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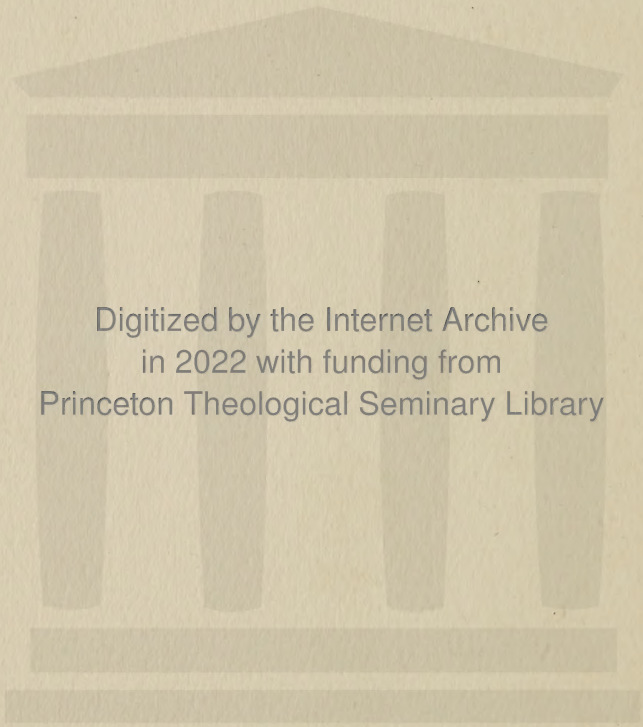

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM

BY

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CONTENTS

THE SACRED FIRE

CHAPTER I

THE SACRED FIRE

We went forward in the darkness under the dim arches and between the high square pillars, amid the mingled odors of mildew, incense and tallow. The sound of my guide's stick, striking the flagstones heavily, directed us through the gloom, which seemed to be filled by a rumbling noise, deadened by the heavy stone roof. I felt as if we were walking in the corridor of a Roman amphitheater just before the beginning of a performance, with the crowd grumbling impatiently above. Then the tapping of the stick stopped and everything became bigger, the arches, the silence and the rumbling noise which was as gloomy as the rest. A low door in the wall. I slipped through behind my guide, and we went up some very narrow stairs. Here and there, on small landings, the sunlight gleamed feebly through barred openings cov-

ered with spiders' webs, showing dust that had been accumulating for centuries. I could hear the stick marking each step with that fateful accent which a regular noise assumes in the dark. Just like my hands on the mildewed wall my spirit was feeling its way, it made no difference where I was, nor what I was thinking of, nor what I was going to see. The stick stopped again. Silence. Then suddenly the air struck my face, and once more I heard that rumbling noise, which I had momentarily forgotten on that dark staircase.

I found myself in a niche in the thickest part of the wall. Through an opening in the dome above my head a ray of the sun blinded me as I entered. Beneath me lay a deep, dark pit, from which the rumbling rose, louder now, but as meaningless to me as before. There was no light except the one ray which seemed to stop half-way down, like a bucket at the end of too short a rope. Gradually my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and I saw a crowd of people

swarming around a small building. They seemed to be carrying it on their shoulders, this extraordinary structure, rectangular at its base, half-way up shaped like a drum, and at the top like a Chinese hat. Tall candles, rows of lamps, flower-pots of carved wood and sacred images covered its walls, crowded close to one another as in a shop. All these things were cheap, faded, out-of-date and gaudy at the same time. It seemed incredible that that dust-covered, vulgar tomb, that barbaric work of an unskilled Mytilene mason could be the Holy Sepulcher, the Tomb of Christ!

All around it the crowd was shouting, thousands of Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians, Armenians, for the feast of the Sacred Fire which is celebrated on Easter Saturday is not a Roman feast, but an Orthodox one. On that day, the divine fire comes down miraculously from Heaven to light a lamp in the interior of the tomb. Is it a return to the pagan celebration of the solstice, rejoicing at the departure of winter and the coming of

spring? Or is it a symbol of Christ's resurrection, conceived by an Oriental imagination? The origins of the ceremony are obscure. The Roman Church observed it for a while. Urban the Second believed or pretended to believe in the miracle—at any rate it helped him to arouse enthusiasm for the Crusades, —and many companions of Godefroy and Baudouin saw the miracle with their own eyes. But even then the miracle was intermittent and the fire did not come down every year. It stopped altogether after Jerusalem was taken by Saladin. However, the Greek Christians went on believing in it and now an invisible Archangel brings the fire down from Heaven every year for their benefit.

While waiting for the fire to appear the crowd would shout the same phrase over and over again in a monotonous Oriental rhythm, then a new phrase would be started and taken up with the same fervor, but in a different rhythm. The two phrases would vie with each other for a while, until one would conquer and impose its barbaric rhythm on the

multitude, only to be displaced in its turn by another.

They would shout:

"Our faith is the only true faith!
The Jews are rascals!"

or:

"O Jews! Your feast is a Monkey's feast;
Ours is the Messiah's."

and again:

"The strangers here will leave on Tuesday
With our best wishes for a happy journey."

I had heard similar shoutings in Morocco at the sacred dances of Mohammedan societies, but it was surprising to find this frenzy in front of Christ's Tomb. Carried away by the rhythm, the slowly moving bodies gave an oscillation to this packed crowd, in which no one could move independently.

Thousands of Russian pilgrims were miss-

ing. Before the war they came to Jerusalem every year for Holy Week and especially for this Saturday. From the interior of Russia, on foot or by train, they went to Odessa, and from there, crowded on ships, they were carried to the Holy Land. Their long, ragged processions, chanting prayers, went up to Jerusalem to secure the great treasure, the Holy Fire which protects Russian life. But they have not come since 1914. The Holy Fire has been almost extinguished for them by war and revolution. Russia is not represented to-day at the Orthodox Feast. And looking at the dense mob on which the Holy Sepulcher seemed to be floating like an ark, I wondered how all the Russians ever found room!

The only empty space was the narrow alley leading to the door of the Sepulcher. Between two lines of soldiers some English officers walked up and down, indifferent to all the excitement. Above the solid moving mass, where the red fez of Egypt mixed with the golden turbans of Damascus and Aleppo

and the white tarboosh of the Kopts, a pleasing sight rested my eyes, tired by the crowd's monotonous motion which made me feel seasick. In the corners of the vast rotunda boxes had been built with platforms and planks, on two or three levels as in a theater. In those boxes women dressed in their best lay stretched on mattresses and cushions, gossiping, peeling oranges and drinking lemonade. Each one was like a picture by Delacroix. I stopped looking at the dusty Holy Sepulcher and at the mad mob, and gazed instead at the wooden niche opposite mine, occupied by a black-haired, black-eyed, barefooted beauty, wearing a red-and-white dress touched here and there with purple.

Suddenly there was a disturbance, created by the young men of the town, who pushed their way brutally through the crowd, bringing with them a new phrase, a new rhythm which quickly drove away the one which had dominated a moment before:

"Hail, Blessed Virgin!"

It is customary for the Greek Patriarch to give a very heavy baksheesh to the Mohammedan authorities at the time of the festival. Naturally the Mohammedans never find the sum big enough and each year it is a pretext for interminable disputes. The arrival of these youths showed that an agreement had been reached and that the moment when the Sacred Fire comes down was approaching at last! In the small boxes the women became animated, laid aside their oranges, peanuts and pastries, applauded and shouted. Down below the tumult redoubled. I saw a Jewish member of the English police force being put out, passed like a parcel from hand to hand above the heads of the crowd while every one tried to strike him and thousands of voices repeated the chorus:

"The Jews are sad! The Jews are sad!"

Over the tops of the heads—the only way to get through the crowd—another man crawled on all fours. He was a peacemaker, and was trying to persuade the police not to put

out an Orthodox Christian who had been insulting them. Then a space was cleared in the middle of the crowd and a giant began to dance, carrying on his shoulders a man with a stick in one hand and a package of tallow candles in the other. This increased the delirium. The applause and the shouts grew wilder. The man standing on the shoulders of the giant chanted in a full voice a phrase to which he gave a frenzied rhythm by brandishing his stick and his candles:

"The Messiah has come!
With his blood he has saved us.
We are joyful to-day
And the Jews are desolate!"

and the crowd repeated in a chorus:

'We are joyful to-day
And the Jews are desolate!"

In their private path, between the double ranks of their soldiers, the English officers went on walking to and fro, unbending, in-

different, seemingly incapable of being interested in anything.

At that moment a man came along their path wearing a morning suit and carrying his straw hat in his hand. He was a rich Kopt who had just bought the Sacred Fire at auction. When he goes back to his village he will give the fire to his church and will be held in great esteem by his countrymen. Some Greek priests, their heads covered by the round bonnet, put on him a surplice and a charming cope of a forget-me-not blue with gold edges. Near the Kopt stood a Syrian who had also paid cash for the favor of lighting his candle from the Patriarch's. He wore an orange dalmatica with a green fringe over which was thrown a wide golden scarf. The Patriarch himself came next, a handsome old man with a white beard. His dalmatica was of sky-blue satin; from a necklace of precious stones hung a cross scintillating on his chest; another cross studded with diamonds crowned his tiara of emeralds and sapphires and he

carried a long crystal cane, two crossed golden serpents forming its hook. About twenty ecclesiastical dignitaries and a crowd of choir boys in white surplices and red belts followed him. A procession was formed. In front of the Patriarch, two priests each carried a cornucopia with thirty-three candles—thirty-three, the number of years Christ lived. Twelve banners preceded him, representing the twelve apostles. A thirteenth one followed him, Judas! The crowd was silent now, and through the human mass which opened as if by enchantment, the procession went around the Holy Sepulcher three times while an immense shout arose, the call for the Sacred Fire:

"What is rightfully ours,
O God! Give it unto us!"

The Patriarch returned. His tiara, his dalmatica and his stole were taken off, a white handkerchief was tied round each of his hands, the two cornucopias with the thirty-

three candles were given to him. The crowd was shouting:

"May God give prosperity to the
Greek convent!
May God give victory to our
government!"

I closed my eyes for a moment. I tried to imagine this noisy place when it was only a lonely spot outside the walls, a small stony field with a few olive-trees and, at one end, the tomb which Joseph of Arimathea had had prepared for himself, a tomb like hundreds of others all around Jerusalem. But how could I escape even for an instant from this hellish noise, how could I believe that silence and peace had ever existed here; that silence and peace to which the owner of the field had looked forward during his lifetime, thinking of eternity?

I opened my eyes. The Patriarch, followed by the Armenian bishop, went to the entrance of the Holy Sepulcher and disappeared in the Tomb. With blows of their fists the Eng-

lish soldiers pushed back some fanatics who tried to follow him. The noise was formidable. It seemed impossible that it could grow any louder and yet suddenly it became even more deafening. The miracle had taken place. Through a hole in the wall the Patriarch held out to the crowd the Sacred Fire just down from Heaven, brought by the Archangel. Some one lit his candle from the flame and the fire, as if in a clearing of dry herbs, spread instantaneously over the multitude as they all shook their thirty-three lighted candles. The bottom of the dark well was a vast light—the women's boxes seemed to be ablaze. Some people, perched quite near the cupola, pulled up with long ropes the candles which were lighted for them down below. The mildew which covered the walls looked as if it had suddenly taken fire. The loud noise of cymbals added to the din of the mallets striking the iron sheets which are used as bells by the Greeks. At the height of the fire and the noise the Patriarch came out of the Sepulcher, holding at arm's length his

two cornucopias, flaming like huge torches. The little lane was invaded by the mob, but the English officers made a way for him, as brutally as if they were defending the man who carries the ball in a football match. And then, on the dusty roof of the Holy Sepulcher, in the midst of the ex-votos, lamps and painted wooden flowers, an Armenian monk jumped up and began an extravagant dance, waving his candles about his bearded face, and thus purifying himself in the Sacred Fire. An English officer saw him and appeared also on the Tomb, more out of place there in his khaki uniform than the Armenian dancer. As an Englishman his conception of religious enthusiasm was, no doubt, different from the Armenian's! He collared the monk, and with the gesture of Punch beating the policeman pushed him down the stairs into the throng where both of them disappeared.

Darkness reigned again. To avoid one of those fires which have destroyed the church many times in the course of centuries, the policemen had ordered the candles to be put

out. Only a few survived, here and there, like will-o'-the-wisps. A disgusting smell of bad wax and smoke filled the basilica. In the renewed darkness, the Holy Sepulcher shone with all its candles, all its lamps and above, under the cupola, I saw the sun-ray again. Meanwhile, the fire was flying on its way to Bethlehem, to Hebron and to Nazareth. In carriages and on horseback they were racing to see who would bring the Holy Fire first to their coreligionists. When the Russians used to come, a ship under steam waited for the runner in Jaffa. As soon as the Sacred Fire was aboard, she started on her journey. Without a stop, she went to Odessa, where thousands of people with small lanterns secured the precious light, which they, in their turn, distributed to all the icons of Russia.

The ceremony was at an end. I found myself lost again in the mysteries of the staircase. I reached the bottom and found myself among the crowd and the blown-out candles. The ferruled stick of my gorgeously dressed guide, who preceded me, opened the

way easily. In the Orient, a stick with a silver knob striking the ground authoritatively, a gold-embroidered coat and sky-blue knickers will always bring about miracles. Another stone staircase straighter than a ladder and we came out in sight of the sky, on the roof of the basilica, and found ourselves in the midst of another crowd, which in the daylight appeared to be the transfiguration of the somber crowd below. This crowd was singing too, singing words with a savage rhythm, which sounded like the breathing of an Oriental holiday crowd. Some young men armed with shields and curved sabers were mimicking a war-dance, striking their shields and twirling their sabers, while every one around applauded rhythmically and followed their gyrations enthusiastically. Gladiators' games on the roof of the great sanctuary of Christian devotion! The pagan fire-festival merged with the celebration of Christ's resurrection was received by these people with the same enthusiasm, the same games, the same shouts which accompanied the festival of the

Sun God in ancient times. Nothing disappears altogether, everything endures, even though apparently changed. A God dies to save men, to make them all brothers, and on his tomb the sons of this earth can worship him only with the outworn thoughts he came to destroy!

The music and the shouting went on. The four gladiators, excited by the colorful crowd, continued their war-dance with a growing exultation. The tall bonnets of the Greek monks moved among the turbans and the fez. Along the wall groups of women in bright-colored dresses looked like branches of wisteria. From the stone balcony surrounding a neighboring minaret, some Mohammedan women were looking at this Christian festival, enjoying the games and applauding to encourage the dancers. A sharp tinkling as of innumerable small bells filled the air. Could this noise come from invisible goats? No, it was made by the sellers of orangeade, rose-water or simply fresh water, who drew attention to their cooling wares by striking

copper goblets against each other. And all the time, on the roads of Palestine, the small flames lighted in the darkness of the Tomb were being carried through the arid countryside, over the blue rocks and the burning sand.

What time was it? I did not know. An hour from the pit of ages, an hour from the oldest of the suns. One thing was certain, that the dinner-bell at the hostelry of the Assumptionist fathers had rung a long time ago. But no dinner-bell could have made me leave this extraordinary roof. I let myself be carried along by the mob, through a labyrinth of cupolas, vaults and terraces, to the inner recesses of a dark chapel where candles had just been lighted from the Sacred Fire, and there I came across some swarthy priests who looked like sorcerers, brothers, I suppose, of Balthasar, the Wise Man of the East. Within these walls, where each Christian rite has its sanctuary, this isolated chapel on the roof was reserved for the Abyssinian church. Just as I arrived in this cramped space the

Abyssinians were celebrating in the open air on the terrace above the chapel where Saint Helen discovered the wood of the Real Cross. The crowd was as dense here as everywhere else; above it gilded banners floated, as if they were hanging from the sky, and in the corner under a great tent, supported on one side by the wall, and on the other by two poles, I discovered the Abyssinian clergy. Seated in a semicircle, the bearded priests, in satin robes over which were thrown bright stoles, were singing liturgies and chants unlike anything I have ever heard in churches. In their midst the Bishop was seated in an old velvet armchair, holding in one hand a lighted candle and in the other his priestly staff. A curly beard whitened his cheeks and his chin. Balthasar himself! In front of this assembly of Wise Men of the East stood a drum, a long and narrow drum. The whole gathering seemed to be in honor of this drum, which stood like an ancient altar, surrounded by the brightly dressed priests.

I stood there as charmed and surprised

as I had been the day I stood in the market-place of Marrakech, in front of the snake-charmer or the story-teller. I was as fascinated by them as I had been by the band of negro musicians who, in the moonlight at a crossroad at Rabat, had brought forth the world of subterranean spirits. But the Bishop had spied me standing beside my gorgeous Kawa. He took me for an important personage, signaled to me, left his armchair, invited me to take his place, thrust his candle into my hand and sat down modestly on a chair beside me. I wondered if he also intended to give me his priestly staff! Once I entered a synagogue in Galicia when they were celebrating the Feast of the Law. On that day the Holy Scrolls in their velvet sheaths with their silver bells are taken out from the tabernacle. They are carried around the synagogue to the singing of joyful hymns, and how beautiful these hymns are, how divinely joyful! To honor me (they had taken me for a Jew) the beadle gave me one of the Sacred Scrolls, and I can see myself still

with my Thora on my arms, turning around the almemar, while the crowd of Jews pressed around me trying to touch the small bells and kiss the holy fringes. . . . But this was a still stranger experience, sitting on the throne of an Abyssinian Bishop, worshipping the tall drum together with the priests. Next, followed by my swarthy clergy, holding the enormous candle in my hand, I went around the terrace, under a blinding light, behind the golden banners, amid the shouts, the hurried beatings of the drums, surrounded by the smell of the tinkling censers swayed to and fro by the dark officiants. It was nearly three o'clock when the procession ended. The Abyssinian and myself came back under the tent, I thanked His Grace, gave him back his candle and left the roof of the Holy Sepulcher; for as it was the Sabbath, I wanted to see the Jews lamenting at the foot of the Wall of Wailing, before the first star appeared in the sky.

