, be my friend. It's as easy as one, two, three. Do you, too, have no idea, none whatsoever? Would it do any good if you knew just when that cockeyed notion occurred to me? Would that help you help me? It came, that painful worry, the instant those finches woke me up, your damn California finches. The immediate moment. No, earlier. Even, I think, while I slept I caught their terrible point. Yes, heard them singing that brutal suggestion from their soft places along the boughs of the persimmon tree right outside my window but slightly to the left, on the side where the heart lies. Heard them announce that I, good God, Leml Kopp, young Talmudic scholar about to be examined for the rabbinate, was in great trouble. For I had somehow allowed myself to forget a thing of huge importance, some deep matter, something from head to toe which was about to happen, God forbid, unless, God willing, I remembered and postponed the event in time. There, now, what do you say? recognize the secret? any hint pop up? It was something I told myself the night before. I'm sure of that. But by morning I forgot and those birds, guessing my neglect, gathered together to plague me. Can't you counteract a few birds? I'm not joking. Without your help, I'm a gonner. How can I pass the test, how show I can *pasken sheilos*, if I'm unable to answer my own questions? Understand?

Leml collapsed, and lay in the aisle of the empty bus gasping for breath like a fish at the surface of polluted waters. With one eye he saw the driver bending his head above his horizontal steering wheel, not making any reply, not making any comment, apparently convinced it was all a game. Leml would have been glad to accept each bump as a discreet punishment for his forgetfulness, but his body was so numb from fear and exhaustion that he felt no pain. I'm dying, he thought. The Talmud's right. No friend, no life. In fact, after a few minutes, Leml was altogether asleep.

2

When finally he was up, he banged his head against the wall. Then gathering together his pillow and one shoe, Leml jumped to the open window and flung both articles at the innocent persimmon tree. At once many tiny figures bursting open, rose through the branches toward the bright sky like a collection of small balloons released by a vendor who had suddenly, poor thing, either just fallen asleep or lost his mind. Good, thought Leml. Fly up,

fly down, who cares? To heaven or to hell with you, but out of my hearing. Liars! I've forgot nothing. However, almost immediately the birds returned to their places and continued their enormous, intricate jangling. Furious, Leml hopped to the door, determined to sneak up on those birds, by way of the back garden, and catch a few for his late breakfast. Are finches kosher? Leml asked himself when his stubborn door refused to give. The birds sang many songs as Leml twisted fiercely the loose knob. Then he threw down his hands, and gave up all hope. At that moment, when Leml was about to weep, the door swung open of its own accord, and there, empty and quiet, as though waiting for him lay the slim winding path of the long hall. But to his present mind that bent passageway looked definitely and dangerously like a huge fish hook, or the poisonous tail of a giant scorpion. Suspicious, in fact frightened, Leml pushed one quarter of an eye outside the doorjamb, in order to be certain the waters were deserted. He didn't want the other lodgers, his enemies, to discover his doings. Why should they know of his discomfort, of his plan for revenge? Besides, this was his last day in California. He wished simply to pack for home and disappear, without anybody's comment, good or bad. So, helter-skelter, not caring how his body moved so long as it moved quickly, Leml flung forward his arms and his legs, and in a few moments had scurried past everything: by the little doorless washroom with its single sink and four warped shelves, by the back porch that had recently been converted into a permanent lodging for a drunk, abandoned husband and his dog, by the kitchen which Leml shared not just with the tenants on his floor, but with hundreds of ants, large and small, past the room that held the tall, young, yet always exhausted real-estate agent whose wife, according to the report, had fallen in love with someone else for the sixth or seventh time, past the room which held the old short fiercely energetic real-estate agent who used Leml's soap, towels, shaver, toothpaste, who yesterday lit a firecracker in Leml's ear. But instead of exiting through the back door, by mistake Leml pulled open the door leading to the cellar and then, hearing a noise approach somewhere along the hall, he jumped inside, at once deciding to forget about the birds and prepare himself rather for the important trip homeward. Yes, he'd follow the advice of the Talmud, seize the important thing and let the unimportant go. He had an examination to take! Standing on the broken top step, quiet as a mouse, Leml stared down. There at the bottom, at a corner plagued by earwigs, was the makeshift combination shower-privy. Good, he'd go to the bathroom. Well, *shtunk*? Leml questioned himself harshly. How should I descend? Take each step like a man, or leap down the short flight like a beast? He leapt. And found the drop much greater than he expected. The slap of his feet against the cold cement was incredibly loud and stinging. What did I do that for? he complained. Too jolted to walk, he dragged himself up on to an old trunk, his own, perhaps, and lay crumpled and staring. I absolutely condemn this place, gasped Leml. This entire house I damn, I curse. Head pressed against heart, Leml, weeping, mumbled: When will my mistakes stop? And he wondered whether he had ever performed two right things, one after the other. Had he been right to come out here, self-banished, for a full year? Was he now right to leave, with everything up in the air still? What sign might

he follow? He required a friend to end this disjunction, instruct him concerning things basic and initial, pointing out, for example, that his clothes were way too baggy for a man of distinction and some age. A friend, a friend, to remind him of his duty, and keep him awake. In the midst of his weeping, mumbling, and wondering, Leml fell asleep.

Two hours later Leml was back in his room, newly self-admonished, self-warned: he had not managed to reach the bathroom, but from now on he would pursue his last day only according to his needs. That meant prayers, breakfast, and packing for home. In other words, he would forget the bogus accusation of the birds. Applauding himself in his heart, he put on his religious garments, fringed shawl, leather binding for head, leather binding for arm, and soon was all ready to direct his attention to Heaven, ready to read his morning prayers, each one, with *kavoneh*, heart and hand, according to the Law, completely awake. But immediately, before he had a chance to sing the first word, he realized that the time for morning prayers was long since gone. His blessings would be vain. Nitwit! He yelped, snapping his prayer-book shut, only to open it again at once and examine the pages, afraid that he had by mistake squashed one of the quick wasps that dwelled in a corner of his room. What have I forgot? squeaked Leml. Those birds are right. What is it? This is insane! Pinching his two temples with his unevenly long-nailed thumbs, Leml attempted to squeeze out the recollection, the solution. Nothing occurred to him, except pain. No memory, no prayers, thought Leml. So, wearing just one shoe and dressed still in his heavy *talis* and *tefillin*, Leml headed for the kitchen. According to my Talmud, Leml queried himself, what foods help the memory? Unable to recall, Leml decided on having the dish his friend had loved, cottage cheese and sugar heaped up high like a bleached anthill. Seizing the container, he slapped off the lid, and found inside, everywhere, on the surface and up the sides, fluffy tufted stains. That's what a mad brain must look like, thought Leml, then smacked his forehead, wondering, Hey, was that it, the thing he had forgot, the spoiled cheese? Had he noticed it last night and told himself not to forget to return the bad goods immediately the next morning? Impossible! A minute ago, no more, he had opened the container for the first time. *Lemlkopp*. Well, at least he'd take back the cheese. And in order to avoid any forgetting, he'd do it right now. Yes, he'd postpone his breakfast. Obviously, damn it, obviously the newspaperboy had told the youngster who delivered Leml's kosher meat from San Jose that he had left Leml a paper two days old and Leml forgot to complain, and the delivery youngster boasted to the local grocer that his employer, the kosher butcher from San Jose, once sent Leml meat a month old and Leml, though he certainly knew about it, forgot to complain, so the local grocer, also an enemy, handed him yesterday a container of cottage cheese half a year old, expecting Leml to forget the whole thing! No, that wouldn't be his choice this time. He hadn't crossed country to be preposterously deceived by a group of shopkeepers and their orderboys. That wasn't his purpose. Though he had claimed he needed the year to study the Talmud, his true plan was to sit down in a distant, unfamiliar place and by concentrating on one thing, a single memory, discover whether he was innocent or guilty, decide, once and

for all, just exactly how much he was to blame for his friend Ketsl Lebb's entering a madhouse, the asylum which conveniently lay but a few streets from both their houses. Now, thank God, the year was over. Hadn't he spent his time well, making daily illegible entries in a single fat journal, arguing with himself according to his understanding and memory of that tragic friendship? In fact, his book was like a tractate of the Talmud where a hundred voices converge to decide something important: He who steps in dung, while taking his preparatory three paces backward and forward prior to the silent prayer, what should he do? This very question Leml had studied last night, after making his final entry in his journal. He rejoiced to find that the Rabbis, unable to make up their minds, had ended with *teyku*, rejoiced because his own conclusion, not about the dung but about his friendship, was the same, the last word of his private argument was *Teyku!* He would simply have to return to his life empty-handed, the amount of his blame unmeasured, the decision up in the air, and go about his business unconvinced of anything till the coming of Elijah's better judgment in the end.