THE WALL OF WAILING

CHAPTER II

THE WALL OF WAILING

THE Jewish quarter was only a stone's throw from the Holy Sepulcher. It seemed deserted. Easter was near and, according to custom, the Jews had painted a bluish white the irregular fantastic walls of their small houses, all of which are covered by small domes, small stone caps very like the round hats they wear. In those narrow stony streets, with many vaults, stairs and sharp turnings, silence reigned after the continual noise which had filled my ears since early morning; and what a silence! How restful was this crumbling ghetto which looked quite abandoned! Titus, Bar-Kochba, the Prophets, the Holy History, the corner of the village church where I learned my catechism, some very important moments of my life and some very trivial ones came back to me, in disorder, pell-mell, to disappear entirely,

leaving me free to enjoy the present and the feeling that I was not a part of the long chain of events which had taken place here. Suddenly a strange-looking person appeared from one of the side-streets. He was dressed from head to foot in a violet velvet garment, the color of faded hyacinth; his colorless beard harmonized with a bonnet of fawn fur, and his dead-white skin, ivory-like, was as faded as the velvet of his clothes. Then another appeared, dressed in green, the green of a three-hundred-year-old parrot. Two more, one in a cherry-colored caftan, the other dressed in crimson velvet which looked as old as Jerusalem itself. How strange they seemed, dressed in velvet, centuries old, as old as the sheaths of the Thora! I had never seen such people outside of Venetian pictures. The most brilliant as well as the most delicate colorings, all the nuances and shades that shine in the "Marriage of Cana." It was the first time that Jewry appeared to me as a fairy-tale. Seeing those Jews seeking the light, I thought of all I had heard, at Bels, at

Zadagora, about the old men who abandon their country to come here to die and spend eternity in the land of Jerusalem. Was it to honor death that they had covered their old bones with those charming velvets and silks? A tall, dark Jew, dressed in his black Galician gabardine, walked among those brilliant or delightfully faded robes; he was as somber as a candle-snuffer and as lugubrious as Poland under a low winter sky.

In the blue-painted walls doors opened on narrow passages or upon stairs leading down to interior courts. All Jewish houses are sunk in the ground in order to have more space, but this side of the hill was so irregular that often a court which seemed to be underground opened straight on a narrow street. Down below, I still received an impression of seething humanity, an impression that Jewish life always gives, and even Jewish death, as in the old cemetery in Prague, where the tombs climb one on top of the other, elbowing each other just as the dead did while still alive. But this humanity was full of amia-

bility, inviting me to come down, to look in, to enter. The Easter coat of paint had hidden for a little while the poverty of their dwellings, but this momentary brightness only made the smell of soured things more noticeable, the same smell as that found in the hold of a ship which I have always noticed in the ghettos I have visited, as if a ghetto itself were only an immense vessel of emigrants. In the depths of these deep courts one often sees a small synagogue, walled in, buried there, doubtless because it is written: "I cry out to Thee, O God! from the depths!" Dust, poverty and dirt reigns in those caverns of piety. It is as if a horror of anything beautiful, or even of anything agreeable, were part of the Jewish worship. The only thing that is beautiful, the curtain of embroidered velvet which hides the cupboard of the Thoras, adds to the lamentable impression by drawing attention to its beauty.

I had thought that to find my way to the Wall of Wailing I would only have to follow the buttercup-colored Jew and the amaranth

one who went gesticulating side by side, and that on a Saturday, at the end of a Sabbath day, all the Jews in Jerusalem would be going to the Wall of Wailing. I followed them at a respectful distance. What on earth were they saying to each other? They walked, stopped, gesticulated a little more, went on their way. A conversation that one cannot hear is always full of interest and mystery, and I artlessly imagined that if I could understand them I would at once learn something about that silent quarter of theirs. I followed them through the maze of those descending streets, while other Jews went up, brightly or somberly dressed. After all, all the Jews of the ghetto were not going to the Wall of Wailing. The two I had been following entered a synagogue decorated with frescoes where one could see lions, gazelles and lyres hanging on weeping willows, about a hundred figures from Titian and the Veronese like those I had already met in the street were shouting and rocking in the manner of the Galician Jews. I asked in bad

German where the Wall of Wailing was. Nobody understood my jargon and everybody asked everybody else questions to try to guess what I wanted to say. Instantly all the prayers stopped as if they did not mean very much to them. Instead of the All-Powerful who, as I came upon the scene, had been the center of interest, I suddenly became the object of attention. Pleasure had come into their lives, a happy diversion which must not be missed. These old men seeking eternity were able to taste the joy of the passing moment and make the most of whatever it might bring to them, and what fire, what vivacity, what petulance were wasted on nothing at all! That is the Jewish mind, always ready to go from Heaven to earth without transition. I was surrounded by a circle of bright eyes, which reminded me of those Russian pictures in which one sees a sledge stopped in the snow surrounded by wolves with shining teeth and burning eyes. They all called out to one another, each one evidently having his own idea of what I wanted. The phrase that

I heard repeated that morning *ad nauseam,* "The Jews are sad! The Jews are sad!" is not true. I saw them there, in their synagogue, at the center of an isolated universe, absolutely indifferent to what was going on a few steps away at the Holy Sepulcher, as far from Christ's Tomb as if they were at Bokhara or Cracow. This Holy Saturday was a day like any other for them; they were in their habitual mood, their love of life mixed with their violent piety. All around me they went on shouting at one another and I was unable to understand a word of their Yiddish. But what seemed to me more extraordinary than anything else was that it did not occur to one of those Jews that at that particular hour on the Sabbath in Jerusalem I could only want one thing, to go to the Wall which dominates their whole lives, the Wall which they had come from afar to seek just as I had myself.

How did I reach it? I cannot tell. No one guided me there. I kept going on to-

wards it, blindly feeling my way through narrow street after narrow street, and finally I believed myself to be really lost between two small stone walls about which a smell of refuse lingered. Suddenly, as so often happens in those Oriental mazes, at a turning of this passage leading apparently nowhere, I saw some women seated in front of small stalls and at the same time I heard a sound, made, I soon discovered, by a thousand shrill voices. Then I realized that at last I had found what I was looking for, and that this smelly, narrow way had taken me to the legendary Wall, which millions and millions of Jews have reached only through the path of their dreams.

Here was the Wall, the great groaning, the lamentation of Israel. The wailers were there, a small crowd of undersized people, hugging the ground, swaying, shouting and lamenting at the foot of the high wall. Each one groaned in his own way, without paying any attention to his neighbor, letting himself go, intent only on his own sorrow. I was not

surprised. I had expected something like it, or rather, I knew all about it through my experiences with the Galician Jews. As soon as the scene had imprinted itself upon my mind I saw that it could not be otherwise. These people in the throes of prayer, more anarchical than ever in their sorrow, crowded into a scanty space between a small wall made of mud and stones, just like the one I had passed on my way, and the wall itself made of enormous blocks of stone perfectly balanced upon each other without any cement to hold them together. The shiny, golden, weather-beaten wall, greasy where foreheads, lips and hands have been touching it throughout the centuries, that collection of blocks with nothing to break its monotony except some plants growing on it here and there, that bare and inflexible mass which has survived all the calamities which have bruised Jerusalem since the beginning of time, that wall represents the religion of Israel, bare, simple, strong and abstract. Tradition has it that those stones are a remnant of the

foundations of Solomon's Temple. Archæologists give other explanations. But why bother about archæology? Whether the Wall was built by Jewish hands or whether it was built long before the Hebrews took possession of Judea, what does it matter? It sustains something greater than Solomon's palace, the undying hope of Israel that its defeat is not eternal, that its days of glory will come back.

At the entrance of the passage the women, draped in their flowered shawls, their heads covered with handkerchiefs, were moaning softly. I saw some who caressed the Wall slowly and gently with their old hands, sobbing the while. A young girl was crying bitterly, pillowing her pale face upon the cold stone. Was it possible that any one so young and charming as she could cry over a dead stone, or over the idea, deader still, of a temple ruined nearly two thousand years ago? What was her sorrow? Why did she despair? Was she trying to ward off some unhappiness? I felt that those stones

could do nothing for her, except help her to cry. Carried away by the sorrow of their mothers and sisters, the children were crying too. Further away, with their prayer-scarves on, their beards and their long noses bent upon their psalm-books, the men in silk and velvet and the men in black caftans were moving about, bending down, getting up, elbowing their way nearer to the Wall, so that they could rest their foreheads and their hands on it, and read their prayers nearer to it. I felt keenly the contrast between those ancient stones which will last a long time yet and all the old men who to-morrow, maybe to-day, will lie down for eternity in the valley of Josaphat. But after all they are eternal themselves in their way. They have taken the place of other old men, as old as they are, who once prayed there and others exactly alike will in turn replace them. Of their wild sorrow how much is habit, how much real emotion? I had been admiring one of the Abrahams who was groaning louder than the rest, one of those sad, old men whom the

Greeks had been mocking in the morning at Christ's Tomb. Suddenly he stopped to scratch his shoulder where some insect was biting him, then, relieved, he returned at once to his accustomed gestures, his inextinguishable sorrow.

The passer-by happening upon this scene, not knowing anything of the feelings which animate this strange gathering, would only see in this high Wall a ruin like many other ruins on the Phenician coast, and all the wailers would be only a picturesque and mad mob such as one finds constantly in the Orient. The gesticulations, the shouts, the swayings, the phrases repeated eternally on the same monotonous rhythm are the same. But there is something more than in the dance of a Mohammedan crowd on a square in Morocco, something great, the flame of a desire, which, seen or unseen, lives in the heart of Israel, expresses itself and increases in front of this Wall. I had felt it, a long time ago, in Galicia. Yes, in the imagination of a Jew in Eastern Europe, the love of Zion

exists. The heart of the scattered people has never ceased to sigh for the Holy City of David! *May we meet next year in Jerusalem!* It is the hopeful wish they have been repeating every year since the fall of the Temple, every Easter, in all the places in the world where Fate has thrown them. The Occidental Jews may add some of the bitter irony so natural to their race to this wish thousands of years old; but in the ghettos of Russia, Poland and Roumania, the wish is full of sincerity, full of an astonishingly strong hope! In the midst of the harshness of the Law and of the Talmud, in small houses on the edge of a Carpathian torrent, or on a plain in Poland, Jerusalem raises its domes and its palaces with all the radiant splendor that nostalgia can conceive. Each morning, in their prayer, this appeal goes up to the Lord: "Blow the trumpet of our deliverance, O Lord God, set up our banner to assemble our scattered brethren, gather them from the four corners of the earth, come back full of loving-kindness to Thine own

City of Zion and reign over it, as Thou hast promised us. Build it up again and establish it for ever. Be praised, O Lord, Thou wilt set up Jerusalem again!"

In those Jewish settlements I had heard many times how the miracle will take place. The Messiah will appear mounted on a white horse. As in ancient times the Red Sea divided, so will the rivers divide in front of the people of Israel. Bridges of cigarette-paper more solid than those made of steel will enable the Hebrews to pass over the oceans as lightly as shadows, and a thousand other miraculous details are told which shorten the cold evenings of exile. It was an ordinary occurrence to see there the old men who had for sixty years and more cherished their longing for Jerusalem, as shown in that ancient wish, "Oh, to be next year in Jerusalem!" deciding to leave their relatives, their friends, the villages where they spent their lives, to go on this remarkable journey. When old people are nearing their end they often have the desire to be elsewhere, to go

away, to flee, to escape the death which is waiting for them.

But the old Hebrews who venture on the road to Zion believe that dying in Palestine makes eternal life certain. All the sacred books say that four steps in the Land of their Ancestors cleanse from all sins. Living in the shadow of the walls of Zion brings as many benefits from the Lord as fulfilling rigorously the six hundred and thirteen commandments. This journey also satisfies their natural pride to an astonishing degree. A poor cobbler out of work, a tailor who can no longer see to sew, whose clients are leaving him, all those who, because of their age, are becoming public charges, become suddenly people of importance when going to Jerusalem. In a single day they enter a holy kingdom, they become ambassadors of their villages; but this is not all; they become the representatives of all Israel to the Almighty, who listens with far more favor if the prayers of the Jews come from his ruined Temple! Amid praises and blessings they leave Po-

land, Hungary and Russia, taking with them only enough money for their journey, their talliths, their phylacteries and prayer-books.

In Jerusalem, a pious man has no need to worry about ways and means of living. Are there not all the Jews in the world, who are unable to leave the place of their exile, to support the delegates of the scattered People, the holy ambassadors who spend their days sending Jewish prayers to the Lord God from the foot of the Holy Hill where David used to offer sacrifices unto the Lord? If these old men were not there, crying at the foot of the Wall, if, when by chance, the Lord looked at His beloved Zion, which has been abandoned to the pagans, if He did not see, here and there, a Jew with an old beard, an old hat, an old caftan, all the things that soften His heart; if, for one day only, He could say, "There is not one solitary Jew in My beloved Zion, they have truly abandoned Me," calamities and plagues would befall Israel. But the old men are there, wailing all the time. Just as the angel held back Abra-

ham's knife from Isaac's head, so their beloved presence softens the anger of the Lord and prevents His arm from leaning too heavily on His forgetful chosen people. Well then! Since these old men of Israel assume the task of appeasing Jehovah, of calming His outraged spirit; since, thanks to their intervention, unlimited blessings fall like manna on all the scattered People, how can they be expected to do anything, to lose a single precious moment in the sordid business of earning money? Women can have shops, sell candles, ounces of sugar, corn or coal, that is quite as it should be. Who cares what the women do? The Lord God Himself never cared. But the men, the men here, have only to cry and moan; for the rest, they depend upon Israel's charity.

It may seem absurd that Moses' people have only been able to express their deep poetic quality in this gathering of old men and women who looked as if they were dressed in the discarded costumes of some bankrupt theater. But the most beautiful

thing I saw was that poverty. If Israel, rich and powerful, had tried to do something magnificent, it would have been banal. Is it not greater and more in keeping with its destiny that it should be represented in Zion by people in rags and by beggars? The Jew is here as we see him in his hidden settlements in Oriental Europe and in the poor quarters of London and New York. He would be deceiving Jehovah once again if he tried to make Him believe that he thinks only of Him when success and wealth come. When Israel is doing well it thinks very little about the Lord. But it always appeals to Him when it is poor and oppressed. In sending to the Wall some of its poor members, it wants to show God its pitiable state, to keep Him from forgetting the promises of power and happiness which He made to them years and years ago.

I did not understand any of the prayers which went up all around me with a growing intensity as the evening approached, but they probably said: "For two thousand years we

have been faithful to Thee, for two thousand years we have loved Thee and had confidence in Thee, O Lord, for two thousand years we have appealed to these stones which have remained cruelly silent. Surely that is something! Look! Our hearts have not changed! Our thoughts always come back, O God, to the hill where David saw Thine angel with his shining sword. We mourn when we are far from Thy house where we have worshipped Thee. We ask Thee with tears and supplication to bring us back here soon. We lament here because Thy Temple has been destroyed and Thy Beautiful City lost."

Behind this prayer, I detected the eternal Jewish uneasiness, their dissatisfaction, their desire to be something else, their appeal for other temples, for ideal societies where the whole of humanity would be ruled by them. The strong hope of reigning over the universe that Israel has always had was ridiculous and touching at the same time when expressed with such incongruous strength by these poor samples of the scattered race.

After all, is not such deep despair the greatest proof of faith? Underneath all this despair, their complaints were full of happiness, of the confidence the Chosen People have in themselves, the sign by which we always know them. One burst of the trumpets was enough to pull down the walls of Jericho; surely so many tears will end by rebuilding the Holy City.

In front of the great, bare Wall, where nothing rests the eyes, any kind of words are of no avail. I said to myself that it was unlikely that the Temple would rise up again under my eyes to-night. I began to tire of all the pious shoutings which had been filling my ears since morning, with the most diverse tongues, with the most diverse thoughts. I had had enough for one day! The chanting of the Orthodox Christians, the drum of the Abyssinians, the wailing of the Jews! Some wailers closed their prayer-books, separated themselves from the mob and went away, satisfied to have moaned, to have fulfilled a function of Israel. The others went on, their

moaning increased. Would the sight of the evening star, late in making its appearance, stop the fanatics?

I tried to reach the other end of the infernal passage with the hope of finding a way which would take me up above the Wall, to the esplanade where the Temple once stood, the Temple that the moaning voices were beseeching the Lord to erect once more with His own hands. I made my way through the wailing crowd with difficulty. At last I reached the end of the passage. But I might have known that it would be impossible for a wish, however humble, to have a chance of being fulfilled in this place of eternal desolation. The passage I had found was a blind alley. I had to go back, I had to make my way again through the lamenting mob. At last I managed to get out of this extraordinary place. One of the crouching women offered me a small posy, made up of two jasmine flowers and of some blades of grass from the Wall. I wanted to give her some pennies but she refused them. It was Sat-

urday and on a Saturday a Jew cannot give or receive money. So on that day beggars become givers in their turn and they give away lemons and small posies. With my two flowers in my hand, I went through the ruined labyrinth, as evil-smelling as before, which I had followed on my way to the Wall. But this time it appeared in a new guise to me; it was an ideal way to lead to the Wall of Wailing, the poverty-stricken way which leads to that impasse of misery, that cul-de-sac of hope.

THE MOSQUE OF OMAR

CHAPTER III

THE MOSQUE OF OMAR

A LONG passage, already dark, as imposing as a stone bridge, where, in spite of the night which had begun to envelop it, I guessed at small shops hiding in the wall, on the left and the right, with windows through which could be seen bright lights, small, moldy patches and strange fragments of statuary mixed with the vegetation that grows on ruins. At the end, an open space, a golden light, some olive and cypress trees, an emptiness hardly broken by the presence of small buildings, kiosks, tombs, fountains—I could not exactly see all that was there—a wide, white staircase, shining softly in the twilight, and above all that, on the spot where once stood the Temple in which the angry God of the Jews used to receive the blood of sacrifices, stands a kiosk of turquoises and diamonds, covered with green mosses, a kiosk

of changing colors, as bright as a blue-jay. Taken by surprise I stopped on the dilapidated steps, the prisoner of invisible spirits dancing around me; I seemed to hear their divine laughter.

Here, too, people were praying. This brilliant azure palace contains, besides its sculptures and its mosaics, covered with multicolored birds, the Sakra, the sacred rock on which God stopped Abraham's knife when he was about to strike Isaac, and from which Mohammed was brought into God's presence. Through the open doors, under some lamps, I could see the faithful bowing and getting up with movements not unlike those of the Jews, if gestures executed with serenity and nobility can in any way recall those performed in a frenzy. But the Mohammedan prayer asks nothing from God. It is simply a greeting to Him, just enough to show that He is always present and that men's thoughts are still climbing the ladder of light which has been standing there, between heaven and earth, ever since Jacob's time.

I did not expect for a moment that in this place, where the Tablets of the Law had stood, with all that they signify, threats, punishments, thwarted life, I would find the most beautiful expression of the pure joy of living that exists in the Orient, perhaps in the world. In vain I kept trying to remember that this was the threshing-ground which David bought from Ornan for six hundred pieces of gold, the site of the Jewish tragedy, the place chosen by God, where the voice of Jesus was heard—the charm of this delightful spot drove all such thoughts away. What a break with the past, which had been replaced by a striving towards things that the Law had tried to suppress. Just as a long troubled human life finds a haven some day, so this place had achieved a perfect peace. Tired of trying to attain the treasures stored up in Heaven which are too hard to reach, its advice to the pilgrim is to love the pleasures of this life, but to love them lightly, with the lightness of the olive-branch, to renounce the unattainable, too, in the way which the Orient

has of giving up when the path is hard, to be resigned in the face of disappointments, to be content with whatever happiness is within easy reach. The lamentations at the Wall of Wailing were still in my ears; by shutting my eyes I could still see the tear-stained faces, the backs bent by centuries of misery, the long, inconsolable beards, the hands eager to seize happiness but finding only hard and smooth stones.

Here I was, a few steps above the lamenting old men, in a divine place, a paradise where not one of them would have dared to venture. The Mohammedans would not permit it, and the Jews themselves do not want it, for by going up there, they walk in the Holy of Holies which only the High Priest has the right to enter. Brought from so far away by their desire for Zion, they come up against the Wall and remain in the ditch to moan. And what are they asking, O God! That the most beautiful spot in the world (yes, a spot as beautiful as a dream) should disappear, also like a dream, through

a dreadful miracle. O God, do not listen to them! Do not heed the prayers of your Jews! Let them lament and moan; they live for it and love doing it! Do not rebuild the Temple, do not allow any one to touch this enchanted place! . . .

I walked around the high esplanade over the dusty grass. On one side I could see the mass of mildewed cupolas, yellowed here and there by the rust of ages, and the old Jerusalem, looking like a herd of cattle going down a hill; on the other, the rocky hill of the Mount of Olives, and, further off, in the distance, the bluish mountains, the Hills of Moab, the Dead Sea and the Jordan valley. But in this vast space, the imagination is occupied more with the sky than with the earth. I saw the heavens filled with shining ladders, on which angels went up and down, their shining forms carried by cherubim; I saw clouds where Jehovah appeared in the lightning, shining swords, rains of manna; I heard sounds of thunder and holy trumpets, of threats and promises, pacts and solemn

engagements, denied and renewed many times. Now the scene is empty, desolate, forsaken of men and of God.

The night came and with a light finger caused everything to disappear, just as time has succeeded in suppressing any vestige of the different ideas that have followed one another in that place. This sacred spot, closed in, is like an old palimpsest that men have rubbed constantly only to begin writing on it again. What has become of the dark room where the Ark of the Covenant, the Tablets of the Law, Aaron's rod and the urn containing the manna were kept. Not a single trace of the Temple or of Solomon's palace remains, nor of the Antonia where St. Paul was imprisoned, from which Roman soldiers watched the turbulent Jews, always ready to create disturbances. Not a trace is left of the Capitol built by the Emperor Hadrian after the revolt of Bar-Kochba and of Reb Akida. Here and there the moon lends a certain charm to some building lost among the olive-trees, the columns and the dome of David's

tribunal that a chain seems to connect with the sky, lovely porticoes whose sole purpose is to imprison a little of the pale light under their arches. Of course, it was the light which prevented me from seeing the chain on which the Angel Gabriel will hang his scales on the Day of Judgment, and between the porticoes the thread, finer than life, sharper than a sword, that the Believers will have to cross as a supreme test before going to Paradise.

The beautiful mosque of precious stones shone now with a soft green-and-blue radiance. It seemed as if the air were still impregnated with the perfume of the rose-water that Saladin's sister brought from Aleppo on eighty camels to purify the place which had been made into a church by the Crusaders. The ghostly porticoes and the gray olive-trees were absorbed by the shadows, as ghosts which are seen for an instant and then disappear for ever. The cypresses awaited without uneasiness a night less dark than their foliage. Then, I do not know why, some dreadful demon came to me with the

thought: "Is there, at the foot of the Wall, in the blind alley, is there still a voice foolish enough to ask for the destruction of all this?" And I was foolish enough myself to try to see whether it was so. Leaving this moonlit paradise, I went through the gloomy labyrinth which led to the Wall. There was no one to be seen in the Passage of Tears. I went through it from one end to the other, surprised that no sobs should come out from those stones, for, after all, a wall that has been warmed all day by the sun, gives forth some heat long after the sun has disappeared; so why not tears?

It looked as if the Jews of Poland, Russia and Roumania, the ghettos of Berlin, London and New York, the Jewry of the world in fact, had decided at last never to trouble God any more. It was only then in that solitude that the Wall looked sad. Everywhere the Jews go they bring intense life. Their howling despair is life, their frenzied lamentations drive away sadness. But silence! a silence such as invades a court when plaintiffs

and defendants are gone! Beside me, in the shadows, I smelt a fig-tree which had its root in the Wall. No, the Wall was not abandoned after all. Men had left it to itself for a moment, but the ancient Biblical tree was giving forth its perfume into the darkness just as the tiny light in front of the sanctuary was carrying on, during the peace of the night, the prayers that men had stopped uttering for a little while.

THE PROPHET OF THE BOULEVARD

CHAPTER IV

THE PROPHET OF THE BOULEVARD

What had happened during the night? Had God Tzebaoth brought another miracle to pass? Could it be, that in one night He had changed the old Jews belonging to past ages that I had seen the day before, sobbing at the Wall of Wailing, into young men dressed in the American manner, with khaki shirts, knickers, woolen stockings, alpine shoes, with the silk neckerchiefs of the Boy Scouts, big felt hats and revolvers in their belts? And could the young women be Jewesses, too, with their short skirts, their sleeveless dresses and their hats covering their bobbed hair? I knew them by their faces, the young men and women that I met everywhere that morning. In the quarters of the new Jerusalem there were also Jews, but Jews of a new kind that I had never seen before, more surprising to me in this unexpected garb, than the caftaned Jewry

living in the narrow streets of the old Jerusalem. These are the haloutzim, the pioneers, the Levites of the new Zion, who want to bring back to the ancestral home the ancient Kingdom of David, and while looking at them I thought of the strange series of events which had brought them here.

About the year 1895, one met in the cafés on the boulevard where the journalists used to gather, a man about forty years old, a good-looking Semite with black eyes and an Assyrian beard, who had nothing of the ghetto about him. His name was Herzl, Doctor Theodore Herzl, correspondent in Paris of the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna. He came from Budapest and he was a Jew, if learning as a child a little Jewish history, a few words of Hebrew and remembering some faraway Easter evening or a Purim's feast make one a Jew. The secondary school and the university had carried away all that, and if some traces of the Jew were left by that time, traveling through Europe, meeting different people and mixing with different so-

cieties had wiped them out. From Paris, Dr. Herzl sent political or literary articles to his paper, or else he was writing light plays in the boulevard manner, which were acted in Vienna and Berlin. In brief, in the evening between four and five, at the Café Napolitain, he could sincerely believe himself to be a real Parisian.

But he discovered one day that he was deeply Jewish. The Dreyfus affair brought home to him something he had forgotten, that a Jew, however detached from the old customs, remains always, among the nations where Fate obliges him to live, different from other people, some one against whom the old hatred is always ready to flare up. Should he resign himself, disappear, become humble and inconspicuous, or should he fight and protest? To give in is cowardly and stupid! But what is the use of protesting? The experience of centuries proved to him that it was useless. There is a Jewish problem, and nothing that has been done for the last two thousand years has ever helped to solve it.

Violence and unfavorable laws have succeeded only in isolating Israel among the other nations, keeping it always the same, often against its own desire. By an unlucky fatality, tolerance and emancipation give a very different result from the one expected. In any country where the Jews are freely allowed the full play of their talents, their success has always excited jealousy and aggravated the hatred that it was supposed would disappear with more liberal measures. What can be done? What is the remedy for this ancient illness of both Jews and Christians? Since the Jews are, among other peoples, a kind of foreign growth which disturbs the national life; since they themselves are not perfectly at ease, because they feel in themselves something different, which cannot, which will not disappear, the best thing is to renounce for all time the hospitality of other nations, to free them of an unwelcome race; therefore, it would be best to find somewhere, in Palestine or elsewhere, a place where the scattered people could find, at last, peace,

security and happiness; a country where they could lead their own life, like the other races of the world. Once more, the thing to do was what Moses had done, bring the Chosen People out of exile. But the task of the Great Ancestor can be compared to the new enterprise only as an old-fashioned opera can be compared to a modern lyrical drama. Herzl wanted to play the same melodies, but with many more instruments, more flutes, harps, violins, brasses. He wanted a new stage-setting and more magnificent choruses, and was carried away by his enthusiasm, very astonishing in a writer of farces (but passion and irony can live quite peacefully in a Jewish heart). He wrote a pamphlet of about one hundred pages to show how he desired to bring about the wholesale migration of his race.

The rôle of Israel's guide, which Moses assumed in ancient times, would be held to-day by a society of disinterested Jews, accustomed to great undertakings, who would be diplomats representing the Hebrew nation

before the other nations and do all that was necessary to obtain a territory. Another society, quite different in character, chartered like the English companies, would liquidate the property of the emigrants in the countries they left and thus those who left behind them houses or estates would find, at the end of the exodus, possessions to compensate them for their loss. Work would be found for those who had nothing. Naturally they would be the first to go. They are excellent material, the poor of Israel! No great enterprise succeeds unless it springs from a great despair. They would be the pioneers, they would build houses, start towns, make roads. The bourgeoisie would follow them, attracted by a life of greater ease in a country full of hope.

But it is harrowing to leave the country, even though an unfriendly one, to which one is attached by many memories, made one's own through births and deaths. Well, the cradles could be taken away, and the tombs have been abandoned before, in emigrating from one inhospitable country to another.

The bitterness of the new exodus would be taken care of, a long time beforehand, by prayers and practical lectures, to prepare the souls and bodies of the future emigrants for their difficult enterprise. The departures would take place in groups of families and friends, having as their heads trusted men elected by each group. Thus, during the long journey, they would go on living with friends and that would help to drive home-sickness away. The groups, being large enough, would be able to charter whole trains, whole boats. There would be only one class, because on a sea-passage it is difficult to put up with differences, and though the journey would not be precisely a pleasure trip, everybody would have to be humored. At their destination the emigrants would be received, not with wild cheering, but solemnly and soberly. They would have so many trials and labors in front of them. Then each one would go to the place destined for him, and a life forgotten for two thousand years would begin again for the Jews, on Jewish soil, pro-

tected by a new Jewish flag. It would not be decorated with the lion of Judea, nor with Aaron's rod, nor with the seven-branched candlestick, nor with any of the old emblems, but it would bear on its silk the sign under which a people born anew intends to conquer its home, seven gold stars, which in Herzl's mind symbolized seven working-hours—one less than any other race.

The ancient Messianic feeling was at the back of this plan, but it was hardly recognizable, it was so much swamped by the arguments of business men, sociologists and lawyers. There was nothing in it of the old Jewish misery, nothing of an appeal to Jehovah. The great longing for the ancestral land, which always dwells in Israel's heart, became a diplomatic matter, an enterprise of emigration, a banking transaction. What had been for a long time only a desire of the soul, a sentimental dream, became with Herzl a workable measure. The return to a country of their own became a burning question, which was agitated in the newspapers and in

congresses of all kinds. He gave to a mystical thought the realistic touch, the touch of earth which belongs to things humanly possible. Many Jews, especially the revolutionary Russian Jews, adhered willingly to the new faith. It was much less dangerous than the Revolution in Russia and yet it also brought them some hope.

At that time I remember I was traveling in Poland, discovering with intense astonishment the very quaint life of Galician ghettos. One evening, when I had just witnessed in the small town of Bels one of those extraordinary banquets at which all the Jews of the place are gathered around the Miracle-Working Rabbi, I was approached in the snow by a very lanky, poverty-stricken looking young man. Instead of the caftan, worn by everybody, he was vaguely dressed in European clothes, and vague was the French in which he asked to have the great honor of exchanging a few words with me. Shortly afterwards I found myself with him in my room at the inn, lighted by a single candle.

He said: "Sir, I have been observing you for about a week. Here, as you know, we have nothing else to do but to watch the people who happen to be passing and, when there are no strangers, to spy on one another. I hesitated a long time before talking to you, but I could not resist my impulse. You have been spending a week among hypocrites and madmen. The Miracle-Working Rabbi who is the center of everything here is an execrable man. He lives on our poverty and no one resents it. Ah! if he were a scholar, it would be a different matter, but he is an ignoramus, who knows absolutely nothing, neither the Law, the Talmud nor even the Kabbala, which he thinks he knows. But he is a miracle-monger. Some believe in them, others pretend to believe in them. People are living here on stupidity and lies. I am ashamed for the Jews. Everything you have seen, Sir, must have disgusted you."

That young man had approached the wrong person. It is not every day that one discovers a new world; the exaltation, fever,

the bizarre mysticism, the library of Bibles, Talmud and Zohar, the Miracle-Working Rabbi with his blind eye and the beard of a prophet, the pious feasts on Saturdays with their songs and alcoholic breaths. Was this interfering person trying to spoil all that for me?

"If I understood you correctly, I gather that you are not very happy in Bels; tell me, where would you be happy?"

Then, for the first time, in that lost little town, I heard the name of Dr. Herzl, and evidently the young man had the same blind admiration for him that the rest of the town felt for the Miracle-Working Rabbi. With the quickness of his race in seeing a dream as an accomplished fact he saw himself already in the Ancestors' country, rebuilding the ancient Kingdom of David. I listened to him amazed, because the enthusiasm he showed for that idea appeared more extravagant to me than anything I had seen in Bels. The mystical appeal to everlasting Zion, the faith in the Messiah who would some day unite all

the scattered Jews in the New Temple, was not unreasonable. It was a dream-possibility, just like a very ancient custom, an old expression of desire, a sigh for the unattainable. But how could any one believe seriously that without Jehovah's help unknown ministers of Foreign Affairs and rich bankers were going to bring to pass a miracle, the giving of Palestine to the Jews? How was any one to believe that Abdul Hamid, Commander of the Faithful, would for a sum of money, however big, abandon Jerusalem where the Mosque of Omar stands, the most sacred spot in the world for Moslems, after Medina and Mecca? How could any one believe that the Christian nations would view favorably a Jewish guard of honor around the Holy Sepulcher? How could any one believe that the British government would accept in Palestine triumphant Judaism, the effect of which would be to increase the power and the pride of the Jews remaining in Russia? How could any one imagine that the Jews of France, Germany, England or America, who

were sincerely attached to their adopted countries, would be imprudent enough to claim a new one? While the people of Bels, with their sordid exaltation, appeared to me to have found a sure way to happiness, I pitied this excited young man, with his sublime confidence in those chimerical hopes which would not remain dreams.

It is always wrong, however, to throw water on any enthusiasm. Outside, in the holy town of Bels, there were plenty of sour dispositions and enough mud and snow to put a shadow on the heart of this poor young man. I kept my thoughts to myself; I let him go away with his treasure of hope, clutching to his breast some greasy old Hebraic newspapers, where one could see photographs of Jews in morning-coats or business-suits, who, in London, in America or elsewhere were fighting for the Great Idea. . . .

The new Prophet of the Jews soon knew all the tribulations which have been attached from time immemorial to this old trade of Israel. The Rabbis in charge of the congre-

gations of Western Europe did not have anything in common with this businesslike Messiah, who led the life of a Gentile and had the audacity to substitute himself for Tzebaoth as the rebuilder of Jerusalem. The great Jewish bankers remained deaf to his appeals. Neither Baron Hirsch, who favored establishing colonies in Argentine, nor Baron Edmund de Rothschild, who, at great expense to himself, kept up the Palestine colonies, intended to change their plans and follow this new Moses. An anonymous group donated some millions, but, considering the immense amounts that are required in these hard times for the humblest miracles, it was a paltry sum indeed! Herzl could not hope to buy back Palestine from the Commander of the Faithful with baksheesh. He saw Abdul Hamid twice. The first time Abdul Hamid gave him the Order of Medjidie and a diamond pin. The second time he was offered the right of founding in Asia Minor some scattered colonies without the privilege of linking them together. Failure was inevitable. The Viennese doctor began to see

that the political realism he was so proud of was after all rather short-sighted. Luckily, just at that time, Chamberlain, the English Prime Minister, who had some drops of Hebrew blood in his veins, was visiting Uganda. Seeing those deserted regions, he thought of Dr. Herzl, whom he had met in London, and of his great plan for the wholesale migration of the Israelites. The British Government let him know that England would be pleased to have the Jews settle in Uganda. Of course, East Africa was not Palestine, Uganda was not Zion, but since the great exodus appeared to be so far distant, might not a temporary refuge be created, a place where the Chosen People could experiment with self-government and try their hand at agricultural life? Herzl seized upon the idea, but alas! he had forgotten what his Jews were like. I don't think he had ever understood that the enthusiasm he aroused among the intellectuals of the ghettos had nothing to do with his personality or even with his ideas, but was due to the passionate longing which sweeps Israel off its feet whenever Zion is mentioned.

To the Jews of Poland, Roumania and Russia, Jerusalem was not an empty symbol, the symbol of a state to be founded anywhere, but an actuality, the object of their most cherished desires. In the congress which he called annually at Basle, London or some other large city, he proposed to those homesick people that instead they go to Uganda, and was received with tears and lamentations. He was betraying Jerusalem! Instead of offering them the Kingdom of Light, he was offering them a Kingdom of Night, on the Dark Continent. The new Moses must have spent some terrible hours with those coreligionists of his, people of the ghettos whom he had never learned to know either in Vienna or in Paris! Such noise, such excitement, so many hands, so many gestures, so much stamping of feet, groaning and sobbing! What a lot of hair-splitting, what a lot of pish-posh! It is said that on his death-bed, in his delirium, the unlucky Prophet saw himself in the hands of those savage Jews and bathed in a cold sweat he waved his hand desperately in an attempt to silence them.

Herzl realized at last, better than he had ever done before, the forces which had carried him on, and he gave in to their fury. To calm down this howling, gesticulating mob, he swore a solemn oath: "May my hand dry up if I forget thee, O Jerusalem!" And in Uganda, the half-dozen English people who were the population of the country, became angry, too, at the thought of a Jewish invasion and protested with petition after petition, so that the British government soon withdrew an offer which had pleased no one.

Herzl died after his failure. He was only forty-four years of age, but prophets gain nothing by becoming old. After his death the agitation continued, aided by embittered discussions in the newspapers and at the congresses. Some, faithful to the idea that Zionism was the only final solution of the Jewish problem, refused to begin migration to their ancestral land without having obtained guarantees of their rights as citizens of that land. They argued that without such guarantees all the effort expended would

only establish precariously a few thousand subsidized colonists and failure would imperil the complete liberation of Israel. Others held, on the contrary, that the idea of reconstructing a Jewish state in Jerusalem was an impractical dream which ought to be abandoned. There were political reasons which seemed to make it unlikely that it could ever be fulfilled. And even if Palestine were to be given back to Israel? It would be madness to think that all the Jews in the world could be taken there, for this rather barren country could not feed many people and moreover all the Jews would not go. The thing to do was to assist the departure of those who wanted to go, to add to the number of settlements, to the institutions of all kinds, to create, little by little around Jerusalem, centers of Jewish life which could have a good influence on the Jews everywhere, and perhaps later, when a great many emigrants had taken root again on the land of David and shown to the other nations what they could do, then it would be time enough to claim, in the name of the Jewish people, a

country of which they had proven themselves worthy.