Leml decided to take his journal along with him to the grocery: perhaps the walking would somehow loosen up his thinking, perhaps aid him to introduce, at the last minute, a significant change, a twist, some item that might alter the entire sum. He hurried, since he had to pack yet and catch a bus before nightfall. But in less than a block he stopped short, realizing his mistake. He had run into the street shoe off, phylacteries and shawl on. Should he go back and change? Why bother? The distance to the rotten grocer was just three and a half blocks. And didn't the Talmudists of old wear their outlandish equipment from dawn to dusk? Shouldn't he, this one time, honor them? And honor his friend, too? Hadn't Ketsl begged him once to imitate some crazy ancient god who ran about the world with his left shoe on his right foot, right shoe on his left? Yes, enraged for some reason, that god had abandoned Heaven mis-shod. It took a bee to locate him with a sting. Afterward, his rage and malice were taken away from him, altogether stamped out, so that the world might fall into place again, milk return to the cow, fire to wood, love to man. Right, so too Leml Kopp: his dish no longer upside down, worry fled, he'd remember whatever it was he had forgot. So, comforted, Leml limped on. But at the end of the next block his face twisted into a wildly sad expression. What if some enemy noticed his uncommon outfit and mocked him outright, sneezing on his prayer shawl, say? What would Leml have accomplished then? Nothing but his own disgrace plus his friend's plus the disgrace of the One Above. Better he should wrap his shawl around his middle like a sash and stuff the other items in his bosom under his shirt like a brassier. Or, better still, let him just drop the whole business down a sewer and later on come back for it! Nobody would find out such a hiding place; his treasure'd be safe for ever and ever. So, at the next corner, that's what he did. But, immediately regretting his decision, Leml stuck half his body through the mouth of the same sewer and, howling and snorting like a pig, fished out each item. As he harnessed himself again to his stinking religious costume, he shrieked, Why just my shoe? Why did I cast just my shoe out the window? Why didn't I throw my whole head out instead? His

head felt like a rock and he wished for something soft nearby on which to lay it down, slowly. Nitwit, he warned himself, don't fall asleep, remain up and alert, this is serious, serious, it's serious. The repetition made him dizzy. In order to keep his face awake, he began to sing an old madrigal his friend Ketsl had taught him:

*The grass, methinks, should grow in sky,
The stars unto the earth cleave fast;
The water-stream should pass awry.
The winds should leave their strength of blast;
The sun and moon by one assent
Should both forsake the firmament;*

He stopped in the middle, refusing to stuff his mouth any more with such moldy words. He didn't have to imitate Ketsl in everything; he had other ways to prove his friendship. Yes, at those real trials he wouldn't flinch. That thought scared him, for it brought to mind the morning finches, so he buried his head inside his opened journal, and, as he hobbled along, fell asleep.

It took a stranger, Mrs. Peitschkarell, to wake Leml just in time. Yes, just as he was scurrying past the store where he had purchased his bad cheese, her high-pitched moan stung him. He snapped his head up, and saw the woman holding on to a bottom corner of the grocer's glass pane, while she sang the song her husband had sung on his deathbed a month ago. Immediately Leml was enormously grateful to the widow for her present help. And hadn't she also helped him in the past? Although Leml had exchanged few words with anyone during this year of self exile and silent disputation, he had met Mrs. Peitschkarell on his first day of shopping for himself and had assented to learn from the elegant stranger how to detect a perfectly ripe melon. He had even, though not fit for company, spent a tiny portion of a day with her family: her Bulgarian or perhaps Yugoslavian husband, her Czechoslovakian or Roumanian mother, Leml could never remember which, and her (Abyssinian?) cat. He hadn't, of course, mentioned his trouble; in fact, he barely said two words. Instead he listened to them sing, noting that they all sang in high voices, the cat included. So Leml had reason to be quite grateful to Mrs. Peitschkarell. Therefore, without feeling at all foolish, he showed her now his full face and, almost smiling, bowed slightly as he asked, How is your husband, my good friend, Mr., Mr., Mr....? While Leml struggled to recall the name, he saw, with one eye, Mrs. Peitschkarell's gloved hand slip from the glass and bang her hip. What you mean? she moaned. You were at funeral! A joke? What you wearing? Is a joke, too? For a moment, the woman wept hoarsely, then suddenly she was gone. God, cried Leml. What made me forget? He beat his thick journal against part of his face. Perhaps that was the only way to wake himself up, roughly. Only a good *klapp* could put his bad *kopp* in order, bopping things into place. Yes, one uncomfortable *patsh* would do the trick, Mrs. Peitschkarell! he cried, noting that the bang he gave his head had already helped him remember the woman's name. He peered all around, intending to apologize with his heart, but the widow had disappeared, vanished. Take my forgetfulness along with you, Mrs. Peitsch, Leml murmured. My depressing neglect, Mrs. Karell, take it, do.

What was the answer here? Leml wondered. Had he, for just that one moment, really forgotten that her husband was dead and buried? Or was he making believe? He decided not to budge, not to leave his spot, until the thing was argued and concluded. Shouldn't he exercise his mind for the coming test? Stretching his arms out, swaying them like branches pushed by many winds, Leml weighed both possibilities. Moments later, he announced his result in song: *Teyku, teyku, teyku!*

About to stray into the street singing, Leml heard a gasping noise right before his face. It was the door of a bus. Leml jumped inside, hand to nose, checking if anything had been crushed. The driver swung back into traffic, but Leml grabbed the wheel, crying, No, wait! I'm not going anywhere yet. I have to call up the widow and ask her forgiveness. Understand? All I need is some change. The driver stared at Leml for a while. First he gave him a look of anger, as if to say, Go pretend you're crazy somewhere else; then a look of pity, as if to say, Poor nut, you *are* crazy! He handed Leml an extra dime, and Leml jumped off, his prayer shawl filling like a balloon.

Another bus appeared immediately, and Leml hopped aboard. Is there room for one more? he inquired. O, pardon me, the vehicle's special, I can tell by their faces. Tut-tut-tut, what a shame, unfortunates, eh? What exactly? Deaf and dumb? No, the other thing? Not the body? Ooooo, the route's prearranged, it's off now to a certain sad institution, unmentionably sad. Yes, just look at those innocent sardines. Ah, I'm sorry, my mistake, just a picnic? Nothing more? Fine, go ahead. My course, though, is unchartered, and alone. Bye bye!

Hooray! screamed Leml when he saw another bus coming. That's it, the box where I'll find what I lost.