The moderate views carried the day and the original idea of a separate State of Palestine was shrinking to such modest proportions that it was hardly recognizable, when suddenly it regained the importance of its earlier days. However sure Herzl was, with the optimism of his race, that favorable circumstances would help his dreams, he could hardly have conceived a new kind of deluge, an upheaval of the world such as had never before been seen, which would, in an almost miraculous fashion, make his dreams come true.

From the beginning of the war, England, France and Russia had been trying to decide on a division of the loot, resulting from the disruption of Turkey, the inevitable result of the victory which they hoped for. Who would get Palestine? According to geography and history, this country was part of Syria, which nobody at that time thought of getting away from France. How-

ever, England could not view the prospect of France as her neighbor on the Egyptian frontier without uneasiness. She desired to create under her protection a mighty Arabic Empire which would unite India to the Mediterranean, and negotiations had already been started with King Hussein with the promise that he would be the sovereign of all Arabic-speaking countries. It was rather difficult, though, brutally to keep France away from the Holy Land which she had been guarding since the time of Charlemagne. The British government conceded the severance of Palestine from Syria. It would become a neutral country, administered partly by the French and partly by the English. That was only a first step. The claims of the Zionists soon gave the English a chance to eliminate the French altogether.

For some time before, the English had been organizing propaganda on a large scale to claim their right to a country which Israel had never ceased to consider its own. Incensed at the idea that the land of their ancestors could become international, they

asked that it should become a Jewish country under a British protectorate. The several hundred or so people who make opinion in London received this proposal favorably, and they had the best reasons in the world not to object to it. In the minds of all Jews the world over, England soon assumed the rôle of a disinterested Power intent on setting right an injustice two thousand years old. England profited greatly by that attitude, for it is rather advantageous to have the money and sympathy of Israel on one's own side. In a little while Mr. Balfour, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was submitting to Lord Rothschild a proclamation by which Palestine was recognized as the "National Home of the Jewish people." But the important London Jews, Sir Philip Magnus, M.P., Mr. Cohen, Chairman of the Jewish Board of Guardians, Sir Moses Montefiore and others, who were afraid that their love for their adopted country might be doubted, protested against the word "National." The Foreign Office's zeal for Israel's cause was greater than the zeal of the Jews themselves, so the protest went un-

heeded and, having secured President Wilson's help and the assent of the French, a little less enthusiastic than the English, on the 2nd of November, 1917, the Foreign Office sent to Lord Rothschild a new letter whose official text in its diplomatic jargon follows: "His Majesty's Government looks with favor on the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and it will use its best efforts to facilitate the realization of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing will be done which might be prejudicial in any way to the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities living in Palestine, or to the rights and political status enjoyed by the Jews in any other countries."

Two years later, at Cannes, the Allies agreed to an English mandate for Palestine. France was definitely excluded from the Holy Land. The English had won the difficult game. The Jews were entitled to think that they had won their game also, so from Germany, Poland and Russia thousands of them descended upon Jerusalem.

THE VOICES OF PALESTINE

CHAPTER V

THE VOICES OF PALESTINE

THEIR coming pleased no one, neither the Mohammedans nor the Christians, nor the Jews already there.

"Is our country a desert?" said the Mohammedans. "Did Mr. Balfour miraculously do away by one stroke of his pen with the six hundred thousand Arabs who live here? We also love this place where we have been living for thirteen hundred years; Jerusalem is to us the Queen of Cities, one of the four towns of Paradise, of which Mecca, Medina and Damascus are the others, but of all the sacred spots in the world it is the nearest to Heaven. The people who live here are neighbors of God and to die in Jerusalem is to die in Paradise! The Jews pretend that they are coming back to their own country, because they were ejected by violence and violence has never given rights to anybody.

But did they not settle here by right of conquest themselves? They came from Chaldea, from the Euphrates Valley. Abraham himself was so much an alien in Canaan that he sent a servant to Chaldea to find a wife worthy of his son Isaac and the Bible is full of the struggles of their kings to subdue the country. We settled here in our turn. Why should our conquest not give us as good a right to the country as theirs? Do we claim Andalusia because we maintained a splendid civilization there for centuries? Why perpetrate the great injustice of putting a dead race where there is a living one? During the whole duration of the War when we fought beside the Allies, they held before us the idea of a great Arabic Empire and now, as a reward, they want to hand us over to the Jews! That's what it amounts to, isn't it? To be obliged to receive these emigrants, to be allowed to be their equals on our own territory, to have to endure the imposition of their language upon us, it is true that it is not absolute submission, but we won't be our own

masters any more. When these foreigners coming from God knows where are here, two or three hundred thousand of them, with their resources and their cleverness, what will become of us? We shall be their slaves, their servants in our own country."

And the Christians, too, have their say:

"For centuries we have been seeing Turkish soldiers mounting guard at the Tomb of Christ. Did the last Crusade take place to put Jews in their places? If they come back to the Holy Land filled with the same spirit in which they condemned Jesus, to what extremes will their fanaticism carry them? Shall we see them here, in the rebuilt Temple sacrificing sheep, lambs and doves to Jehovah? We do not know of any Messiah having changed their Laws about that. If, as they claim, Jehovah has ceased to interest them, what can we expect from a faithless Judaism? Humanity! Justice! We know to what violence these two words can lead and they call them the essence of the Jewish spirit to-day.

Believers or infidels, people who think they have been persecuted for two thousand years by Christian nations are apt to be tempted, as soon as they are powerful enough, to take their revenge in the place where their troubles started. What will the Wandering Jew do once he is back in Jerusalem, after his arduous journey?"

But of all these protests, the most surprising is certainly the one that comes from the Wall of Wailing. Only yesterday I was asking myself: "How can the modern Jews whom one meets everywhere in the new Jerusalem, with their flashy clothes and their haughty airs, have anything in common with the pious beggars of Israel, who have come here to die?" I know now. I have heard the ghetto's lament!

I heard it in the quarter of the Jews from Holland. This consists of an irregular court, rather spacious, with very mangy grass and a few dusty acacias, surrounded by squat houses, unsafe stairs and worm-eaten bal-

conies. I was ushered into a room freshly painted a bluish white, through whose narrow barred window could be seen a tomb-covered hill, sloping towards the valley of Josaphat. It was the dwelling-place of Rabbi Sonnenfeld, one of the old men whose thoughts are as old as Jerusalem itself. How far one was in his presence from the businesslike prophets whose photographs adorn the Zionist papers, who try to harmonize their vague Hebrew ideals with the ones they have borrowed from Western civilization! In his long, black caftan, he was tall, thin, endless. His cheeks were so white, that one could scarcely tell where his long, white beard began. He had the paleness of the chickens which the Jews empty of all their blood and soak for a long time in salted water before cooking. His voice was flat and colorless, but his eyes had kept the passionate light of youth, I mean, of course, of ancient times.

Here was what he told me, as nearly as I can repeat it. But how am I to describe to you all the white tombstones, as I saw them

myself through the narrow window? In the luminous silence of the countryside, they looked as if they were gliding over the hill to listen to him! . . .

"We are thy slaves, O Lord! It is the Law and the Law endureth for ever. On the day when we Hebrews accepted that slavery, our fate was irrevocably fixed. Both good and evil come to us only from God! And yet some madmen think they can take the place of the Almighty and rebuild Jerusalem with their own hands. Mr. Balfour is their Messiah! But has this Mr. Balfour driven out the Christians and the Mohammedans from the country? Has he rebuilt the Temple, reinstalled the Holy of Holies, put up the altar of the holocausts at the top of Mount Moriah? Does he think he has done anything when he allows a few Jews to settle in Palestine? Did the pious among us wait for his permission to come? Alas, the misfortunes of centuries still burden the Holy City. And another sorrow is added to the ancient

sorrow,—new sins to the old sins of Israel! These modern Jews, whose faces, clean-shaven like pigs, are in themselves an offense to the Lord, bring their impiety with them. They open schools where every name is mentioned except Jehovah's. For ordinary conversation and for teaching their so-called knowledge they use the sacred language of prayer, and if they keep on they will soon teach the asses to bray in Hebrew! The Town would still be standing if the Sabbath had been observed. But do they observe it? Do we see them in the synagogues? Do they come to lament at the foot of the Wall? Now they intend to impose a tax on the unleavened bread we eat at Easter. But we won't pay it. We won't place ourselves in their power. Blessed be the Lord God! He delivered us from Pharaoh! He brought us back from Babylon and captivity, He has kept us intact in the midst of the Gentiles and He will preserve us now from those Jews, full of pride, who believe no longer in their Lord's promises, those Jews who come here

not with the Talmud and the Thora, but with the gospel of Karl Marx. . . ."

A light rosy flush had come to the cheeks of the old man. In this pale old face, there was still some blood which anger brought to the surface. He pointed with his long bony finger to the extraordinary landscape outside the barred window and all the dead of centuries buried in the valley of Josaphat. "The Jews sleeping there waited all their lives for the Messiah, we are also waiting for him and others will wait after us, but Jerusalem will never be rebuilt by faithless Jews!"

And to all those voices and complaints which come from the four corners of the earth, the Wandering Jew answers, not with the humility of the conquered, but with the pride of a master returning home after two thousand years' absence:

"What does Palestine represent to a reasonable mind? It is Israel's native land, the country where we created ideas worth something to humanity as a whole. Since we

have been driven out of it, we have occupied it better by our tribulations and our desire twenty centuries old than if all our people had never ceased to live in it. Where are our martyrs and our dead, we are asked? We have given of our blood everywhere, but always for other nations. The Arabs may say that they have been here for thirteen hundred years, but everything is the same as if they had come yesterday. Uncultivated land, a culture more sterile than the sand or the rock, that's all their occupation has given the country. What have they made of Palestine? What has the country of abundance spoken of in the Bible become? We need all our love to find in this Jezebel the beautiful features of old! And yet the dear face retains something of its former beauty. On the Mediterranean Sea the best oats of the world still grow around Gaza. The plain of Sharon has its orange and almond trees and its vineyards still. At the foot of Nazareth, the Esdrelon country still produces barley and wheat! If the waters of Tiberias were

cleverly utilized, why could not the Jordan valley become a new Egypt? One can see on the mountains of Judea, now so arid and crumbling, the remains of a succession of terraces, such as still exist on the hills of Lebanon. We will build up those terraces again, we will have hanging gardens once more. We are the only ones who have enough love for this country to be willing to bury in the tired earth, the marshes and the sand, the effort and the immense capital necessary to bring it back to life. All over the earth there are other countries, healthier and richer, but for us Jews there is none so rich or so healthy. Here work has an attraction for us that it has nowhere else in the world. In redeeming this country, it is our spirit, our soul, we are going to resuscitate. Among the Christian nations we were so busy trying to make ourselves acceptable that we ceased being true Jews, we became instead odious to others and unfaithful to ourselves. In the ghettos of Russia we were more dead than alive, tied down by stupid laws, which may

have been useful long ago, but are senseless to-day. Sonnenfeld's time is past. It is thanks to him and others like him, that we have been made the miserable people you see in the older Jerusalem. We will let the Mohammedans and the Christians alone. We do not come to bring back to life an out-of-date Judaism. Not one of us would ever think of insulting the Holy Sepulcher, or of destroying the Mosque of Omar to build the Temple in its place. Is there a Jew in his right senses who would sacrifice oxen, lambs and doves there? We have other things to think about! The free genius of Israel does not have its source somewhere in Heaven, at the feet of Jehovah, but on the ground of Palestine, in the hearts of the Jewish people. We will recover this genius that we have lost during our exile, we will become again, if we can, the agricultural and pastoral people that we once were."

THE FIRST LOVERS OF ZION

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST LOVERS OF ZION

THOSE rather declamatory Jews are not the Firsts who came to Palestine to resume an intimacy with the soil, which had been interrupted for nearly two thousand years. About forty years ago some Russian Jews, terrified by the pogroms which followed the assassination of Czar Alexander the Second, came for refuge to this land of their eternal hope. They were town-dwellers, intellectuals and small merchants, carried away by the romantic desire to lead on the Land of their Ancestors the existence of the Hebrews of long ago. They were called Choveve-Zion, that is to say, the Lovers of Zion, or Bilou, a word made out of the first letters of the five Hebrew words which mean: Sons of Jacob, let us go away together! The first-comers settled down at Petah-Tikwah, the Door of Hope, upon a marshy ground, in ruined

buildings built some years before by Bulgarian Jews who had been driven away by fever. Some others bought an estate of about six hundred acres which was named Rishon-le-Zion, that is to say, the Firsts of Zion. There was no water there, the soil was very stony and they had no money to bore wells. Still others settled in Rosch-Pinah, the Key Vault, between Safed and the Jordan; others in Zichron-Jacob, the Remembrance of Jacob, at the foot of Mount Carmel; others wandered about without resources or shelter and everywhere the same misfortunes dogged the steps of these unlucky creatures who had had too much confidence in their Bible.

Palestine was far from being the good country flowing with milk and honey, wheat and malt spoken of in the Scriptures, abounding with manna from Heaven, of which one can dream by a warm stove in Berditchev, or in Kiev, or in the depths of a cellar during the anguish of a pogrom. But has it ever been a good country? A Jewish legend relates

that when Jehovah showed Moses the Promised Land from Mount Nebo, on the other side of Jordan—such a fantastic array of inextricably mixed mountains, ash-colored, without a tree or a plant, and the Jordan valley which is nothing but sand and dry-caked mud, left by the waters of the Dead Sea—the Prophet who had just spent forty years in the Wilderness uttered these words: "Whither dost Thou lead us, O Lord?" And to reassure him God showed him Jericho, with its flowing spring and its motionless palms at the foot of the naked mountains. Perhaps that oasis was less barren than it is to-day, but that poor little spot of green must have seemed very insignificant to the aged shepherd of Israel, who had still fresh in his memory the rich land of the Nile. The Bible says that he died on that day on Mount Nebo, and that the Lord struck him down because of a sin committed forty years previously in the Wilderness of Zen, when his confidence in God had weakened before the murmurings of his people. But I rather suspect that, when

he saw a Promised Land which was itself a Wilderness, his heart failed him and he died from the shock.

Samaria and Galilee, that Moses could not very well have seen from the top of Mount Nebo, would have consoled him a little. There, in the midst of a stony and arid land, are found fields and orchards, places full of an idyllic charm, where beast and man come to drink of the same water and rest in the same shade. Along the coast, among the marshes, one occasionally sees charming spots, but on the whole it is a country very badly treated by nature and very much abandoned by man. And it is small, too, exceedingly small, so small indeed, that one wonders how all the grandiose names can fit such tiny places. . . .

The unlucky Lovers of Zion had settled in particularly unpleasant places. They had spent all their money to buy the land. Where were they to find the necessary resources to cultivate the soil, to irrigate it, to make the place healthy or at least livable?

Those who dwelt in Zichron-Jacob were obliged to sell even their scrolls of the Thora! Fever played havoc with these poor, weak people who could not stand a climate to which they were unaccustomed. Many died, others went away, and the ones that were left were about to disappear in their turn when a miracle took place, just the same kind of miracle one reads about in Persian tales, which begin badly and end well, thanks to some good genie who arrives just in the nick of time.

Wherever you go in Palestine, you'll hear the Baron mentioned. Which Baron? Well, the only one who exists for Jews there, Baron Edmund de Rothschild. He is a living magician, the good genie who took pity on their distant misery and saved them from utter disaster. Rishon-le-Zion, the Firsts of Zion, were on their last legs and he took them under his protection. Then came the turn of those of Rosch-Pinah, those of Petah-Tikwah and finally of all of them. The Key of the Vault,

the Door of Hope, the Great Space, were all too small to keep alive the families which were crowding one another on the sand. All those whose hopes were sinking sent their distress-signals to him. Then he sent them money and more money, for irrigating the sands, for drying up the marshes, for boring wells, making roads, planting trees and vines, for buildings of all kinds, cellars, wine-cellars; he had to bribe the Turks who had forbidden all buildings, who would not even allow a stable or a barn to go up, who had even ordered the buildings already in existence pulled down; he had to pay the taxes, to pay the agricultural experts and the watchmen who protected them from attack from the Arab plunderers; to pay the Rabbis, the teachers, the doctors, the chemists, all indispensable to the Jews, who can't get along without teaching or remedies.

Some directors sent from Paris saw to everything, provided all the needs of these amateur colonists, paid all deficits and made up for all the reverses, whether caused by

nature or by men's inexperience. After some years, eucalyptus groves, vineyards, plantations of lemon and orange trees sprang up from the sands, agreeably surprising the eye amid the barrenness of their surroundings. Among those green gardens lived a small bourgeoisie, thanks to the Baron's help, just as in Jerusalem the beggars at the Wall of Wailing live on Israel's charity. The land was cultivated by Arabs or by poor Jews from Yemen who had become accustomed to the heavy labor of the fields in their own country. And all these peoples found it just and reasonable that the munificence of their distant patron should reward them for leading in the Land of their Ancestors this easy life, which, they wrongly imagined, had been the kind of life led by the ancient Hebrews.

For the last twenty years those colonies which have let themselves be guided by the shepherd's crook of Baron de Rothschild, have been conducting their affairs themselves. But now, just as before, the Baron is still the Providence to whom everybody turns in hard

times. All hands are held out to him if the oranges sell badly, if the heat has turned the wine into vinegar or if it is discovered suddenly that it would be wise to grow lemons instead of oranges. Hardly a third of the children born in the colonies remain there and the others leave them without regrets to take their chances elsewhere. One does not know which to wonder at most, Baron de Rothschild's persistence in trying to create a race of Jewish planters in Palestine or the powerlessness of the Jews to change themselves into agriculturists.

THE PIONEERS OF ISRAEL

CHAPTER VII

THE PIONEERS OF ISRAEL

THE new pioneers of Israel despise the people of the old colonies with all their hearts, —those bourgeois, they say, the Baron's slaves, as the lamenters at the Wall are Jehovah's slaves! They do not want to lead the lives of sad peasants bent over their work, such as are seen in all the countries of Europe. It is not to establish there the old forms of Western civilization that the people most passionately attached to equality and justice come back to the Ancestral Land. Once again Zion will give a Law, once again Israel will create in the social and economic order something comparable to what it once accomplished in the divine order.

All the ills the world suffers from come from the old Roman idea that individual property must be absolute and perpetual. This detestable principle must be replaced by

another, a principle very old and yet very new, of a purely Jewish inspiration. It is said in the book of Leviticus: "And all the Tithe of the land, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord." The Lord! the pioneers of the new Zion have, I believe, ceased to believe in Him. But they replace Jehovah by the idea of the Jewish people, and in their new Law, they interpret thus the text from the Old Testament: "The land will not be sold for ever, for it is mine, saith Israel."