Woke Leml screaming. And when he saw the whole world flying by, he screamed some more. Where was he? In Heaven? In God's chariot? Was he now dead, and being driven throughout the sky so his disgrace be published everywhere? He saw two eyes up ahead enclosed in a shiny rectangle and approached them, peeking through his dirty fingers. Up close he understood his error. Hey, he growled. You're not God! The driver paid no attention. You can't trick me, I'd know your face anywhere! Then Leml began crying again. It's getting worse, he barked. I just dreamt you were God. And before that, I dreamt another mistake. At my examination the Rabbis asked me how my friend was, and I took that chit-chat for the test itself and argued that he wasn't my friend, no *teyku* about it! What's your opinion? You think I was his friend, that I let him way down? You blame me 100 percent and want now to pay me back? Is that why you won't help me out? Please, I have to get to the absolute other side of the country. If I prove to you that Ketsl was never ever Leml's friend, that Ketsl owes him nothing, are you listening? which name am I? This is serious. I want to go home. If I prove to you that afore Ketsl came, Leml had a career, his scope was certain, he sat on an arrow

flying to the target's eye, but subsequently all's gone, out the big window, that one there, will you help me remember the thing I forgot? Then let me recite my journal, I know't by heart, starting with the Yiddish proverb, Beware of friends not enemies. To the point, eh? Set it down in your own book when you get a chance. Next comes the Philosopher himself, O, my friends, there is no friend. These are only mottoes, to be sure, pointing hands; the shape of the argument itself goes like this:

One morning, Ketsl Lebb turned to Leml Kopp. And using those ancient words of his and that unsteady voice, worse than a seagull's, always in danger of unscrewing, Ketsl said: Be my *chaver*, I require a friend immediately, else I perish, somebody uncogging, somebody like myself. God, the lie sticks out like a sick tongue! How could he and I be friends? Where were we alike? Dumbbell, what about our initials? Didn't they indicate the precise opposite? L.K. mine, K.L. his? And what about their meaning? Lebb says heart, Kopp says head; Leml says meh! But Ketsl says meowww! Hear the big difference? Those four are enemies. So what if I became his *chaver*? That word means partner-in-study, not friend. Besides, Ketsl's reputation was not my reputation. He had a gift in madness, I in sanity. I was the Talmud, but what, pray, was he? See, I argue not that friendship died but that 'twas never born! Is this enough, sir? Are you convinced? Do you agree with me now that Leml Kopp and Ketsl Lebb are names for things far apart, heaven from earth? Not yet? Then I'll recite some more! That liar, just as he was troubled, even so was I? Odd notion. Swing round, Rabbi, forget the wheel, mouth it to my sad face, do me this ease: Did you ever hear that an aunt of mine raised her fat umbrella over my head, making me spill my beet soup from fear? Have you ever noticed my shoe to wear unevenly, slantingly? Is the report concerning Leml Kopp that he went on a supposed fellowship to Holland but acted pimp in Italy instead? Acknowledge it, the accusation's bogus, throw it out of court! Was I stabbed while swinging innocent as a bird in some playground? Point out my scar, trace it along my back. Was I an orphan, sir, from early age, brought up by a cranky kranker grandfather who crouched meanhearted before the house, bruising potatoes with a rock? Was my grandmother a judge, a prophet, of footfalls? Did she predict that my small, unsteady steps would lead me nowhere? Unwilling to care for me, did these grandparents tie me mornings to a tree? No, my childhood was safe, but his, his was as safe as friendship. Was I forced to become an orderboy, lugging cartons on my delicate head? At camp, was I tied naked to a flagpole? Be good enough to say whether any of this was ever called to your attention concerning Leml Kopp. Mocked everywhere, cawed at, cackled at, hissed at, was I forced to sit aloft in my own shadow playing chess against myself, reading aloud obscure books of philosophers, munching hard cheese, biting into each piece like an animal for revenge? Was I finally, a free thinker at fifteen, fourteen, twelve? Would I have forgot such a thing? In short, sir, when that other name turned to me, was my past a terror and my present a terror and my future, too, nothing but a terror? No, his life added up to terror, not mine. That morning I turned my face away, and said zero. But later on, toward afternoon, when he claimed again that we two were one person, I wanted to give him a *klap*, a

zets, a *tsie*, a *patch*, a *shtoch*, a *frask*, a *shtup*, a *huk*. (That's eight, I'm missing two plagues.) Instead, I kept my hands in my pockets, and ambled on. But no use, an hour later he was back at my side, like a familiar cat, begging me to accompany him, grant his conclusion for just a year or so, take some of his steps, think any of his thoughts, that so our voices might combine, ascendingly, descendingly. Isn't that dangerous? I said at last. The morning I grant your conclusion, take one of your steps, think any of your thoughts, by night I'll be your echo. Wasn't I right, driver? To become an echo, isn't that to become nothing? Echo? piped my friend. Yes, echo! grumbled I. At once I heard Ketsl reply, Echo? There, see how he tried to confuse me, with his demonic echo? to make me uncertain where my own voice was coming from, his head or mine? You think I exaggerate, like some cat, leaping, twisting, spreading and fanning my legs, all elaborately to defend myself against a piece of string? Not so. He was no friend; I grappled that day (drop the r) against a fiend. I comprehended the hazard of propinquity. I knew the report in the Talmud about a strange bird that suddenly appeared and nobody knew if it were kosher, until a clever man caged and hailed the unfamiliar thing to a rooftop and then everyone witnessed a raven alight beside it, so their minds were made up! the stranger, like its friend the raven, was unclean. Yes, I didn't wish to acquire his reputation. So I advised myself in my heart, play dumb, *mach sich nit vissendig*, ignore him like an ignoramus, pretend you're a nitwit, that way he'll avoid you himself. When he returned that night, I made believe he wasn't there. The following morning I changed my tactic; I made believe I wasn't there. See, he said, you're just like me. And I knew he wasn't just after my heart, he was after my head. Again and again he returned, the same request in his mouth. Could I call the police? Each morning I prayed, God, save me from a bad friend (It's one of the first prayers in our prayer-book, that, you know?) Nothing helped. God was silent. So, in the end, you hear? I nodded my head. Ah, but what was the meaning of that nod? Assent, or sleep? So, so, exactly so I admit it, for the next two years we ate together, studied together. Even like two friends, always together, one soul, two bodies, eh? One package, one article up for sale, he the nut and I the wrapper, the shell, the *klipeh*, the outside of the inside? O, he read me Greek and Latin? I him page after page of the holy Talmud. We compared passages on friendship. Look, Aristotle defines living together as thinking together. My Talmud explains, He who wishes to purchase a friend must eat with him, read with him, study with him, sleep with him, and reveal to him all secrets. There it is! What secrets did I give him? None, *bobkes*, goat's droppings. Yes, I listened to him, o, as you're listening to me, with one ear. But are you and I, on that account, friends? Get the point, pinhead? Cockeyed dodo! *Shtunk!* Must I *knuck* you? Oooo, that's the ninth plague. He insisted upon my company. I accompanied him. But *lemkopp*, did I do more than pretend to grant his conclusion? Say, did I love him? Not the Talmudic amount of an egg, not the bigness of an olive. And all our passages, Biblical, Talmudic, Greek, Roman, they demand mutual loving. Nothing so thin as one-sided friendship. What's that old phrase? Troth must be in both. Why, everybody with a head knows your friendship must be riveted at all

corners. *Shoiteh*, let one corner flap free and you've lost a friend. What do you suggest? If Ketsl had been smart he'd have used paint? Paint sticks, would've done the trick of friendship honestly? No, paint stinks. Besides, the distance between us was too great. It'd be like sending a junk horse on a journey coast to coast, he'd never accomplish it in his life-time. You can't follow me? What, am I talking a soft again? Can't hear me? Sir, don't scare me. Do I neglect myself now to such an amount that I don't bother to open my mouth when I speak? Do I just use my eyes and let it go at that? Am I only pretending to be speaking? But I feel my mouth going, my lips wearing, rubbing out. True, I prefer to speak below a whisper, ever since I yelled at my friend, but I speak nonetheless. According to the Law, a portion is sometimes considered an entirety. And I go by the Talmud. So what did I need Ketsl for, that untalmudic man? He traduced tradition! He claimed God was crazy and that it was our job, Ketsl's and mine, to knock some sense into Him. Yes, that God had cracked with the destruction of the second Temple. Of course Ketsl was alluding to the story the Rabbis themselves tell, that after He smashed the second one He told Himself, I'm a bad teacher. So was I to let him *dray* my *kopp*? I had my own two temples to look out for, sirra. If I were to put my head in his hands, he'd lose it; that's the Talmud's good definition of a madman, you know, somebody that loses everything. So was I to join the likes of him in exile? Was I to sail with him wherever the bad winds blew? He promised that our friendship'd be as excellent as the friendship between Titus and Gisippus, Pytheas and Damon, Orestes and Pylades, Saul and David? I suggested. And that's the way it always was. No mere echo, no mere parrot, I dream day and night, confessed Ketsl. Dream? says Leml, I never dream! Ketsl, tangled in a shrub, squeaks: My eyes, my eyes, they can't see a thing, they're good just for their hue. And Leml, not waiting, making a bee line for home, yells back, my eyes don't miss a thing. Color they have none. Look behind you, six blocks away, see that cat? It's about to throw up! Two years we strolled together, he stumbling, I steady; he troubled, I calm. Was that a friendship? Answer me, rabbi. You know what'll happen to me if I'm judged guilty! The Talmud brings the Law in many places: anyone who embarrasses his friend to his face is himself in the end embarrassed; not only that; the damaging angels push and drag him around, confusing his mind and show his shame to the entire universe. My only hope is to prove that he was never never never my friend, not for an ittybitty moment. And haven't I done just that? Haven't I shown that all Ketsl had was his request, a little slip of paper, an application? I'll swear it yet in the Court of Heaven. My signature wasn't on it, the transaction was void. I'm innocent. If I hadn't shooed away the birds, my walking would be blameless. They're probably all back by now, ringing the little bells in their throats. But if Ketsl were here, he'd admit it himself, he'd squeal I was never his friend. The glue was insufficient. The last day finally came. The morning that Ketsl turned to Leml, sickfaced, moaning, one eye hid, and quacked, Leml! say that you're my friend, that you've been and will continue my friend, otherwise I'll neglect myself completely, I'll lose all heart and mind, I'll strangle myself, I'll stop thinking, I'll cry to death, God, Leml, go mad, go mad, Leml, give me your

hand, it's the hour of lead, my head's exploding, help me extricate the terrific aches trapped beneath my skull, ah, must I beat you? That moment what did I do? Did I say, Your head hurts, go study? Did I say, If you're going to play with words, Ketsl, goodbye? Did I say, Don't worry, Ketsl Lebb, according to the Talmud a madman cannot go mad? No, I turned on my toe and fled for my life. Yes, our hands remained unlinked, for it was a question, I say, of my life or his. You'd better believe it! Everybody, above and below, knows the Talmudic ruling on that score. Two are travelling through a desert, only one has a canteen of water; if both drink they both perish, if just one drinks, that one reaches civilization; the old opinion, God knows, couldn't last, the opinion that both should share the water and behold each other die; a stronger opinion taught the law. Thy life comes first before the life of thy friend. Yes, a devil like you might argue yet, asking which of the two travellers drinks, the one who purchased the canteen or the one who poured in the water? Because all you want is the plague *Teyku*. But this time couldn't you pretend, for the sake of friendship, to agree with the decision? A plague take you, I said to myself, and turned and fled for my life, a wasp before the swatter. Nonetheless, I am blameless. I was right to guard my life. I knew what Leml was after. Didn't you hear him talk and talk? Me, I keep quiet. Of course, now that I'm to be a Rabbi I must have a mouth for all occasions, a mouth to fit the goblet's or the grave's brim. But otherwise, mum. Ketsl's the talker. A Shakespearean actor! But he couldn't outwit Leml; Leml was too shrewd for him. The last tidings proves it. Later that day I heard the report: my friend Ketsl Lebb had been sent to the asylum. There! shouldn't I have celebrated? Wasn't I correct? That's where he was heading all along. You think it was my duty to visit Ketsl at once, ask forgiveness? Was I such a fool? I knew better. I stared at the news with a single eye, suspecting, know what? a ruse. This business was his slyness, his hoaxing way of forcing me to enter a madhouse. Was I to follow after him, admitting that Ketsl and Leml were one person, separation impossible? I refused, I didn't visit. Next morning my doorbell, once it started ringing, it wouldn't stop, pushed by some shild's, some prankster's, finger, though I, and threw open the door. There stood, my God! my friend Ketsl Lebb. Yet how altered, looking strengthless as a rag, looking old, fifty or sixty, after a madness of only one day. Perhaps he had run the entire distance, anxious to make his visit, and was just exhausted, nothing else. That's the face! I heard him gasp, and heard my own mouth gasp back the same words, That's the face? We stooped and squinted at each other, face to face, as if seeking our image in a mirror badly tarnished or badly cracked, and gasped these three words. Long enough for my head to fill somewhat and remember the precious Talmudic sentence, Greeting the face of a friend is like greeting the face of God. I wished to offer Ketsl this sentence but my mouth was gone. He moaned, I moaned; he took a pace backward, I gave an equal pace forward; he bit a left knuckle, a right knuckle bit I, swayed he, swayed I, he chanted, I chanted. Like a regular copycat. Then from her cage in my room my bird, the parrot, called out, Who's there? awaking us both. That instant Ketsl struck my head, and collapsed. Like a cloth weighted with a rock and let go by a boy's hand over

the railing of a back porch. Yes, from the whack he gave me you would have guessed that I'd be the one to drop right down; but he, Ketsl, fell. And o! the bang of his heart 'gainst the floor-boards was incredibly loud, and stinging. Stinging me, I mean. Do you think I enjoyed that sound? But am I to blame? What if a stranger, mistaking me for a friend, ran across a street to greet me and got hit by a car, am I at fault? Altogether not! What if I were flagging down a cab and that stranger, thinking I was beckoning to him, crossed over, and the cab I had hailed struck him flat? At fault? Not altogether. Measure it then. Not enough inside to make a valid blessing. Numbskull, any friendship to chess? Pawn takes pawn, bishop takes bishop, knight takes knight, conclusion—Talmudic draw, *teyku*. Fitting, for we were but stale mates. There it is, I'm innocent. The ruling is that a nitwit cannot be insulted. And yet, even so, I'll pay. Isn't that fair, judge? How much is his mind worth? He slapped me; subtract a slap. It goes according to the dignity of those involved. Wait, pretend that's Ketsl over there, in back. Psst, Ketsl, psst, come out. Do, be a friend, at least an *amicus curiae*, release me now, before God's face, swear we were never friends. At least I was never one. Upon my heart. If I've disgraced you by mistake, I've acheive no honor through that mistake. Pity me, a lame Leml. And for penance, let me weave nests for birds. Agreed? Whatever you say. Want me to give up the rabbinate and become a comedian, doing imitations? Then admit that from first page to last I was not your friend, that the book's title *Teyku*! is wrong. Well, what do you say?