A fund, called the National Fund, made up of contributions that come from the Jews all over the world, buys back piece by piece the sacred Land of their Ancestors. When an emigrant wants some, the land is not sold to him, but a temporary assignment is made. If the newcomer has enough money, a lot is given to him with a long lease-term, with the strict understanding that he and his family alone will work it without help from the natives. He can also, if he wants to, join as a partner one of the numerous communist colonies. Some of them are completely communistic,

others are cooperative, others still adopt an intermediary plan, each family working on their lot but all the families uniting to buy machinery, seeds, cattle, etc., and sharing all general expenses. If the emigrant has no money, he joins as a laborer a farm belonging to the National Fund, where he receives besides his daily pay a part of the benefits. He can also find work in one of those battalions of workmen organized in a military way—laborers in the building trade, agricultural laborers, railway laborers who go from place to place, wherever their services are required. When he has put some money by, he can, in his turn, settle down on a farm. Thus each colonist is Israel's farmer. The Jewish people remain the only owners of the land. It benefits by the increase of value given to the land by the work of its farmers; it reserves for itself the right to raise its rents in order to buy more land, and if a lot is not cultivated, or is not well looked after, it can take it back at the end of the lease. As for the colonist he has the advantage of not

having to put up any money to get land and of being able to use all the money he has for improvements. The agricultural laborer who gets a part of the benefits is not condemned all his life to live from day to day. Just as, according to the ancient Law, the Jewish slave could not be held in bondage for more than seven years, through the force of circumstances the proletariat will also free itself. Thus Israel will rid itself at the same time, or rather it believes it will, of the two plagues of the world: capitalism and wages.

I have visited the colonies created by the National Fund, from Jaffa to Jerusalem, from Haifa to Tiberias, and I have met on the roads many battalions of workmen. All these people work hard, they make canals for irrigation purposes, they plant trees, they mend roads. In the evenings, they assemble in their tents or their wooden shanties, to discuss endlessly some political, social or economic question, to listen to a lecture or to go to some concert or some moving-picture.

Their life is hard and I don't want to criticize, but I got the impression that they ought to be pitied, because they are, for the most part, ill-suited to their work. You will look in vain for one among them who will say simply: "At home, I made caps or cut shoe-leather." They always say without fail, "I was a student at home." If you ask to see their diplomas, they have always lost them or else they have been stolen from them during their wanderings. A certain brutality on many faces rather makes one think that their memories are at fault, but whether they have really studied at some university or whether they were originally tailors or shoemakers, they are all imbued with the deplorable idea that intellectual gifts are superior to all others, and that they are doing something admirable by condescending to work in the fields.

In other countries this exaltation of the mind is the reason for the success of Israel, but it is not wanted in this new land, which requires muscular energy above everything else. I must say that I don't care for the

shepherd who reads Tolstoy while looking after his flock, the workman who carries under his arm the poetry of some Viennese decadent poet and the young girl who would rather break stones along the roads than look after a household, under the pretext of helping Palestine much better that way! Those pioneers who carry with them moving-pictures, pianos, lectures, literary evenings, just as the Hebrews carried the Ark, do not inspire much confidence in their farming and laboring abilities. Do they themselves feel that way about it? Is it because of that, that they all have such strained and sad expressions? I have never seen either men or women smile. But how can they be happy, when they carry inside themselves the idea that they are not like other people and that all the world is looking at them! All these social experiments of which those poor people are so proud spread the mantle of Noah upon a miserable reality. Whether they are organized in a communistic, a socialistic, cooperative or patriarchal manner, they are able to live only through help from the out-

side. Just like the old lamenters at the Wall, they live on the alms of the whole of the Jewish people. Not one of these colonies is self-supporting. Each one of those haloutzim is a luxury that Israel indulges in.

How far one is from the romantic imaginings of Herzl! He could see the Jews all over the world, filled with a holy joy, selling their houses, winding up their businesses, liquidating their capital, to come to Palestine and find there the equivalent of what they were leaving behind them. That mountainous wave which was to shake the Jewish world to its depths and bring all Israel by an irresistible impulse to Judea, that wave did not come. Not a Jew from Germany, Italy, France, England or America, not one of those Jews who, according to rumor, were horrified at the thought of absorption by foreign nations, not one of those Jews has left his adopted country to conquer Jerusalem. The only people who have come are those who have nothing to lose, Russians, Poles, Roumanians, and even in Russia the enthusiasm has cooled. Before the War, it was really the

only country where life was made difficult for the Jews, but since then there have been many changes, and now in Russia they have the same rights as everybody else. They have even the unhoped-for happiness of having within reach that to which they are so well adapted, a revolution, and a revolution made by themselves and for themselves! Why should they try their social experiments in a poverty-stricken country, when they can exercise their genius in a country full of resources and peopled by a hundred million inhabitants? So many of those who, in other times, would have looked towards Palestine, see now only a poor country where, as Trotsky, a Jew himself, says, short-sighted people are trying to resuscitate a narrow nationalism.

Neither did they get as much money as they had hoped for. Enthusiastic Jews travel all over the world, to awake in Israel both enthusiasm and generosity, but Israel is very unaccountable, it is ardent and skeptical, it is rich and poor, charitable but not deeply generous. They help one another willingly from door to door, from house to house, but

when it comes to helping a great idea so remote, purses and hearts alike are adamant. There is no deep national feeling to make them feel the need of reestablishing a home in Palestine. Year in and year out a French Jew gives about eighteen centimes, an Italian fifty, an English one less than two francs. I do not know what the sum is in America, but in spite of the great sums given there, one must not have any illusions, for when one thinks that there is a population of four million Jews, the contributions per head are really very small. In spite of oneself, one cannot help thinking that this attempt to transplant all the Jews in the world has created much ado about nothing, since it has only succeeded in creating, here and there, those isolated communities of Jews, some of which are already disintegrating.

The most enthusiastic Zionists do not hide their disillusionment, but cannot resign themselves to the belief that, after all, all the Jews of the world are not aflame with the purest love of Zion, so that, instead of attributing the failure of this great enterprise to Israel's

apathy, they throw all the responsibility on British duplicity. How many times have I heard these words: "It is true, our rich co-religionists in Europe and America have not left their comforts and their businesses to come to Jerusalem. We expected they would, but frankly we never counted very much on them. Thank God, we have enough poor devils here to populate a country three or four times as big as Palestine! If they do not come in much greater numbers, the English are to blame. They said to us: 'Here is your country, your national home. Enter, it is yours.' Then, when we came, instead of opening the country freely to us, they shut the door in our faces and let in just enough of us to save theirs. About a thousand a month, at the most, are allowed in. That's too few to do anything, but it is enough to make the Arabs hate us; to give the English a good reason to occupy a country where everybody would be at everybody else's throat, if they were not there to police it. Do you know the Jewish story? A Jew arrives at an inn, the hostess asks him: 'What

do you want?'—'Well,' he says, 'a breaded chop with potatoes.'—'I have no chops.'—'Well, then, give me an omelet.'—'An omelet? I have no eggs.'—'Give me a herring.'—'With an onion and some tea, you can't die of hunger.' 'Oh, you Jews, you want everything, don't you?'—That's our story in Palestine. What is this *national home* that the English have given us? Not even a dried herring! With these two words, they have excited our imagination, only too ready to see the future in rosy colors, to the point of delirium. The word *national* fed our eternal illusions, it seemed to give us a country, and the word *home* was put there to reassure the Arabs. To them they said: 'A home is not a state. What does it matter if the Jews found a home in Palestine?' We see to-day that we have been the dupes of the English and that under the cover of the righting of a wrong two thousand years old, they settled here to protect India and Egypt. But what will become of us? Is it not an illusion to bury work and money in a country which probably never will be ours, and to use all

our energy creating in Palestine a garden for the Arabs and a military barrier for the British Empire?"

Whether it is due to Israel's indifference or to the fear that its sacrifices will not aid towards a Jewish State which appears more and more problematical, the fact is, there is no money. The thirty thousand Jews who have landed at Jaffa since the Balfour Declaration find it hard to live. Each boat which arrives with its contingent of emigrants is a danger for the others and tends to destroy the frail equilibrium which has been established. In the first days of enthusiasm, they went up to one another asking: "Have you got work?" To-day, the question is, and it is asked ironically and sadly: "Have you got a passport?" A passport for a country more favorable to the success of the Jews than sad Judea. A lot of them have left and among those that remain, I wonder how many I would find, if I went back there in ten years?

THE SON OF JUDEA

CHAPTER VIII

THE SON OF JUDEA

But the Jews in Jerusalem have accomplished a miracle. Hebrew is spoken everywhere, in the streets, in the schools, on the roads, in the colonies, in the offices, in the shops. It is really miraculous, for the old language of the Bible had been dead for two thousand years, as dead as the Jews sleeping under the stones in the valley of Josaphat. It was the language of prayer and of the Holy Scriptures. All the children learned how to read it from infancy, but no schoolmaster would have thought of trying to teach his pupils to understand what they were reciting. What was the use of wasting time on such futilities! The most important thing was for the child to know, as quickly as possible, a chapter of the Bible by rote. The schoolmaster himself, who could have recited without hesitation, from beginning to end,

the whole of the Thora, very often did not know its meaning. It was not the least extraordinary feature of the extraordinary ghettos to hear, at all moments of the day, in the houses or in the synagogues, for the prayers and for the innumerable blessings, by which all their life is ordered, those Hebraic words which nobody understood.

I saw the first man to bring this dead language out of the books, back to ordinary use, some weeks before his death. His Russian name was Eliezer Lazarovitch Elianow; his Hebrew name, Ben Yehouda, that is to say, Son of Judea. Here is the story of his life as he told it to me, himself,—one of those strange Jewish existences of which long periods seem to have belonged to other epochs; a daily miracle of enthusiasm and poverty, which through a thousand obstacles and vicissitudes has realized what appeared to be at first an impossibility.

His childhood was spent in a Lithuanian ghetto and up to his fifteenth year he led

the existence usual for the students of the Talmud forty years ago in those small Jewish universities called Yeshiva. Imagine, in an isolated village, a house with a thatched roof and there, grouped around some famous Rabbi, twenty young men dressed in caftans, with round hats and long curls falling on their faces, discussing all day long a point of the Talmud. Very often the text itself was quite clear, but is there a clear text for a Hebrew mind? Reb Hillel said, for example: "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also likewise to them." It looks simple, but it is evident that Reb Hillel wanted to say something else, because if that was all he meant to say, where was his genius? And Isaiah, the prophet of storms, could he have said things that you and I could understand immediately? Would God have poured into his soul all the floods of Heaven and earth to get out of his lips a small spring of pure water? Those Rabbis were able to make the most ordinary sayings incomprehensible.

They made everything difficult and they always saw about ten different meanings in a sentence, which obviously could have only one. They called to their rescue the host of commentators who, for centuries, had worked hard to solve that question; they were accustomed to refuting one another and in the end, they, in turn, raised a magnificent edifice, a sublime tower of David, a brilliant new solution which was interesting to them, only because it was absolutely different from any they had considered previously. During the lesson, any of the pupils had the right to stop the Rabbi, to point out some weak point in his logic. They all crowded about him, shouting in his ears in a frightful confusion, for all they cared about was showing off. They all answered together and in that small space, covered with mouldy straw, which had become the rendezvous of those extraordinary chatterers, those inimitable debaters, who for ages have been seeking light in the darkness and sunshine during the rainy weather, who among them thought about hunger and cold?

Who would think about it, under that thatch through which the night snow leaked as it melted in the winter sun and fell in icy drops on their delirious enthusiasm?

In those villages of Yeshiva it was an ancient custom and almost a duty for the Jews to give hospitality to the students of the Talmud. Each student took his midday meal in the same house, sometimes for a week, a month or six weeks and sometimes each day at a different one. This was called *making a day,* or simply *a day.* But *a day* was only lunch and the evening's dry bread was earned in a very peculiar manner. Each Friday the students left their school early to go begging in the neighboring villages. Each had his district, his begging territory which he visited every week from dawn to sunset on Fridays. He brought back from his journey enough to buy his evening bread for the week and in order to avoid being tempted by fresh bread and not to eat too much during the first days, they took good care to make seven

lines on the crust with chalk, a line for each day.

When Easter came they all went away for about three weeks. Why? To beg, of course. Always to beg. To find enough to buy some shirts, shoes, a caftan and books. They always chose to go to the poor synagogues frequented by a few Jews, where the only furnishings were four or five unsteady benches, a barrel for ablutions, a tin candlestick and against the wall, the cupboard of the Thora. They made the unleavened bread, their voices for singing the joyful hymns were better than those of the ordinary cantor and they preached sermons listened to with pleasure by poor peasants not *blasé* about eloquence. Then they went back to the shelter of the thatch roof and their discussions began again about the inexhaustible text.

The students and their Rabbis were the only ones in the ghetto who knew Hebrew. But as all the commentaries on the Biblical text were made in Yiddish and it would have been sacrilegious to use the sacred language

even for religious teaching, it was a great scandal, when here and there, in the ghetto, young men well thought of in the Yeshiva, began to take an interest in the old Hebraic language for its own sake, learning its grammar, appreciating its beauty and finally in their audacity going as far as to use it for ordinary purposes. The Jew Mendelsohn had outraged every decency in translating into German the five books of Moses. As if it were possible to take away from the Law the sound that God gave it, without changing and debasing it! A sin that was greater still was to use in an ordinary manner the words used by the Lord, those words that His mouth had uttered, to make them fit things that the Lord of the Jews was not interested in. The old ghetto was getting worried, it called all those young men *Epicureans,* making this word mean all that poor humanity can conceive in the way of vanity, sin and malice. The old ghetto was partly right. This indiscreet curiosity and this unheard-of carelessness about abstract words were the tremors, the

first signs of a desire for foreign knowledge, of an aspiration, vague as yet, to escape from the old discipline and the traditional science centered altogether around the commentaries of the Law. Through a very strange meeting the taste for this language—asleep for two thousand years—and the taste for new thoughts were suddenly associated and grew together as natural allies. Some small newspapers written in Hebrew which circulated under the caftan, began to spread unknown venoms in far-away communities. One day, a day not to be forgotten, a novel, the first to be translated into Hebrew, "The Mysteries of Paris," suddenly brought to the notice of austere Jewish life the great prestige of Western civilization!

Eliezer Lazarovitch, who was short and slight, with a yellow complexion, already the prey of tuberculosis, was preaching one day in a synagogue to some Jews gathered around the almemar. They all wore their greasy caftans, their fur caps, their beards and their

curls. A stranger who did not wear the gabardine, a Moscow merchant, on business in the village, carried away by the eloquence of the student, went up to him and offered to take him into his house and to pay for his education. He was one of those Jews who admire Western culture and think they are doing a worthy deed by rescuing from the ghetto a promising boy to give him Russian schooling.

In Moscow, Eliezer went to the Lycée. In the evenings, after dinner, he gave Hebrew lessons to Deborah, the eldest daughter of the merchant, who was about his own age. That went on for three or four years. One day (it was in the spring of 1877) the merchant, coming home, brought the news that the Russians were going to fight the Turks in order to help the Bulgarians. The whole family was in favor of Turkey, but Eliezer surprised them all by being violently in favor of the Russians. "They are right to help their brothers! We Jews never do that, that is why we remain weak and scattered all over

the universe!" Everybody laughed at him except Deborah. From that moment, the other children made his life so unbearable that he decided to go away. He confided only in Deborah. She gave him some rubles she had saved, then, when he crossed the threshold for the last time, she put her hand over his head, blessing him and saying good-by: "God bless you, Eliezer, I'll come to you whenever you call for me."

He went on foot most of the time, stopping at Warsaw, Lemberg and Berlin just long enough to earn some money by giving Hebrew lessons. It took him a year to reach Paris. One day, in a barn, during this long journey, his mission became plain to him with a forcefulness that ideas often have in Jewish minds where a Messianic dream lies dormant. He would raise the old Hebraic words from the dead, make Hebrew a living language, he would discard along with the gabardine and the fur cap, the awful Yiddish, that jargon for second-hand dealers, made up of odds and ends, a dialect only fit for slaves.

He would use the ancient language of the Kings, the Prophets and the Judges and by so doing, unite Israel again! . . . Every thing seemed clear and simple to him, the straw of the barn was shining and in commemoration of his resolution which was to create a new life, in this poor barn without any wise men, a Virgin or a star, he christened himself, Ben Yehouda, son of Judea.

In Paris he found himself penniless. Then a mysterious Pole appeared in his life, an émigré of '48, who was dreaming of reviving Poland as Ben Yehouda was dreaming of reviving Judea. The Pole had taken a fancy to this funny little Jew who dreamt the same dream. Indeed they were as much alike in their dreams as in their poverty. The clever Pole knew Paris thoroughly and in moments of distress he always found a place to which they could invite themselves, and if no food could be found, it was always easy to find another kind of food, an ideal kind, in the lecture rooms of the Collége de France, or in the Chamber of Deputies, where the two

friends would lunch on a speech of Gambetta.

It was no diet, of course, for a man with tuberculosis. Ben Yehouda became ill, he had to leave Paris for a warmer climate. Where did the money come from for their journey? The Pole looked after that. One fine day they both arrived in Algiers. Algiers, Tunis, Carthage! On the top of the hill where Dido settled at the head of a colony of Phenicians from Tyre, the Son of Judea dreamt to his heart's content of the greatness and spirit of enterprise of his Semite ancestors. He was thinking of going to Palestine, where the editor of the *Rose of Sharon,* a small weekly published in Hebrew, was offering him a fortune, a salary of twenty francs a month. Should he answer the call of Judea and seize this golden opportunity? His heart was for it, but the Pole was uneasy about the life of poverty which Ben Yehouda would find in Palestine and persuaded him to ask first the advice of the man Ben Yehouda admired more than anybody else in the world,

without ever having seen him, Smolensky, the novelist of the ghetto.

I am sorry that I do not know Hebrew. I have only read fragments, translated pages of Smolensky's famous novel, "A Wanderer Through Life's Byways." They have stayed in my memory like the rays of light Rembrandt suddenly projects into the shadows of a synagogue. Such clear-sighted glimpses of Jewish life! The page finished, one is sorry to be in darkness once more, unable to accompany the hero whom he takes from adventure to adventure through the unsuspected misery and grandeur of the ghetto! He had himself been an *Epicurean,* and it is his own story that he tells all the time, the story of the poor intellectual, who, in the great disruption of ancient Jewish life in the midst of the deepest poverty, looks for a plank to cling to. He fled from the ghetto, exasperated by its fanaticism, and wandered about Europe, but the Occident failed him and he discovered at last that the truth for a Jew ex-

ists only in Judaism and the Messianic ideal. But what is the Messiah like? The old Jews of the synagogue still see him as a divine being enveloped in superstition and legend, who will appear some day mounted on a white horse, to bring Israel back to its home, to see that justice is done. To the Wanderer who had found the Way, the Messianic idea was not an empty dream nor the still unfulfilled hope of Heaven coming to the rescue. It was an immediately realizable hope for the moral and political resurrection of Israel, which would become concrete as soon as the Jews again became aware of their national unity, through studying their language, their religion and their social traditions.

Ben Yehouda found Smolensky in the miserable room where he himself was printing with a hand press his review, *Haschabar* (*Dawn*), which gave such great hopes to the unsatisfied in the ghetto. He kissed him and told him of his plan of going to Palestine. "You are mad!" cried Smolensky, "you will be devoured there by lunatics and big-

ots!" He offered to keep him as a collaborator to *Dawn*. That had been the Pole's hope. But a door opened, Deborah appeared! She had also left her father's roof and she was ready to follow him to the end of the world, that is to say, Jerusalem. They exchanged the marriage rings at once. Then the three of them, the Son of Judea, Deborah and the Pole, who could not reconcile himself to parting from his companion, took a boat down the Danube on their way to the City of Zion!

The Gates of Iron between Belgrade and Orsova have seen many people pass, but they have never seen any as romantic as these three. In that journey on the river which seems destined by nature to witness solemn vows, Ben Yehouda declared solemnly to his wife that from that moment he would speak nothing but Hebrew to her. Although Deborah knew only the few words he had taught her, from that time on they always exchanged their thoughts in that forgotten language, which had been lost for centuries. In fact, they were the only ones in the whole universe

speaking it. They embarked on the Black Sea. The crossing lasted twenty days, then they traveled for twelve hours on donkeys through sterile mountains full of marvelous associations. Suddenly through the dust which is always being blown about by the wind in Palestine they saw the City of Eternal Hope, with its indented walls, placed on a stony plateau like a crown, but alas! only a crown of thorns.

At that time, there were in Jerusalem about twenty thousand Jews, crowded in a small space, between the center of the town, the Mohammedan bazaars and the garden of the Armenian convent. It was an extraordinary population, unlike any other in the world, consisting chiefly of those old men who came from everywhere, from Russia, Roumania, Poland, to await the hour of their sleep in the valley of Josaphat. Having gone in an apotheosis, amid the cheers and the good wishes of their assembled neighbors, they found upon their arrival the eternal ghetto, much more than that, their native one, be-

cause they gathered together according to the place, the town or the village from which they came. Here those who came from Hungary, Germany, Russia, Poland, Roumania, Austria, Caucasus and from Bokhara. There those who came from Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Yemen, Salonica, Smyrna or Bagdad. They were all small ghettos, all different and yet they made two big families: the Jews from the North and the Jews from the South. Those from the North, the Ashkenazim, with subtle and quick minds well versed in the Talmud and the Law, very fanatical, untidy in their appearance, spoke Yiddish; those from the Mediterranean, the Sephardim, less learned, less intellectual, more careful of their appearance, with better manners and with less fanaticism, spoke the Spanish patois that the Jews banished from Spain in Isabella's time had brought with them. The Ashkenazim and the Sephardim lived quite apart. They did not pray together, they did not intermarry and they would never eat with each other, because they could not agree about the

way of killing chickens. . . . As soon as they arrived, all sought their own people and they were happy to see relations, friends, to find the life they thought they had left behind them, the same dirt, the same poverty which had eternally dogged their steps. But it is sweet to find under foreign skies the customs and the kind of people that one had expected to leave behind for ever. The most remarkable thing was that those old men who had come there to die found miraculously a renewal of their youth! Did the air of Jerusalem awake in them something of the Patriarch's strength? or must one believe the proverb which says that long prayers preserve life? In order to please Jehovah, who hates widowhood, many married, after a short stay, girls of fourteen or fifteen. And the Lord be praised, they had a posterity which added to the Lord's pride and to the poverty of the town.

What enabled all these people to live was *the Holy Halouka*, a fantastic institution which, like everything else, is not a new de-

parture in Jerusalem. When Cyrus allowed the Jews of Babylon to go back to Palestine the same thing happened as has happened today. Very few Jews accepted the favor extended to them. Exile is not always unprofitable. On the banks of the Euphrates the captive Jews had not wasted time lamenting under the willows; most of the exiles had done very well in their businesses and they had no desire to leave them to go back to Jerusalem. The only ones who went back were the unsuccessful ones, but the rich Jews of Babylon acquired the habit of sending every year to their poor coreligionists a sum of money to be divided among them. It was called the *Halouka,* and the custom has been kept up. In all communities of Eastern Europe a tax is raised for the support of the pious people who live in Jerusalem. Each house has its savings-box where, on every occasion—happy or unhappy—a coin is thrown in for the wailers at the Wall. Once a year, alms-gatherers come from Palestine to get the tax, to empty the precious savings-boxes, bringing in ex-

change some of the earth of Judea; a thread that has gone round Rachel's Tomb, or the promise of a place in the Temple when rebuilt.

These alms are not enough to enable the beggars of Jerusalem to live, but, at least, it prevents their dying. They each get very little of it. The journey to the Holy City is long and a good deal of the money gets lost on the way. For example, in Russia the considerable sums given by Jewish charity were first gathered by the Rabbi of Berditchev, who passed them on to the Rabbi of Zadagora. Those two personages, two distinguished Rabbis, each had a retinue and lived on a grand scale. On Saturday, the day of the ritual banquets, they always had a hundred, sometimes two or three hundred guests at their table. It was only natural that they should keep some of the money that went through their hands. Was it not God's will? Their secretaries were not rich either and who would believe that the gatherers lived on nothing? When, at last, the

money reached the City of Zion, it could not be divided equally among everybody. There are ranks and castes even among beggars, there are noble beggars and common ones. Could the grandson of a distinguished Rabbi be treated in the same way as a man who was a shoemaker in his village?

In Jerusalem, luckily, they have always known the secret of how to live on nothing! Except on Saturdays very few people in the Lord's city ever ate their fill. If everybody had tried to, what would have happened? Jerusalem's ghetto would have disappeared a long time ago from the Lord's presence! In their poverty, they helped one another. Each one knew his neighbor's poverty as well as his own, they lent to one another a saucepan of coal, a measure of flour, a little oil or a little sugar, money, if there was any, and everything was lent without receipt. Charity was obligatory among those beggars. If a hand were held out to them, they had to give and to give something else besides a blessing! But what is one to give when one has

nothing? Is there another country in the world where there exists such a touching and bizarre thing as beggars' money for beggars? So that it could not be said that in the City of the Lord a Jew had asked in vain from another Jew; they had invented a money: small squares of tin, worth about the tenth of a half-penny, with which they could be generous.

The eternal lamentation dominated this pious poverty. It is no exaggeration to say that in Jerusalem, each day was a day of mourning. The spring and the summer especially! For in those seasons favorable to military expeditions, the city suffered from many terrible disasters and the commemoration of those ancient calamities made the pleasantest seasons the saddest part of the year. Between Easter and Pentecost, they were in half-mourning, in remembrance of the twenty-four thousand pupils of Reb Akida massacred by the Romans. After the seventeenth day of Tammuz, another period of three weeks' mourning, till Tische Beav.

Then, a great lamentation in memory of the destruction of the Temple by Titus. A month before Rosh Hashana, a new explosion of sorrow which gathered strength as the terrible days of Yom Kippur approached. In the middle of the night the shofar was heard and the voice of the Shames shouting, awoke everybody from their slumbers: "Awake, now is the hour. Go and worship the Lord!" In slippers, as it is written, and with a lantern in their hands, the moribund old men went through the narrow streets where Arab urchins had scattered ground glass. At the foot of the Wall or in the synagogues, they could be heard uttering the secular lamentation: "My heart groaneth when I see every town proudly built on its hill and the city of God lowered into the abyss! . . ."

There was no more washing, no more cutting of hair, no giving in marriage, only a continual fasting. At least it was good for the slender resources of the ghetto. Every place outside the walls seemed to the Jews to

be full of ambushes and dangers, just as if Titus' army were still encamping outside the gates of the city. During that period of mourning Jerusalem consisted only of the Wall of Wailing and the vast burial ground, which covers the hill, on the other side of Kedron, with its tombs where the Jews found their eternal rest after having prayed there all their lives. They never went outside the walls except on Saturday, the day of the dead, to go and pray among the tombs. There was once an old, blind man, who almost every day had his son take him far away into the country, telling him as they went: "Four steps more, my child, on our Ancestors' ground, thus we shall please God!" He was, of course, thought to be eccentric.

In the town itself they seldom left the beloved quarter of the synagogues and their blue-painted houses. Why should they go to the impure quarters? What could they see there? Nothing very agreeable! Maybe Mohammedans, who up there, on the sacred Esplanade, walked over the ground of the

Holy of Holies, poisoning with their prayers the place of David's sacrifices, or maybe Christians who made a god of the greatest traitor among the Jews.

From time to time, some great Israelite millionaires and philanthropists came there, and the fanaticism and poverty touched their hearts. With the pride of the Western Jew, who does not pray or prays unostentatiously, who washes and knows how to eat properly, they were ashamed of this Jewry living in its pious abjection, like Job on his manure-heap, and wondered how the life of the ghetto could be transformed and how those professional beggars and lamentators could be made into ordinary, decent people. One of them opened a school; another imported weaving-machines from England at enormous expense, with a German engineer to show them how to use them; another brought water to the town and built better houses outside the walls; another thought he could cause the old antagonism between Ashkenazim and Sephardim to disappear by giving them five pounds of sterling

each time they intermarried. In spite of the five pounds, Ashkenazim and Sephardim did not marry; the weaving-machines were left unassembled, their parts lying around in the dust; nobody left the ghetto to live outside the walls and as soon as a school was opened, the shofar was sounded, anathema was uttered against the director, the teachers and the parents, who would send their children to it. The utensils used for washing corpses and the stretchers for the dead were brought and laid outside the school.

Ben Yehouda arrived in this old ruin with his new madness. He wanted to teach a new tongue to people who hated each other, because they could not agree about the manner of cleaning chickens; and people who loved their Yiddish and their Spanish as the dialects of their beloved pasts, he wanted to unite by a superior conception of the Messiah! What indignation, what scandal this sickly-looking Jew created! He never spoke anything but Hebrew everywhere he went and

no matter to whom he talked. They called him a lunatic, children ran after him in the streets, and in the synagogue there was always a furious fanatic ready to assemble the faithful to the sound of the shofar and heap curses on this impious person who degraded the sacred tongue by using it in ordinary speech.

He remained unperturbed, saying his prayers, his forehead hidden by the tallith, doing everything that pious people did. He went out in the street with his head covered by the black-and-white scarf worn by the real devotees. It is true that after having lived a long time with a Catholic Pole and after having listened entranced to Gambetta, Jules Ferry and Clemenceau, one can't believe in much. This Son of Judea believed only in the miracle that words would make the Hebrews a nation again. When they drove him out of one synagogue, he went to another. Repulsed by the Ashkenazim, he went to the Sephardim, then he abandoned altogether the

tallith and the phylacteries and gave up going to the synagogues.

Poverty reigned at home. Twenty francs a month to live on was very little even in Jerusalem where a chicken could be bought at that time for four sous. Poor Deborah, accustomed to the ease of a well-to-do family in Moscow, found herself suddenly plunged into the hardest kind of Jewish life. And things went rather badly with the Pole. When he arrived, he stayed at a small hotel near the Tower of David. What happened? Did he fall in love with Deborah or was he jealous because he was not any more the only one to watch over Eliezer, or could he not bear life any longer in this town of madmen? One morning Ben Yehouda, going to see him as he did every day found no one at home. The enigmatic Pole had gone the day before, leaving no address, and to this day no one knows what became of him. Ben Yehouda's friend had disappeared, soon his money would disappear too. The editor of *The Rose of Sharon* could not keep this madman, who was

ruining his paper, very much longer. He discharged him. In this town to which the Son of Judea had come in order to resurrect a lost language, and among these people who remained as deaf to his voice as the dead of the Kedron valley, there remained only one man interested in him, who would speak to him without cursing him. His name was Pines. He was a Lithuanian, a well-read man himself who after long stays in France and Germany had come lately to settle in Palestine. He had written in Hebrew a work famous among the intellectuals of the ghetto, "The Children of My Mind," in which he defended traditional Judaism, and on that point he did not resemble the unbeliever, Ben Yehouda, but he found pleasure in discussions with him in the desert of Judea.

"You are wrong," he said, "to rebel against all the people here. The practices and rites which excite your indignation are as necessary to us as a wick to a candle. How do you think Israel can continue to exist if it

gives up its beliefs? A people who own their own country can live without religion, but our scattered people have only their adherence to their faith to unite them. I love the Hebrew language as much as you do, but do not make it an instrument for our own destruction. Don't let us give up our souls for the pleasure of enjoying the ancient Hebrew words. Don't let us deprive them of all the precious meanings which make our greatness. The Hebrew you want us to speak would be a language a hundred times more dead than it is to-day, if when we use it constantly it expresses no longer the thoughts and feelings it has carried throughout the world."

Ben Yehouda told his friend that for him the religious spirit was not the whole of Israel, but the passing form of a supple and varied genius only waiting to express itself with a new force till it had found its own language and its own country again. Between these two men with such different thoughts but with the same ideals that had brought them both to Jerusalem, the discus-

sion went on interminably, just as formerly they had argued ceaselessly in the Yeshivas of Lithuania.

Deborah was going to be a mother and good old Pines used to tell her when he found her alone: "Deborah, as you are going to have a child, try to persuade your husband to let him learn a living language so that he won't be an idiot!" But the fanatic used to answer: "Let him be an idiot! We'll have another child! He shall speak Hebrew!" The child was born, a boy, and he had to be circumcised. Pines got a Sephardim Rabbi to perform the operation, no Ashkenazim would have agreed to do it. When, in accordance with the rites, the Rabbi asked: "What name do you wish to give to your son?" Ben Yehouda did not give one of those good old Jewish names which, all through life, bring luck to those who bear them, Abraham, Jacob or Moses. Thinking of the new race which would spring some day from the old Hebraic tree, through the mysterious vir-

tue of the beloved language born again, he invented a name which had never before been heard in a synagogue: "Ithamar, that is to say, Trunk of a Palm-Tree!" The godfather nearly let the child drop from his arms!

Three years went by and it seemed as if Jehovah Himself wanted to show His anger, for the three-year-old Ithamar had not uttered a word, neither in Hebrew nor in any other language. Wise Pines used to say: "Do speak to him in some other language but Hebrew and maybe he will answer." One day when Deborah was telling Pines her sorrows and her fear that the Lord was trying to chastise her husband because of his audacious sacrileges by giving them a mute son, a billy-goat went near the child. Ithamar, frightened, ran to his mother at once shouting in perfect Hebrew: "Mamma! Mamma!" Blessed goat of Israel! It was the first Hebrew word uttered by a child for centuries, as a word of his mother tongue. This word being "mamma," how could one help seeing a symbol in it!

Five children followed the first. These births and tuberculosis wore out Deborah. Ben Yehouda was still fighting his co-religionists. In his small paper, *Glory,* he was attacking *the Holy Halouka,* shaming the people of the ghetto because they lived by begging. It was the breaking-point. The madman could talk Hebrew with his family if he liked, but to attack the charity which enabled everybody to live! To represent the pious people of the Wall, the wailers of the Holy City, as lazy and unworthy of Israel's bounties! All the shofars sounded. In the great mosque of Ashkenazim Jews, candles wrapped in black cloth were lighted and the antique formula of excommunication was pronounced against this impious one, this scorner of sacred usages. "Let Ben Yehouda be excommunicated according to the judgment of the Lord God in the two tribunals, the higher one and the lower! Let calamities fall upon him! May his house be inhabited by dragons! May his star be hidden by clouds and may it be full of anger and fury

against him! Let his body be thrown to the serpents, his gold and his silver taken away from him. Let his wife be given to others and let others lie with her! May he be cursed through the mouths of Addirion and Achtariel, Gabriel and Seraphie, Raphael and Mecharetiel! May he fall and never rise again! Let him not be buried in Israel's burying-ground! Let this excommunication rest upon him and his descendants! But let all Israel be blessed with the peace and blessings of the Lord!" At the end of the ceremony the candles were put out to show that the accursed was henceforth excluded from the light of Heaven.

The next day, the excommunicated one wrote in *Glory* an article beginning in this way: "I am dead, but I still live!" His wife threw herself at his feet, she felt death coming. "Eliezer, please go and ask pardon, because if you die you will be buried like a donkey and so shall the children and myself!" Once more Pines intervened. He obtained from the Sephardim, who are a little more

open-minded, the concession that no anathema should be pronounced against Ben Yehouda in their synagogue and this concession made the last days of Deborah a little happier. She saw death coming and she was asking herself in anguish what would happen to her husband and her five children in the midst of so much hatred when she was dead. Then she had an idea, one of those ideas that can come only to one in the depths of misery, when there is nothing near to rely upon. Deborah wrote to her mother to come from Moscow. She came and was astonished to discover the poverty that Deborah had managed to hide from her and to find her daughter dying. That was not all, for, as a supreme consolation, Deborah asked that her sister should leave the family to come to Jerusalem and marry her husband, the tubercular, the accursed, to lead the kind of life which had brought her, Deborah, to an early grave.

Her burial was a tragic affair, for except for the devoted Pines, nobody followed the coffin of the woman who spoke only Hebrew!

On Mount Zion, at the turn of the road one follows to go down to the valley of Josaphat, the place from where one can see the Mount of Olives, an Ashkenazim mob which had gathered there shouted that they would not allow the body to proceed further, to pollute the holy burial ground of their dead. They threw stones! Was poor Deborah going to have a donkey's funeral, after all, as she had feared? The frightened pallbearers let their burden fall, and Ben Yehouda thought for an instant that he would have to retrace his steps and bury his dead in his own ground. But some pitying Sephardim took up the coffin and Pines calmed down the infuriated mob. They stopped stoning the coffin and the cortège was allowed to proceed to the valley of Kedron. Under the burning sun, amid the innumerable tombs, they went up the hill and Deborah was buried in the last grave, in a very remote corner, and on her tombstone the Son of Judea placed the following words which expressed his love and his hope which did not yield even to

death: "To Deborah, the first mother of the newly reborn Jewish people!"

Some months later, in Constantinople, Ben Yehouda married Deborah's sister. He came back with her to Palestine and his miseries began all over again. On the anniversary of the Maccabees, he wrote an article full of enthusiastic nationalism; in the name of the glorious martyrs he asked that the Ancestral Land be given back to its rightful owners, the Jews. This wish left the old Jews of the ghetto absolutely indifferent; they were satisfied with the Wall as long as they were allowed to wail there, but they saw in that article a chance of getting rid of a man who offended them daily. They denounced him to the Turks. It is not the first time that the Jews of the synagogue have turned to Pontius Pilate. . . . Ben Yehouda was condemned to fifteen years' hard labor. Two policemen entered the room on the very day his wife was having her first child and took him to prison. He appealed, but in order to

be allowed out while waiting for the sentence, he had to secure bail for two hundred pounds. Where was he to find anybody who would put up two hundred pounds? Twice already the clerk of the court had asked: "Who will go bail for Ben Yehouda?" without any answer, when a pilgrim from Morocco, who happened by chance to be there, declared that he would go bail for him. He did it out of pity, as he had never heard of Ben Yehouda before. Just then the rain that had been expected for three months began to fall, and superstitious people, who in the bottom of their hearts were sorry to have betrayed a member of their race to the Turks, attributed this favor from Heaven to his deliverance.