Leml saw the bus driver's head disappear out the side window. He heard him spit and say, This is it, your stop, the asylum. Oooo, serenaded Leml. Is it? But what is it I forgot? Haven't I earned that, at least, for my sermon? And he heard the driver repeat, This is it, your stop! Ah, sighed Leml. I see. So that's what you think I forgot, you think I forgot to make my visit. For shame, you've not understood. In addition, he died. Yes, he died in addition. One day mad was too much. But thanks, anyway, Gramercy. I like the way you said that; my stop, the asylum. You took a chance talking up; it's against the law conversing with the driver. Leml jumped down, and as the bus growled back into the road. Leml called out, Are you sure this is where you want to dump me? God, you nitwit, you finally let me down. Balancing the container of spoiled cheese on the face of his journal, Leml hopped, on one foot, toward the asylum's gate. Should I tell Ketsl everything? Leml asked himself. That I haven't yet gone to the bathroom, sung my prayers, munched my breakfast, flung back my bad goods, packed for home? Of course! That's what a friend's for. And I'll confess, too, that I've come posthaste in order to fulfill an important Talmudic principle; He who suspects a friend of something not in him, is obliged t'appease him. Ketsl was not in fact playing a hoax; he was really mad. Even so, he'd wheedle forgiveness out of him. Like Elijah the Prophet he'd return his heart to Ketsl, Ketsl's heart to himself. Like Elijah, too, he'd answer all his questions, large and small. Yes, when Elijah enters a town the dogs dance; when the Angel of Death enters, they howl. Did Ketsl recognize any Greek parallel? O, like olden times! And what a surprise! If they asked him at the entrance who he was visiting, he'd answer, Nobody in particular, surely you all welcome an additional friend, only a madman

wouldn't. That'd hide his plan. Just a short visit, he'd say, pretending not to know Ketsl was around. Nothing lengthy, in and out, no blessing required. Afterward? Whatever Ketsl advised. Naturally, some things had to be done, couldn't be omitted, like bathroom, prayers, breakfast, packing. 'Twas a question only of the order, one two, three, three two one. Let Ketsl decide. Then he'd visit that poor widow Mrs. Peitschkarell. God, that's it! He'd say he came to see Mrs. Peitschkarell. That unfortunate woman, crossed country like himself, only to lose her mind, poor soul. He'd offer her some cheese. Definitely, if not for her, he'd have scurried past that rotten store. Yes, he'd give her nice regards from her son. Wasn't he an old friend? What was his name? Leml? No, that was his own. Nut! What, was also *he* going mad? Good God, good God, that's it! The thing itself. That was the important event, the birds' warning, the thing he had somehow almost managed to forget. It explained the whole story. So, all day, everywhere, unlike Ketsl, he hadn't been pretending he was mad, he'd been pretending he wasn't! Well, well, the worry, th'event he had to postpone: madness! Thank God he remembered it in time. Just in time. Like some powerful old god himself. Now, of course, everything'd fall into its exact and proper place. That deserved, that required a celebration. All, enemies too, invited. Dance, dance. Everybody! He'd remembered the event. Dance, you dogs, Elijah's in town, and here to stay. *Zol zein lebedig*. Ketsl-lebedig, Leml-lebedig! He was awake at last! Yes, no wonder he was falling asleep all the time; that was in accordance with the Talmud. Hadn't he come across that warning in his studies? There are three kinds of slumber: sleep, death, and, aha! madness.

The moment Leml began to prance, the container of cheese slipped from his tilted journal to the grass like a small coffin heading for the great sea. Leml Kopp apparently didn't mind. Timber! he sang. The container hit the ground, its lid popping off, half the cheese inside jumping out, moldy green. Leml picked up the cheese and squashed it in his hands. What difference did it make whether he carried it in the little circle, or on his body, atop his head, or inbetween his toes? His worry had gone to bed; all was q.e.d., demonstrated and proved. Yes, Leml recalled everything now clear as a bell: last night, after introducing his final entry, after writing illegibly down the word *Teyku*, Leml had collapsed upon his narrow mattress and solemnly admitted to his empty room and noisy walls (fooey! those mocking neighbors!) that by morning, God forbid, he might be mad. That a stupid stinky notion, what alousy event to consider imminent and pending. How did any body lose his mind? Wasn't the heart obedient, capable of any journey? How did such a thing happen? Leml certainly had no idea.

None

whatsoever

Personal Preference

I think
 (now that I look back)
 I'd rather drive a taxi
 In Jerusalem
 Than be the King
 Of all of South Dakota
 Or the cantor
 In the Great and Ancient Synagogue
 Of West Rangoon

I don't know why
 (to be sure)

Here the sun sets red
 And there the suns set red

Here the trees sway with infinite grace
 And there the breeze moves the leaves
 With equally gentle fingers

I don't know why
 I'd rather drive a taxi in Jerusalem

But neither have I come to know
 Why the seed becomes a daffodil
 And not a rose

A Rebbe's Proverb (From the Yiddish)

If you always assume
 that the man next to you
 is the Messiah
 looking for some human kindness

You will soon come to weigh your words
 and watch your hands,

And if he chooses not
 to reveal himself
 in your days

It will not matter.

ITS THE TRUTH

By the way the women walk
 you would never think
 a Jewish girl was raped
 by Crusader or Cossack

By their animated tone of voice
 you might think "ghetto"
 was a word some mother
 needed for a lullaby
 to rhyme with
 giapetto

And the millions of trees younger than myself
 would lead even the best historian
 to say that war
 had never scarred
 and seared
 the Judean Hills

And looking up to trace the growl of phantoms
 makes you stop to wonder
 if Hitler and the Mufti
 really understood
 anything at all
 about the Jews

zhivago of the backstreet

a man stumbling among cans
back in the alley,
was heard mumbling to himself
about the garbage there.

"scimpy it seems,
a shame, a disgrace.
have pity on me,
please leave me your waste."

a man died between cans
back in the alley;
he was buried in a pail
with the jews of babi yar.

the forgetting dancers

i made a terrific error

at the russian ballet,
in spite of myself,
as a bourgeois woman noted,
i enjoyed myself,
applauded wildly
and expressed my joy,
while i could hear,
very loudly, even above the music,
my brothers calling,
"how can you sit
not dancing and shouting
forgetting to speak of us,
our feet shackled,
unable even to walk?"

The Second Half of the Pin Test

The pin test—the most difficult challenge to the human mind no matter how great—draws the crowds to the small room, and around the square wooden table, from all parts of the world, across many seas, over countless continents. Old men and young boys stand and talk; how many fathers have promised their sons that someday they would take them to see the pin test, and how many will even be given the opportunity in their lifetimes, so rare is the occasion. They stand and gossip, but there is no use in discussing it; who can even think that he knows who will win; besides it is bad luck.

Already one has lost, but it is impossible to say whether the other may win. That one must lose was expected. No one remembers two men winning the pin test in one generation, but then it may have happened in one generation when men were wiser or at least, able to concentrate more deeply. Anyway, everyone hopes that the other one will win; all desire to see someone win the test. It really is not at all a matter of passing, but of winning. There are some who insist on calling it the pin game; most do not, but only because game seems a frivolous term to use in reference to an endeavour that men spend entire lives in preparing for, but that too is wrong, for so few men are ever given the chance to compete that it would be useless, even absurd, to orient all one's life to such a hope; it would be far better to explain that the test is more to be conquered than simply to be gotten through.

Only now is the one who has already lost regaining his breath. He leans back in his chair and his beard, through the room's light, seems like a flame defying gravity. No matter that he has lost; he has been allowed to compete. How many men are even that fortunate; the crowd will remember him also; they will remember his beard defying gravity as he rose far above the rank of other men. Besides, against whom else but himself can he hold the blame for the cause of his losing. Even then, it is not really fair to call it blame. He missed the proper letter by only one; who can blame him for missing it by only one. It would be stupid and ridiculous to answer, "Any man could make that mistake." Not even ten men in one generation might hope to come that close. What could he hate, the book? the Talmud which lies open on the wooden table? He has spent his entire life studying the Talmud, and he will spend the rest of it doing the same. In that sense, the book is above the test; but in another, it is his opponent; he will spend the rest of his life struggling with the Talmud. He had never regarded the time spent until now as just preparation for the test, although certainly he had always hoped that someday he might know the Talmud well enough, understand it sufficiently, that someday, perhaps someday he had always hoped, he might be able to compete in the pin test. The test was not to prove his own glory; it was not a game which might be reduced to philosophical proportions where someone might

claim that in reality there are no winners, or losers. Nor could anyone who understood even the least of its principles think that it was a microcosm of the world or of life, in which its participants were competing in a struggle of life and death. The game was far more complex than the lives of most men that it might adequately serve as such a microcosm. There were no events in the real world which might even compare to it; if people came, it was not to observe themselves in the text, but almost as if to glimpse the real cruciality which had escaped them in their own lives. Now he sits there, and hopes only that his friend may win, that he may see someone win the pin test.

The crowd is already quiet. They are anxious to go on, to see if they also will be fortunate enough to catch a winner. They study his face closely, scrutinize each detail in the same way that they had been searching the face of the first one when they discovered that indeed his beard did seem to defy gravity; they try to place the details of his face in their memories that they might remember to tell their children and friends what the face of the pin test's winner had really looked like. But there is nothing odd or unusual in his appearance; the next day those same people will pass him by in the street and not recognize him. Still he is somewhat nervous, but whether the nervousness stems from the tension of the moment which he is about to face or because of the crowds of gaping spectators, no one knows or cares; they expect him to be nervous; no one cares about his composure, about his clothes or manners; they see only his hand and his fingers which play with the small steel pin, turning it over between his finger and thumb, all the while scratching on his skin small lines.

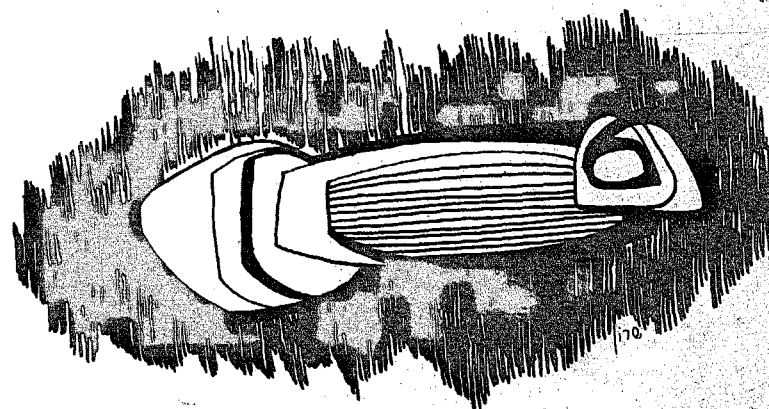
No one talks; Talmudists do not spend their time talking. They have studied with each other for so long, they know each other so well, and they all think with the same absolute precision and clarity, that there is no need for words between them. One just barely opens his mouth, but even before he has completed that movement, his friend moves his lip, and though no word has been spoken, the first one already understands the answer which the second has made to his question; then with a lift of his eyebrow, or a shrug of his cheek, he counters with rapid force, and immediately the second responds to that with another action, with the raising of his finger. So their arguments proceed; now also, though undoubtedly all the spectators have missed their exchange, they have agreed to begin.

He rolls the pin across the table to his friend, but it gets stuck in one of the cracks in the wood. His friend fishes with it, and finally manages to pull it out. He closes the Talmud, the cover falls with the regularity of the waves slapping the beach. Then he opens it to a page in the middle of the volume, but who can say that it has been opened randomly, that this page has been chosen by chance only. The other one, he who is to play the game now, glances at the page; there is nothing new about it to him, he has seen it many times before; had he not, he never would be competing. Of course, he has not studied only from this one edition, but for hundreds of years, all the editions

have been standardized so that not one word in all the volumes of the Talmud anywhere in the world has strayed, or been missed, from its set and proper place on the printed page.

And now the one with the red beard takes the pin and sticks it in the second letter of the eighth word of the sixteenth line on the twenty third page of the ninth volume of the Talmud. The other one must now tell his friend the word, and the letter, through which the pin has passed on the seventh page following this one. Those who criticize the pin test argue that it is irrelevant to the proper study of the Talmud, that it stresses memory and not understanding of the text; that is how much they know about the study of the Talmud and the lives of the Talmudists. They criticize those who are drawn to gape at the talmudists at their pin test and at the Talmud, as if it was some mysterious cult or strange and impossible book. What do these spectators care about their criticisms; they stand, staring at the pin stuck in the page, at the chosen word, possessed by the angle at which it stands in the pages. They are far too nervous even to look at the Talmudist who now must answer; or they choose not to look so that he might not be distracted.

His mouth opens—they see his mouth open from the bottom of their eyes—but he speaks so softly that no one hears. And then the pin is removed, and the pages are slowly turned one by one, the mark left by the pin carefully inspected. There is a nod, and the mob surges forward, but first the one with the red beard, now upright as his head has swung back towards the ceiling, leaps forward at his friend as if to kiss him, as if he has just now been promised a seat in heaven, a certain seat in heaven next to the angel Gabriel.





September 1970

Ramble poem.

No message taut-written in urgent feeling overflow
 Just loose limbed word lines
 Of lanky, lazy thoughts
 On a sun dawdling day.
 Sailing blue patches in a white-layered sky
 And rustling, green willow creepers
 Meaning nothing dark or deep
 Save to those who pierce sun rays with mourning arrows.
 Maybe it playfully wrests the bow from restless finger-twitch
 And laughs a dappled autumn breeze that softly whispers:
 Breathe to live, and know
 What world trouble-shooters fight to attain
 A peace
 Of a late summer afternoon.

THE KING AND I

(Notes on the Nature of Things)

*Any sufficiently advanced technology
 is indistinguishable from magic.*

—Arthur C. Clarke

King Solomon has been on my mind lately. I am thinking about him all the time. As you probably know, he is supposed to have written, by himself, three different books of the Bible: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and The Song of Songs. According to tradition, or legend, or one of those things that other things are always according to when we don't know very much about them, Solomon wrote the love poetry of The Song of Songs as a young man, the wise sayings of Proverbs as a middle age philosopher-king, and the bitter remarks of Ecclesiastes as a sadder-but-wiser disillusioned old man.

This is a rather dangerous way of looking at Solomon in particular, and at the universe in general. It might well have happened differently, especially if Solomon was anything like I sometimes imagine...

One thing, at least, is perfectly clear: everybody agrees that Solomon was a wise man. "A wise man," somebody later suggested, "learns from everybody." Solomon learned from everybody. Before he was very old, he had experienced a great many things. In fact, by the age of twenty-two he had tried practically everything. He had, in short, mastered the fundamentals of the universe. He did this through a theory called Levels, upon which he based the book of Ecclesiastes, which was written during his twenty-second year, despite what the scholars will tell you.

I know this because for some reason which I may never be free to disclose, I have for several months been in possession of some unique documents which can be attributed—with very little doubt—to Solomon. For some reason, the Levels theory and the other manuscript fragments have never been published. Why, for instance, the Levels theory did not appear explicitly in any of Solomon's writings is not known. So many sections of Solomon's books are missing that anything is possible. The Levels theory, for instance, might have appeared in one of his books that didn't survive to this day. It might even have been sent to some obscure literary magazine, because Solomon was always sending his manuscripts to rather unknown periodicals, to see what they would do with them. Wherever it appeared, or did not appear, in the ancient world, may never be known, nor is it particularly important for us. What is important is that these documents appear here, in translation, of course, for the very first time.