Blessed rain! All that happened at the time when Theodore Herzl was sowing in the world the idea that one could bring back Israel's unity through political means, that unity which the Son of Judea was trying to bring about by restoring the Hebrew language and the Hebrew genius. The two

movements were akin to each other. The new Jewish people needed a language. Would they be mad enough to give preference to English, French or German, slighting Hebrew? It was the same problem that they had already faced when choosing a country. Herzl would have accepted English as he accepted Uganda because he had never really belonged to the ghetto. The people who followed him were more deeply imbued with Jewish feeling and loved the language and the country of their ancestors equally. To them, the Son of Judea, the madman of Jerusalem, who was the first to speak only Hebrew with his family, became a hero, the hero of the resurrection of Israel. They thought with gratitude of this man who, through the worst tribulations, went on with his immense undertaking to write a dictionary of the Hebraic language—not a tomb of words, but a building full of life, to house all the modern ideas, feelings and other things unknown in ancient times.

The old Jews of Jerusalem went on turn-

ing away with the same horror as before from the schools founded outside the walls by philanthropists from the Occident, but the people who arrived in Palestine as the forerunners of the scattered people sent their children there. The most important one had been founded a long time before by the Universal Jewish Alliance and the teaching was given there in French. In order to harm this school, the Germans, in their turn, opened a school and in order to draw pupils they announced that all the teaching would be done in Hebrew, but when success followed they changed their tactics, gave only one or two hours a week to Hebrew and replaced it by German. Then there was a revolt, the first revolt in Jerusalem since Bar-Kochba and Reb-Akida. It was a children's revolt. Boys and girls destroyed their copy-books and their books and left the school in a riot, and as this took place on the day of the Maccabees, the rebellious schoolgirls brought to Ben Yehouda a beautiful seven-branched candlestick

with its candles lighted, while outside the boys sang Israel's song of hope.

After this *coup d'état,* a very limited number of pupils went back to the Germans. With the National Fund, purely Hebraic schools were opened. They have multiplied since Balfour's Declaration. In the same Palestine where, forty years ago, the Son of Judea, poor and tubercular, arrived full of enthusiasm with the faithful Deborah and the unfaithful Pole, everybody to-day speaks Hebrew except the old men of the ghetto. It is the official language of the country, together with Arabic and English. The first gesture of the Zionists on the Ancestral Land was to put up a symbol to this resurrection of the Jewish mind and the Jewish language. Up there on the Mount of Olives overlooking the valley of Josaphat, the Mosque of Omar, the Holy Sepulcher and all Jerusalem, they have laid twelve stones—one for each tribe of Israel—the twelve foundation-stones of the First Hebrew University.

Ben Yehouda died recently. The death of

a poor tubercular Jew in Jerusalem and his burial in the Kedron valley was an event which created no stir in the world. The newspaper that brought me the information said that he was given a magnificent funeral. I accompanied him in imagination along the road followed once by poor Deborah. Did his corpse feel anything when the place was reached where the infuriated Ashkenazim stoned her coffin? What did old Sonnenfeld think when he saw, through the bars of his window, a great crowd behind the Zionist banners escorting to his tomb the accursed one against whom he had so often sounded his shofar? I saw him again, in his room, the small, weak, dying man, surrounded by the files and the indexes of his monumental Dictionary, where every word of Hebrew has its history, or its newly acquired pedigree recorded, Ben Yehouda being very like a chemist who has just found a powerful explosive. What will be the fate of those words raised from the dead? What future is in store for those old servants of Adonai? Will they be

used to clothe in an oriental form the banal thoughts of Western civilization? Or will they be used to teach new truths and shall we see because of them a renewal of the genius of the Prophets? Will they give a voice to the Jews all over the world or will they simply be the means of imprisoning them in a spiritual ghetto, narrower than the old one? Will this new kind of powder, word powder, upset the universe, or will it be only the wet fuse of useless fireworks?

THE STORY OF SARAH

CHAPTER IX

THE STORY OF SARAH

This drama has for its setting the most romantic spot in the world. I went there, one morning, from Haifa, over a road running through a narrow plain lying between the sea and the mountain-range of Mount Carmel. The drive in a carriage lasts one hour. Part of the time a rocky cliff makes a kind of wall along the seacoast and hides the Mediterranean; then one comes upon a breach in the cliff itself, just wide enough for two horsemen. Once through this pass, one is separated from the sea only by a narrow stretch of low and marshy land. There on a rocky peninsula, one can see the remains of one of those Frankish forts, which from Mount Moab down to the Mediterranean, from the Taurus to Mount Sinai, are the remnants of the great defeat which the Occident suffered in these parts. It is the fort of Athlit which is pro-

tected by a small inlet, where the vessels of the Crusaders once found shelter. In Syria, in Tripoli, in Markhab, on Kalaat el Hoson and even on the river Euphrates, I have seen much more awe-inspiring ruins than this Frankish fort that I saw from an aeroplane, so isolated, so forsaken and the name of which I can't even recall. What gives more melancholy grandeur to this ruin of Athlit than to any other castle of the Holy Land is the thought that these lofty ruined walls saw the supreme moment of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The last Frankish knight embarked here after one hundred years of strife carrying away with him the bitterness of wasted effort.

It happened seven centuries ago and since then nothing has happened in this ruin except the falling of stones, the slow disintegration of everything, the smothering of the past under parasitic plants and the trivial events which from birth to death (both included) fill the existence of some Bedouin families camped with their goats and asses in those

parts haunted with memories of the distant past. Nothing, that is, until the story of Sarah.

On the other side of the cliff, just opposite the breach made in the rock, the breach being like the gate of a rampart, a long drive bordered with palm-trees can be seen, very much like those one sees on the *Côte d'Azur* leading to some beautiful house. Palm-trees are rarely seen in Palestine and in the naked plain this beautiful drive, looking as if it belonged to some casino, is quite out of keeping with its surroundings. It leads to a very simple-looking house, some outhouses and an artesian well with its wheel. It is all deserted, abandoned. The impassibility of the ruin of Athlit, its indifference to everything that has happened since its adventure of long ago, is replaced here by a very human sadness, as if it had hardly recovered yet from some terrible blow. The doors, the closed windows, some agricultural implements which are rusting under an outhouse, the well where a pail is still hanging at the end of the

rope, the wheel at the top of its shaft, which begins turning with a slight creaking—there is a strangeness and everywhere there is an uneasy, uncanny silence about that ordinary-looking house at the end of its pretentious drive, the kind of silence that surrounds the events that took place there.

Before the war an agricultural engineer called Aaron Aronsohn lived there. The Aronsohn family belonged to a group of Roumanian Jews who had settled in Palestine about fifty years ago. Their beginnings had been very difficult. A Roumanian company had bought from Samarin two to three hundred acres of land, half of which was plowing-land and the remainder for vineyards and olive-trees. The locality was healthy, about three hundred and sixty feet above sea-level, in a very agreeable spot from where on one side the Mediterranean could be seen, and, on the other, the rich plain which rises slowly to the mountain-range of Mount Carmel. There was room for about twenty families. Sixty arrived, about one hundred and twenty-

five people who soon found themselves stranded, without money, the funds of the company having been just enough to pay for the land and the journey. There was no place where they could house themselves, just a few wooden huts and the greater part of the emigrants had to stay in Haifa in extreme poverty. Some of them, more robust than the rest, settled in Samarin. They were for the most part drivers of coaches, ruined by the building of railways, who had from time to time done some work for landowners, so they had acquired some experience in cultivating the land. Their efforts did not accomplish much and like all the colonists who were settling in Palestine at that time they were on the point of going under when the Baron Edmund de Rothschild came to their rescue. He adopted the people of Samarin as he had adopted many others. From that moment the colony, which had changed its name for the more harmonious one of Zichron-Jacob, Jacob's Remembrance, had led a sheltered and uneventful existence, the peaceful life

of the Rothschild's foundations. To-day, Zichron-Jacob, with its beautiful view, its three thousand acres of land and its comfortable villas, is really an agreeable spot, "a small Switzerland," as the Jews there call it, though, of course, they are as prone to exaggerate as the people of Marseilles.

The Aronsohns were typical of those first emigrants. They led quietly the life of the bourgeois, a thing that always exasperates the modern Jews of Palestine. The head of the family had four children: Aaron and Alexander, Sarah and Rebecca. He never dreamed of making peasants out of his sons and Aaron was sent to France, to the agricultural institute of Montpellier. He came back with his diploma of an engineer. While in Jerusalem Ben Yehouda was fighting to make his race accept Hebrew as their every-day language, Aaron Aronsohm was going round the country studying the fauna and the flora of Palestine, its resources of every kind and the means by which the country could be revived if some day it were given back to its

rightful owners. He was a small man, his face as square as his body, clean-shaven, sunburnt, with untidy red hair falling all over his forehead, very thick-lipped, heavy-jowled, with teeth on which dentists had encrusted a lot of gold, hairy hands, in short, a red bull. He was intellectually energetic, full of confidence in himself, very dogmatic, rather sarcastic and with a natural bent for advertising and bluff. In the course of his travels through the Hauran, he found a plant which he called wild wheat. He thought that by cultivating it the food resources of the world could be enormously increased. He left Palestine at once to introduce his remarkable wheat to all the capitals of Europe. The botanists of Berlin and Paris were not very enthusiastic about his find. He went to America where it is easier to make an impression. There he interested in his plans some Jews who gave him enough money to create in Palestine an experimental farm. That was the origin of the trial-station, the Station, as it was called, the place that I saw in the

plain of Athlit as dead and as desolate as the old Frankish fort.

Some years before the war, a young man of a very different stamp joined him there. He was, like Aronsohn, a Palestinian Jew, born on one of the Baron's colonies. Absalom Feinberg had also gone to France to perfect his education but the resemblance stopped there. He was very unsettled, very much attracted by literature and philosophy, filled with an ardor which had not yet found an outlet. What is truth? On what basis should he build his life? Such were the thoughts which in 1906 filled his mind in the streets of Paris, while he was seeking the Absolute. Catholicism attracted and repelled him at the same time. A Frenchman, a friend of his, used to say to him: "Pray, my dear Absalom, and you'll find God!" He told him this in a garden of a Paris suburb and Feinberg went down on his knees on the gravel and began invoking Christ with the fervor of an Orthodox Greek calling for the Sacred Fire or

any of the Jews at the Wall of Wailing. But after half an hour, God having not revealed Himself, Feinberg stopped praying, his knees ached and he was sadly disillusioned. He dreamt also of going to America and becoming immensely rich so that he could press the power of money into service for his dreams. In the end, he did not become a Catholic, he did not go to America, he simply went back to Palestine. At the Station he became Aaron Aronsohn's secretary and shortly after that he became engaged to the youngest sister, Rebecca. The life he led in that out-of-the-way place, occupied with things so unlike his tastes, must have appeared very miserable to him after all the high hopes he had entertained. Yet, the reason why he should be alive, which he had been seeking in vain in the streets of Paris, was given to him, in that lost corner, at the foot of the wheel of the artesian well, at the end of the drive of palm-trees.

The idea that Palestine should belong to the Jews formed an integral part of Absa-

lom's being, but that idea had hitherto been too dependent upon the chances of international politics to attract and hold his attention. The War changed his point of view. By proclaiming that they were fighting for oppressed nationalities, the Allies seemed to have done away with such unimportant things as political difficulties. Henceforth, it appeared, success did not depend upon the precarious good-will of foreign governments but solely upon Israel's faith and energy. As it was a question of sacrifice and devotion, he gave himself entirely to the cause.

But he could not serve the cause in the solitude of Athlit. Feinberg left the Station, succeeded in reaching Egypt and proposed to the English authorities there that they organize in Palestine a secret service. They agreed and he went back to Athlit. But weeks and months passed while Aaron and he watched in vain from the Station for the English boat which was to communicate with them by means of prearranged signals. Then they both decided to disguise themselves as

Bedouins, to go through the Sinai desert on camels and through the lines to Cairo. They started. The Turks arrested them and they were brought to Djemal, Governor of Syria. Aronsohn, who knew him, took the adventure as a joke and with his usual self-assurance told him that he was just going through the desert in order to investigate certain swarms of locusts which had been brought to his notice. Djemal did not suspect him. This young Turk, hard and suspicious and very intelligent, let himself be imposed upon by the scientific reputation of the agricultural expert. He freed the two friends and shortly after gave Aronsohn permission to go to Germany where he was to pursue his researches.

This journey had been planned to enable them to reestablish communication with Egypt. From Berlin, Aronsohn went to Copenhagen and embarked on a Scandinavian vessel for America. In the North Sea the boat was searched by an English man-of-war. Aronsohn was arrested as a subject of an enemy nation, was taken to London and

there he established his identity, enlisted in the British army and was sent to the Egyptian front.

This odyssey had lasted about seven or eight months. In Athlit, Feinberg was beginning to lose patience and was thinking of trying again his unlucky attempt of the year before. He confided his ambition to Sarah Aronsohn, the elder sister of his fiancée, Rebecca, Rebecca being in London where the War had caught her unawares. Sarah was a woman about thirty years old who had married, in Constantinople, a Bulgarian Jew. She had not been able to get on with this coarse-grained man and had come back to her father and to the colony of Zichron-Jacob where she had always lived. She tried to dissuade Absalom from such an enterprise, reminding him of the dangers of the road he would have to follow, the hanging that would be his fate if he were caught again, pointing out that he was endangering all the Jews in Palestine if the Turks found out that a Jew was conspiring against them and finally talk-

ing of the sorrow of Rebecca if anything should happen to him. Absalom persisted in his idea and, accompanied by a friend, a boy called Lichansky, he started again over the dangerous roads.

They crossed the desert without mishap and were in sight of the British lines when a patrol of Bedouins and Turks signaled to them to stop. Instead of obeying they increased the pace of their mounts. The Turks pursued them, firing the while. Absalom fell, mortally wounded. His companion was struck by three bullets, but was able to remain in the saddle and to reach the first English post. He was carried to Cairo and it was there that Aronsohn who had just arrived found him in a hospital. They agreed on means of communication. As soon as he was on his feet again Lichansky went back to Palestine on an English boat which left him at night in the small bay of Athlit.

Then a terrible life began for Sarah Aronsohn, for now that Absalom was dead, she assumed the responsibility of going on

with his work, securing information and conveying it to the English: "My heart is always trembling," she wrote in a letter I saw, "because we are doing perilous work and are always in danger. It is difficult for me to write about our misfortune (she was thinking of Absalom's death) it is so great and there is no consolation. Our dear one gave his blood, he gave his life for a sacred cause. But the sacrifice is too great, even if we succeed and if Israel's redemption rewards our efforts, even then I won't be consoled. If our friend were alive still and if he had heard that the Allies were ready to give Palestine back to us, how happy he would have been! We have this happiness and it was he who ran all the risks. Here I am, taking part in the work, I am not afraid of danger, I am as hard as iron. Sometimes I feel like an inorganic force, otherwise how could I bear such a sacrifice? I am going on with what our dear one began and I'll have my revenge, a great revenge on both the savages of the wilderness and on the savages of the cities."

Urged by Aronsohn, from time to time the English sent a ship to lie off Athlit. A canoe would leave it at night and land on the beach, at the foot of the ruined fort of the Crusaders. People hiding among the rocks would watch for its arrival to give the sailors the information gathered by Sarah and her companions, but the ship did not always arrive when due. Sarah used to despair: "This is the fifth night," she wrote to her brother, "that our men have gone out and waited till morning without any results. They come back disheartened, irritated, discouraged. To risk one's life is hard enough, but to risk it for nothing is worse. We spend a lot of energy and money to get news and they are not on time. To go to the bay is not easy, for, as you know, it is courting death. The English do not come, they are afraid of risking their men. When they send a canoe they have hardly touched shore when they leave, and yet we expose our men for whole nights. I am miserable when I see them coming back after useless waiting! One fear haunts me, is the

thing worth while? Will our people really receive something in return for the lives we put in jeopardy by helping the English? You know that we expose to danger not only our heads but a lot of others, those of the whole population, in fact. . . ." As her brother had been sending her soap and some toilet accessories, since he knew they had none, she begged him not to do it again. "Our people do not risk their lives for such frivolities. Please send me a revolver."

Time went on. The English army encamped in front of Gaza for months and months without attacking, in spite of Sarah's reports which showed that the Turkish army was completely demoralized and incapable of withstanding the shock of an attack. From day to day, the situation was becoming more and more desperate. Djemal knew that a band of spies was at work in Palestine and in his violent anger when he learned that Aronsohn had abused his confidence threatened all the Jews. So that was the way they acted, those people that Turkey had always made

welcome, who had found shelter with her when they were being massacred elsewhere. And Aaron Aronsohn who had pretended to be his friend, to whom he had given a passport and who had gone over to the English! . . . In the first flush of his anger he wanted to put to the sword all the Jews in the country, just as Titus had done, and he was the kind of man to put his threat into effect if he had not been afraid that he would have the opinion of the whole world against him.

But the Jews, who up to that time had led a peaceful existence, having been able to escape requisitions and military service by giving baksheesh, were now less fortunate. In the towns and in the country, the ancient dread of the pogroms, that they thought had been left behind for ever when they abandoned Russia, reappeared very much more quickly than it had stopped. The Jews knew that the Aronsohns' house was headquarters for the spies and they had a grudge against them because of the risk they made everybody run. Sarah felt the hostility

everywhere around her and she knew that some day she might be betrayed by her own people. Luckily for her, the English were going to attack, but would they do it soon enough? Each day, each hour that went by increased the danger. "Not one second is to be lost," she wrote to her brother. "They must come before September 27th. Who knows whether they will find me alive then? The situation is becoming worse and worse. Our Jews themselves are the cause of my uneasiness. They are all indignant and frightened. It may be possible that they are ready to betray us to Djemal. Please have pity upon us, act quickly, come soon, do not abandon us. . . ."

During this period of agonized waiting the Feast of Succoth arrived. This feast commemorates the period when the Hebrews were wandering in the wilderness before entering the Land of Canaan and is one of the rare occasions on which Israel lets itself be joyful. In those blissful days, sad Jerusalem itself, the city where one hears

only lamentations from one end of the year to the other, forgets its sorrow and takes on an air of something like gayety. Bedouin women bring from the country branches of green oak and cypresses. With sheets and branches they improvise in the yards of the houses huts decorated with paper flowers, lemons, citrons and Jaffa oranges. For a week people stay there, drinking and dancing. On the eighth day of the festival, the day of the Feast of the Law, the reading of the books of Moses in the synagogues reaches the end, the next day they begin reading them again from the beginning. So that the days of Succoth symbolize for the Jews the renewal of life centering around the ancient Prophet who had led his people according to the wishes of God, through all their time of stress, to leave them only on the day when the gates of their new country were opened for them. . . .

In the village of Zichron-Jacob the houses were decorated and according to custom the young people were dancing under the foliage.