THE LEVELS THEORY OF SOLOMON

This is all about how things work, very briefly. These sorts of things are best done that way, when they can be done at all. Telephones, for instance, cannot really be explained or understood. It is amusing to listen to people try to explain how telephones work. It invariably has to do with sound, bells, wires,

and electronic particles and mathematics. That's about how far these explanations usually go. Beyond that point, of course, it is magic.

The Levels theory came to me when I was king in Jerusalem. I used to spend four months out of every year abroad, in America, where I lived incognito on the fourteenth floor of a once-prestigious apartment building on Manhattan's Upper West Side. You would really be amazed to learn how many people lived there incognito when I was king in Jerusalem. In the building where I lived, when the service employees were not out on strike, you reached my room by elevator, which went straight up and down, down and up, all day and all night. You must appreciate what the elevator was doing to fully understand the Levels theory.

Most other ways of looking at the universe have a fatal flaw: they are too complicated. Although in many ways an intricate system, the *fundamentals* of the universe are relatively simple. Men have written books to explain these things, but they needn't have. What the Levels theory shows is that things are much less complex than you ever imagined. There are theories which call for the use of higher dimensions: fourth, fifth, sixth, and beyond. The Levels theory requires only that you know about two. Perhaps even fewer.

This is the Levels theory. Everything in life is as if on a single, endless, continuum. On that line you will find objects such as matches, reptiles, and eggplants; places like Galilee, Topeka and Tarshish; people like me, Atilla the Hun, Joseph E. Levine, Rashi, Chubby Checker, Sal Mineo, Marco Polo and the Golem of Venice. Everybody. You and I and our friends. Also on the continuum are abstract things like love, fame, night, hope, purple, success, beauty, vision, power, achievement, wealth, knowledge, stature, pride, creativity, joy, strength, concentration, courage, and all the things after which men strive. I spoke earlier of two dimensions. This is the first; horizontal (if you look at it that way), infinite, all-encompassing. The second, like all additional dimensions, extends perpendicularly to the first, and measures experience through time and degree.*

You are four years old and your grandmother gives you a nickel. That is a level. You are seven and your mother sends you off to the barbershop with four quarters. You get a haircut, spend the carfare on vanilla fudge, and walk home. That is a level. You are fourteen, it is summer, and your father pays you twenty-nine and a half cents a day if you agree to mow the lawn seven times every nineteen weeks (your father, a Jewish calendar maker, is hopelessly addicted to such combinations). That is a level. You are graduating from high school and the local newspaper pays you twenty-two fifty for a feature story which you write. That is a level. You take a job, accept promotions, and

* When I was in high school, before I came to Jerusalem, there was a mathematics teacher who inspired us to become interested in the possibilities of there being more than three dimensions. His name was Peter, and he said that if the fourth dimension were spacial in quality, it would begin where the other three come together, each at right angles to the others. This can best be seen in the top corner of any room. If there is a fourth dimension in space, presumably it begins right there, extending at right angles to the other three, and moving in a direction which is somehow beyond our minds to comprehend.

soon become rich. Those are levels. You become richer and richer; more levels. You have everything you want. These are all, then, various stages or levels on the same (the second, or vertical) continuum, perpendicular to the first, and extending from the point called "wealth" or "money" or whatever you want to call it. Call it what you like—it's your line.

Another example. You are the best kid on your block. Everybody knows that. You are president of the sixth grade class. That is a level. In high school you control the student council. Another level. You are valedictorian at Princeton. You run for Congress, are elected governor, senator. Those are levels. You become President of the United States, of the world, of whatever you want. Levels.

What the first continuum provides is an infinite number of points, which describe the goals and achievements of every conceivable person at every conceivable moment. The second continuum measures these goals and achievements in degrees, or levels. What makes this into a *theory* that is useful rather than a cute observation is that, as was hinted at earlier, *the two-dimensional structure is a fraud*. There is, in reality, only one operative dimension; every point on the second continuum is really the same point. In other words, there is no *qualitative* difference between any of the levels: losing your pet dog, or losing your family; making ten dollars or ten million dollars; being elected class president or President of the United States; hitting a home run or stopping a bank robber. That is to say, *once you've reached the first two or three levels of anything*, you have enough information to determine what it's going to be all about. Now, as they like to say around here, Go and Learn.

Commentary on the Levels Theory

Solomon's Levels theory, as reprinted above, became the basis for Ecclesiastes, as far as I can determine. Solomon, as we have said, was incredibly bright, and had mastered everything he wanted to know about anything in time to write his first book, when he was twenty-two. This was not altogether a pleasant experience, because, as we know, the world is more powerfully evil than good. But, after formulating the theory, Solomon found that once he knew something, he also knew everything, so to speak. So there were no ugly surprises later on.

After the depression which interfered with and accompanied the writing of the first book, Solomon, now much happier, began to think and to write most of the time. He started keeping notes on everything. When he was twenty-four and eight months, the day before his marriage, he published his second book. He had titled it, appropriately, Things I Have Been Thinking About, but his editor changed it to Proverbs. Editors haven't changed. The Book of Proverbs was issued only in hardcover, and is one of the least-known books in what has come to be known by the world as the "Old Testament." This book contains, in a nutshell, all the wisdom of Solomon.

At the age of eighty-eight, feeling a little bit sad about his age, Solomon started to reflect upon the joys of his life. He carefully wrote his shortest and most beautiful manuscript, a small work about the pleasures of love. Although it was really a long poem, he called it, accurately, Love Story. The editor, to Solomon's deep regret, changed the title to Song of Songs. Solomon fired his

editor, and never wrote again. But his descendants established a magnificent gallery, which contained all the wonderful paintings and tapestries inspired by his last and greatest book.

There is, unfortunately, a scarcity of information about Solomon between the ages of twenty-four and eighty-eight. Perhaps he was too busy tending to the kingdom to do much writing. All we can offer are some scattered fragments which arrived with the document bearing the Levels theory.

The First Manuscript Fragment

When I was living in New York, I learned much about many things. New York is a marvellous place to learn things, but you have to know when to get out. It is like a steam-bath in that regard. Unfortunately, most of its inhabitants have long ago shrivelled up, because they have stayed there too long.

As I started to say, when I was living in New York, there were bridges connecting Manhattan to the neighboring boroughs and to New Jersey. There were toll-booths at each end of the bridges. One day, it was decided to remove the booths going in one direction, and to double the toll going the other way. As a result, leaving Manhattan there was never any line-up, while coming back into the city the line of cars moved more quickly than ever before. It so happened that the new, increased fare at the one-way toll station corresponded exactly to the paper currency of the time, thus eliminating the necessity for citizens to ask for change. New Yorkers were astounded. "Why didn't somebody think of this years ago?" they asked.

Well, and this may never be known, as these documents have a funny habit of disappearing after our deaths, I am the guy who *did* think of these kinds of things years ago, but nobody listened, or paid much attention, or bothered to remember.

That's not the only thing I thought of years ago. I used to go to Canada fairly often. It was a good place to write. The telephone would never ring because Canadians never knew when I was there, and Americans never realized that Canadians had telephones. It isn't often you have things that lucky.

One time the Canadian customs officials were particularly obnoxious, to the point of actually checking between the pages of the newspapers and magazines I was carrying. I thought about this after I returned to New York. I started to think about how the world might have developed differently, without boundaries, passports and governments. When I mentioned this to other people, they smiled at me as if to say: "I've certainly thought about that long ago." But I think they had *considered* it, and had not really thought about it. But someday, of course, and hopefully before this manuscript is ever discovered and read (if it ever is), countries and boundaries and passports will have become a humorous footnote in history books. And, what is really important, it will not happen by revolution, or violence, but in the same sudden and strange way which resulted in people's no longer having to pay tolls at each end of the bridges leading out of Manhattan.

The Second Manuscript Fragment

I was very concerned about the extent to which people did violence to other people. I am not talking about the type of violence that took place in some

neighboring countries. On that level we were rather good. I am talking about another kind of violence, which is destructive in a different way.

I have noticed that people whose own lives seem unhappy, fruitless, frustrated, or simply not exciting are particularly prone to do violence to other people, especially if the other people's lives are reasonably happy and interesting. There is a sort of natural law that enables people to find their own levels. It is sometimes said, for instance, that a country gets the leadership it deserves. Similarly, on the individual level, people have a tendency to become involved in situations somehow appropriate to themselves, and suited to their capabilities. Occasionally, however, a strong individual may, at a certain point in his life, challenge his own predicament, or decide to change things, or to improve his life, or alter his relationship to the universe. Other people, particularly those most adverse to change, or incapable of dealing with their lives, are often quick to notice such movements in other people, and label them phony, or contrived.

There is no such thing as a phony person. Phonyness is too difficult a posture to maintain for more than a few minutes or at most, a few hours at a time. When seems to be a phony person is usually a strong person in flux, or confused, or in challenge.

The Third Manuscript Fragment

When I was king in Jerusalem, I tried to keep on top of the situation in the Empire. Once I visited the coal mines in the Northlands, and I learned a wonderful thing. The miners, when they enter a new shaft in the mine, usually carry canaries with them. There is something about the makeup of canaries which makes them extremely sensitive—far more so than humans—to poisonous or deadly fumes. Should the canaries become suddenly ill, or die, this serves as a warning to the miners that there is an imminent danger unless they speedily leave the mine.

In the younger generation, and perhaps in every generation, is a group which serves the same function as the canaries in the mine. The comparison is misleading, however, in that the human variation is not only unappreciated, but often mocked, hurt, and even done violence by the rest of society. These reactions and forms of hostility are usually brought out by elementary schools, but for "late developers," high schools and even colleges have rarely failed to accomplish the task. People with canary-consciousness are for the most part unhappy. They must live with the mixed blessing of being able to detect the dangerous fumes before the rest of the people. And, for the most part, they are getting sick or going mad on account of it.

People with canary consciousness are visibly different in their day to day lives and functions. Unlike the canaries in the mines, human canaries have the capacity to change their lives, to occasionally escape into more liveable surroundings. They do not talk about the revolution; they live it. On the other hand, there are many things which other people take for granted which canary people cannot do. These things include driving automobiles, watching daytime television, thinking about assignments, working in an office, eating in a cafeteria, and attending public schools, not to mention such obvious activities as listening to AM radio, serving in armies, attending meetings or going to

mixers.

The Fourth Manuscript Fragment

In my younger days I used to think about what we called relationships. There were a number of us living in the ancient world; bright, articulate, well educated, from comfortable or even wealthy families. We were doing advanced work in college, and most of us were still single. In the big cities we would run into each other, like so many billiard balls, caromming off into the various corners which were our lives. Like so many atoms in an unplanned cosmos we kept bouncing around, discussing the things which were meaningful and real.

Most often we discussed relationships. Once I met a girl from another kingdom. I wanted very much to be with her. She was lovely and original and her mind governed her conversation. Her soul governed her mind. I told her I wanted to be with her. She replied that she was caromming in other directions. "I like you," she said a few days later. She quickly caught herself, adding, "'like' is such a stupid word. I'm sorry. It's like saying I like French Fries."

"I'm glad you said that," I told her. "I also like French Fries. But it doesn't work like that. This is a high class restaurant. There are many good things here, but you can't order them a la carte. Either you have a fine dinner, or you must eat somewhere else, and this restaurant will be one you walk past, unable to go in."

Relationships are not the only things which require an organic unity. The natural cycle must also be seen in that way. Food, sleep, exercise, sex, shelter, privacy are all part of that cycle. Food is the most obvious, and can be used to measure the other elements. In Jerusalem many of the people were very strict about the Jewish dietary laws. That was known as being *kosher*. But although I too was strict about those laws, I saw them as only a small part of *kashrut*. I preferred to define that term as: the way we ought to eat. Thus, for me, *kosher* also included such things as eating at a table, eating without excessive noise, not eating too quickly, eating with people you liked, and not eating too much at one meal. At the time, it did not seem strange to interpret *kashrut* in what seemed an obvious sense of the need to elevate the various parts of the natural cycle. Unfortunately, as I got older, more and more people seemed to consider only the ritual aspects of *kashrut*. I wouldn't be surprised if, after I am gone, they will actually invent noisy, dirty, impersonal eating places and claim that even such travesties are *kosher*. Humans never cease to amaze.

To be sure, the wider definition of *kashrut* is somewhat idealistic. It is not possible, for instance, to eat every meal during ideal conditions. Many of my friends were concerned with the possibilities and temptations of sexual behavior under less than ideal conditions. It was generally agreed that ideal conditions meant with somebody you loved. I explained to them that while it is essential to maintain the highest standards, they ought not feel like fallen angels every time those standards were violated. "If you have a class at twelve," I said, "and another class at one, when do you have lunch?" They usually replied that lunch was eaten on the run, a sandwich between buildings.

So, with food, sex, sleep, or anything else, I told them, you must elevate and sanctify the routine until it has a special significance of its own. That's what makes us better than animals. At the same time, since we have some things in common with the animals, we must recognize the fact that for various reasons it is not always possible to live every moment under the best of conditions. And sometimes it is better to grab a sandwich and a coke than to go hungry, and eat our own self-righteousness.

POSTSCRIPT A Note on Loneliness

"Eating alone is like death."

—Joel Rosenberg, paraphrasing Richard Brautigan

I have searched through Solomon's writings, looking for some discussion of the problem of loneliness. I have found nothing on that subject. I think it is indicative of the time difference between then and now. The difference is twofold. First of all, it often seems that modern, mass, industrial society is particularly suited to causing alienation and similar troubles. Secondly, there are far more people in the world now. The more people, the more loneliness, as we have learned. That is what New York is all about.

I was struck by these things not long ago, on a Sunday afternoon in December. I drove to the University to use the library, and to see some short films in the evening. The day was cold and clear; bright and crisp like when you go skiing. I drove past a small New England woods and a quiet lake with no name. When I reached the University I went to the reserve room of the library to finish reading The Greening of America. Except in rare circumstances, I no longer buy books. As it turned out, this was one I did buy, but only later. Inadvertently, I opened to page 185. This is what I read:

On a Sunday, the sense of anti-community in a city is perhaps strongest, for this is the day when work does not furnish a focus for life, when there is nothing to prevent one from "doing what he wants," when a day badly spent is one's own fault, not someone else's. Pleasures, more than anything else, require company. So Sunday is the cruelest day; people on benches, or on walks looking at stores that are closed, or traveling to a park or a zoo, or just sitting at home; on Sunday each person or family must separately make what it can of the world.

I closed the book, and slowly got up and gave it back to the girl behind the counter. Neither of us was smiling. I put on my coat very deliberately, walked out of the reserve room into the library hall, and then out of the library into the late fading afternoon. The sun had gone, the dusk chilly and grey. I crossed the campus, my mind drifting, thinking of rainstorms and galoshes, of the old people on Broadway sitting so many years outside of their apartments, and of the wineglass being smashed, at that moment, somewhere, at a wedding.

Notes On Contributors

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GILA BERKOWITZ is spending the year in Israel. A poem of hers appeared in RESPONSE #7.

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d.a. levy committed suicide three years ago, at the age of twenty-six. Another of his poems appeared in RESPONSE #8.

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