What could the thoughts of Sarah have been while she listened to the sounds of the violin? Would the Allied troops decide at last to attack to-day or to-morrow? Was the long wandering of Israel through the wilderness drawing to its close? Just as long ago in the time of Moses, Palestine was given to the ancient Hebrews, would a new Palestine be given to the renascent Hebrew people? Was this feast of Succoth to mark the end of the long exile? Was the sacrifice of Absalom going to have its reward? . . .

Sarah was standing at her door with some young girls, when the violins suddenly stopped. The approach of the Kaimakam of Nazareth and some Turkish troops had been discovered. All the young men disappeared in the orchards, since not one of them had complied with the military regulations. The girls around Sarah were frightened. She alone was quite calm and reassured her friends, yet she knew quite well why the soldiers were coming. In a few seconds the village was surrounded. The Kaimakam dis-

mounted in front of Aronsohn's house. He asked for Lichansky and Sarah answered that he was not there.

The soldiers searched the house and finding no one seized Sarah's father, made him lie on the ground, tied his hands and feet to two guns, forced Sarah and her younger brother Alexander to hold him down and began whipping him. The old man moaned. Then Sarah became afraid, afraid that he might speak. "Father," she said to him, "remember that you have only a few years to live. Die honorably!" The old man answered through his moans: "Faithless one, to speak to me thus!" The next day it was Sarah's turn. For five days, each morning, the soldiers came for her, took her to a house they had commandeered and as she refused to answer their questions, tied her to the door, whipped her, pulled her nails and applied burning bricks to her chest and her feet. Then, through the empty street, they would bring her back to her house to repeat the same proceedings the next day. She was doubt-

less still hoping that an advance of the English army might miraculously save her. But on the sixth day she learned that the Kaimakam had given orders to have her transferred to Nazareth with the other suspects and she abandoned all hope. While she was alone for an instant in her room, she wrote to one of her family:

"If the Turks leave the workmen of the Station at liberty, see that they go on with the work. Let them use the wheat and the barley that we still have and give them thirty francs a month. If they are forbidden to work, give them each fifty francs and let them go. Tell my brothers to avenge me. No pity for those bandits, they have had none for me. I have not the strength to bear my sufferings and the martyrdom they force upon me any longer. I would rather kill myself than let them ill-treat me with their dirty hands. They want to send me to Damascus, where they will certainly hang me. Luckily I have a small revolver, (the one probably that her brother had sent her). I don't want them

to have the use of my body. My sorrow is especially unendurable when they strike my father. But it will be in vain that they'll try all their cruelty upon us. We won't talk. Remember that we died courageously without saying a word. What do our sufferings matter! We have sacrificed ourselves, but we have saved the population and liberated the country. Don't pay any attention to gossips and scandalmongers. I have worked for one thing only: the betterment of my people. Try to go to the mountains as soon as the soldiers are gone. Go to X——, tell him, Kill yourself, don't surrender. Here they are.... I can't write any more."

The Turks were already there. She asked them to let her go for a second to her dressing-room. She shut the door behind her and almost at the same instant a shot was heard followed by the noise of a body falling. The soldiers broke the door. They found her bathed in blood but breathing still. The bullet having entered through her mouth had come out through the neck. The doctor of

the colony, an old friend of the Aronsohns, was called in. Sarah asked him to do nothing, to let her die. The officers who came to see her, struck by her courage, promised not to torment her any more. Her agony lasted three days. Her limbs were paralyzed but her head was clear. Her only fear was lest she might let some name escape in her delirium. She was longing for death, and, when she felt it near, "All right," she said, "now there is nothing more to be feared." On the last day of Succoth, on the day of the Feast of the Law, she left the land of Israel.

Some days later the English army attacked the German and Turkish army, which retreated without any fighting. They entered Jerusalem, they freed the whole of Palestine without firing a single shot. Meanwhile, in Damascus, Lichansky had been hanged. Three of his companions who had been arrested with him profited by the disorder caused by the approach of the Allies to escape to the mountains tied to one another and to the officer who was guarding them.

As for Aaron Aronsohn he also met a

tragic death. A short while after the Armistice had been signed, he returned to London and began traveling frequently between London and Paris to give the Peace Conference the information they needed about Palestine. It was while he was on one of these missions, that he crashed to the ground near Boulogne, in the aeroplane which carried him.

Such is the story of Sarah and her companions. In Palestine they do not talk about it willingly. When I approached that subject I felt a veil between the person I was talking to and myself. Perhaps they have not forgotten the dangers they went through. Danger has always made a strong impression upon the Jews. Perhaps they feel, too, that the Turks who had welcomed them in their distress deserved better treatment, and that over this drama of Athlit there hangs a shadow which, in spite of Absalom's and Sarah's sacrifice, will always prevent it from becoming one of those events which a whole nation, moved by pity and admiration, may incorporate into its tradition.

THE LITTLE GIRL OF THE GHETTO

CHAPTER X

THE LITTLE GIRL OF THE GHETTO

When I went back to Jerusalem the doorman of the convent of Notre Dame de France gave me a card on which was written: "Jacob Birnbaum, once your pupil, salutes you, Monsieur le Professeur. I shall come back to-morrow."

Jacob Birnbaum! That name took me back twenty years to a time when I was a lecturer in the University of Budapest. To tell the truth, explaining La Fontaine or the *"Neveu de Rameau"* to foreign minds is truly an idiotic idea. My students, Hungarians or Jews, were about my age, and we lived as comrades. Very often after the lecture we used to continue our discussion in one of those cafés, very ostentatiously luxurious, where all Central Europeans try to escape from boredom, read the newspapers and gladly merge their individual existences in

the collective one. At the same time, in the great plain, between the Danube and the Tisza, the flocks of sheep and herds of horses stop wandering in the pastures and flock together under the protection of the watch-dogs. In the capital of this pastoral country, the herds of men, urged on by the same deep instinct, avoid the evening solitude by seeking shelter in the cafés, under the protection of their shepherds, the waiters.

Birnbaum, who, before coming to Budapest, had led for some years the beggar's life of a student of a Yeshiva, was a member of the small band which I took with me to continue the work of the University more agreeably, in front of a glass of Pilsener. I had not seen him since that far-distant time but I had often thought about him, because he was the first to reveal to me an extraordinary universe in Jewish life, the picturesqueness and mystery of which captivated my imagination at once. Here, in Jerusalem itself, in the valley of Josaphat, I had often wondered if among all those tombstones there

was one which marked the resting-place of his grandfather, the only one of those innumerable dead of whom I knew something. Jacob Birnbaum had told me so many stories about the astonishing old man, amid the noise of the cymbals and the violins of the Tziganes! During his lifetime he had been one of those old men who study only the Talmud and Zohar, who spend their days and a good part of their nights exploring these far countries of logic and imagination in which so many Jews find happiness. Only once had he left his small village to go to Budapest, and there, for the first time, he had seen something which was not a village; houses with several floors, iron bridges on the river, streets lighted at night, a railway and many other strange sights. Then this untiring reader of the most ancient thoughts, who had spent thousands and thousands of hours upon the fantastic problems discussed for centuries by the Jewry of the Orient, surprised by all those new things and comparing the Christians' activity with his own, had made this

superb comment: "They have been working, too!" But driving at once from his mind the thought of those inventions, useless because they were profane, he had gone back to the Talmud and the Zohar. Then, one day, the longing of all of his race for Palestine had seized him, the ancient desire to die in the Ancestors' Land. In the words of a Hebrew poet, he wished to go and breathe the breath of life in the air of Jerusalem, the perfume of myrrh in its dust and to drink the honey of its waters. He left everything, his room, his small table, the synagogue to which he had gone every day for sixty years, his daughter, his son-in-law and his grandchildren. For more than a year they had no news from him. What was the use of writing a letter? What was there to tell? What could he say that would not be superfluous? Could a man like him find time to waste on such unimportant cares, the time when he was busy praying for all the Jews? . . . At last one of the alms-gatherers brought the news that he had married a girl of fourteen, exceedingly beautiful

(like everything else in Jerusalem) and that his wife had given him a child. All the family had rejoiced and in the money-box that hung on the wall, they had thrown some kreutzers for *the Holy Halouka.*

The next day Jacob Birnbaum appeared at my hotel. I had been expecting to see one of those poor men who live with difficulty by teaching and it took me some time to recognize in this man, still unhealthy-looking, it is true, but very comfortably clad, the poor boy I had known.

"Well, you see," he said to me, as naturally as if our conversations had never stopped (so much so, that I thought I heard behind his voice the cymbals and the violins of the Tziganes), "you see, I went on begging. We begin begging when we are children; it is that way with us Jews, and as a matter of fact, it is that way with everybody. I went to America and once there a great deal was given to me. I could, if I wished, make all the Rabbis of the Carpathians millionaires.

I could give to all the Yeshivas gold-lettered Talmuds, but I will do nothing of the sort. The school of poverty would be ruined for ever and I would certainly destroy the most beautiful secret of Israel. . . ."

He had made a large fortune very quickly, a thing that always astonishes us Europeans, seeming to be only luck as in fairy-tales. Without going into details, this is the way he explained his success: "How did I make it? I don't know myself. I did this and I did that. If I were to give you a list of all the enterprises I have gone into and a long and detailed recital of all the businesses I have had a hand in, or rather which have had a hand on me, it would mean nothing. Success is not any easier to explain than failure or unhappiness. I am rather inclined to believe that fate became tired of buffeting me. I resisted so hard, I never gave in to misfortune, I struggled and always came back again, even under the most difficult circumstances. You know, Monsieur le Professeur (he still gave me this title which once upon

a time had meant a great deal to him, but which now must have been in his eyes a very modest title indeed), that, no offense to you, the lessons of the Yeshiva have been much more useful to me than the tragedies of Racine on which you lectured at the University. You see, I have always remained a Talmud student, a hair-splitter, clever at finding the strong and the weak points of an argument. Well-made syllogisms will always rule the world. Add a little madness, a bit of the moon which with us Hebrews is always somewhere in our brains, to reward us, or maybe to punish us, for having looked so often up to her in the evenings of Neomenie. That's the thing that enables us to go into ventures that the good sense or rather the short-sightedness of other people makes them avoid. We Jews belong to two planets, the earth and the moon. We are skeptical and enthusiastic, we don't believe in anything and we always hope for something, a dollar, a woman, a rise in gasoline, the return to Jerusalem, universal

revolution, in other words, in what we call the Messiah. . . ."

Like all the other Jews all over the world he became very much excited when he read the Balfour Declaration; he became a Child of the Moon as he said himself. *Next year in Jerusalem!* The old wish repeated each Easter had hitherto been expressed without much hope that it would ever be fulfilled. Yet now one had to believe in it, since it had come to pass! He had come here to see for himself, to get acquainted with the miracle. To what extent had this very practical mind been carried away by the dream of seeing all the Jews of the world settle in Palestine? He had believed in it for a moment, because he came back to that idea several times, speaking with an indescribable tone of irony and bitterness: "It is astonishing how we Jews, intelligent as a rule (though that side of us is always exaggerated and some of our real qualities are never even mentioned!), become stupid when it is a question of Judea." I think that deep down in himself, he had, in

coming to Jerusalem, yielded to the ancient desire of Zion, given in to the same attraction which took his grandfather and many other Jews before him to the Holy City. He could see it himself, not without sadness, because to-day, his illusions, if he ever had had any, were quite gone. No, he was not one of those exalted Jews, who, from morning till night, had tried to convince me that Palestine was a new Eldorado; that all the Jews are born farmers and herdsmen; that the existence led by the Jewish colonies is idyllic and that the haloutzim are in the universe an unknown and beautiful type of men. As it went along begging, Zionism was not, after all, the beggar full of hope, the beautiful wandering idea that deserves passionate devotion. "How difficult it is," he remarked to me, on one occasion, "to make intelligent use of one dollar or a million!" He had, once for all, decided that the thing was not worth while, and when I met him he was only interested in trying, in the old ghetto, to hear once again

the ancestral voices and to revive the memories of his youth.

And now he was going to do as his grandfather had done some thirty years before. I was mistaken. His story was not quite the same, because, by marrying a girl of fourteen, his grandfather had only obeyed the law of Jerusalem which forbids celibacy and I am sure that he had never worried about the beauty or the ugliness of the girl. Jacob Birnbaum had fallen in love, of all places in the world, in Jerusalem, where people's thoughts don't usually seem to turn to love! Fallen in love, perhaps that is an exaggeration. He had the most tender feelings for a girl about fifteen years old, one of the numerous relatives that he owed to the favor with which God had looked upon the household of his grandfather. He kept his incognito so that he would not be annoyed by them, but sometimes he was tempted to claim the relationship and to ask the family to let him have the child. "I'll take her to Cleveland," he said to me, "there her life would be very

different from the one she leads here. The only trouble is that I wonder whether I have a real affection for this little girl or if I am carried away by the thought of all I could do for her. There must be something wrong in my case, because while thinking about all sorts of romantic possibilities, I am nearly sure that, in the end, I won't take her away with me. . . . Do you know, God must enjoy Himself greatly when He refrains from changing suddenly the conditions of human beings! Secondly (this way of putting his arguments was habitual and made me recognize in him the student of the Yeshiva), this child of Jerusalem transplanted to America might lose all her charm. There she would be just one more little Jewess with Paris gowns and pearls around her neck. In a few weeks she would be as insupportably vain as all the women there. I think the best thing for her is to stay here. I don't want to take away from Jehovah the task of directing the lives of His creatures. . . ."

And as he spoke his steps would take him

towards the blue-painted house around which he let his thoughts dwell complacently. We would look into the court and occasionally see a rather ordinary-looking child, whose sole interest for me lay in the dreams, of which, unknown to her, she was the object and which could in one day change the course of her whole life.

Birnbaum and I used to walk all the time in the old Jewish quarter, up and down through those narrow echoing streets, whose surprises were now familiar to me. We would vie with each other in trying to discover some new synagogue, buried like a treasure in its subterranean court. We used to go to the Wall of Wailing and I could no longer understand how on the day of my arrival I had been able to think as I did: "What pleasure can one find down here, when up there, on the esplanade, around the Mosque of Omar, one can find a paradise!" I used to go up there often, to walk on the wide flagstoned or moss-covered expanse, thinking I would spend the whole morning

feasting my eyes on this pleasant sight, that chance had made so perfect, those fountains where no water flows, those sun-caressed steps where one can always see some strayed babouche, those cypresses and the mosque where men's prayers seem to have been transformed into rubies, into emeralds, into a brilliance ignorant of sorrow and death. The reverie that men pursue there does not last long, for mystery is lacking. There is no depth to Islam's thought. It is a morality fit for Bedouins only. How flat the Koran seems when compared with the Old Testament and the Gospel! This very precious landscape becomes very boring, in spite of Scheherezade dancing behind the veil of prayers! It seems as if one's shadow were lost, the feeling we Occidentals have of a certain responsibility which keeps our mind clear and straight. It may be a kind of madness to regret such a burden, to ask for shadows and sadness in this place of light, but what can be done about it? Carefully, taking small steps, I cross the esplanade, go

down the steps I mounted so light-heartedly a moment ago, I follow the alley of yew-trees, then I pass under the great vault and go through the maze of narrow streets of the ghetto with as much ease as an old Jew from Bels or Zadagora.

I do not like poverty and there everything is miserably poor, but this is no ordinary poverty; it occupies and feeds the mind, yet leaves it always unsatisfied, unlike that noble insensitive beauty that I have just left behind up there, that beauty, so sure of itself that even dreams can add nothing to it.

As we went along Jacob Birnbaum would go on with his thoughts, sometimes communicating them to me with an air of being disgusted even with his own ideas. He always came back to this: "What reason have we, we Israelites, to think that the air of this country will miraculously give us an extraordinary genius which could not flourish except on the Land of our Ancestors? Thank God we have not had to remain in Palestine to remain intelligent. The Jews of Babylon

have been as famous as Jerusalem's and in exile we always have given some great men to the world. Now they want to make us believe that in lieu of a Jewish State we can create here an intellectual center from which the Hebrew spirit will radiate to all Jewry. What is the Hebrew spirit? I can recognize it in old Sonnenfeld, in an old Rabbi of the Carpathian Mountains, much more than in these modern Jews, who bring with them I don't know what kind of Slavic soul, pretentious, expansive, agitated, incapable of seeing reality as it really is. In this ancient Jerusalem they are killing something purely Jewish, really unique in the world, and what are they going to put in its place? Have you ever been to Tel Aviv? . . ."

Of course, I had been to Tel Aviv. It is a small town outside Jaffa's gates. On the seaside, it possesses straight promenades bordered with eucalyptuses. It has a casino, too, some cinemas and villas where the Zionists who have come to build up a new world here have imitated the most ordinary watering-

places. This town, the first built by themselves on the sea-front, this window on the open sea, this sea-breeze, this opening upon the universe, create in them a touching exaltation. Although it lies flat on the sand they have called it, in their oriental enthusiasm, Tel Aviv, that is to say, the Hill of Spring, and Tel Aviv is dearer to their hearts than the old Jerusalem. Jerusalem represents the old thoughts, and too many Jews, according to them, are still its victims. It is the town of the Commandments, of the oppressive letter of the Law that ties one down to the past. It is the town of the Wall, of the eyes turned towards Jehovah, of the Jews who expect to get everything from Heaven, the impossible, the miraculous. It is the town to which one comes to die. Tel Aviv, on the contrary, is a place where, God be praised, nothing is expected from the Messiah, and the inhabitants expect to find their happiness in the eucalyptuses, in the electric light and English comfort.

—"Well," Jacob Birnbaum used to say,

"I would rather have Jerusalem than Tel Aviv. I love its ghetto, its poverty, its begging population, pursuing their ancient dream, a dream that you can think absurd or magnificent, just as you please. There I recognize myself, I find my soul, the breath of my life, the real Jewish spirit. . . ."

I left Jerusalem for a while to go to Syria, leaving Jacob Birnbaum to his problems. When I came back he had gone. They told me at his hotel that he had gone back to America. Had he gone alone? Had he claimed his family and taken back with him the little Jewess, of whom it would be difficult to say whether she occupied more his heart or his mind? Both hypotheses seemed plausible and if I had had to make a wager I would not have known which one to choose.

I went at once to the narrow street that we had gone through together so often. I saw no one in the courtyard. I went downstairs and through the wide-open door. Surreptitiously I looked into the one room that con-

stituted the family dwelling. The girl was still there.

After all, there were great divergences between grandfather and grandson in spite of deep affinities. The old man would not have hesitated; he would have married the girl. Then, I thought that by not pulling this leaf from the tree of the ghetto, Jacob Birnbaum had revealed himself to be more like his grandfather than if he had taken her with him to America. I went on with my walk through the hilly streets where I could have gone with my eyes shut, thinking: "He came here full of hope and he went away disillusioned. Should I pity him? Maybe not. With the whole of Israel, he believed for a while in the dreams of Dr. Herzl and he was right to believe in them. But is there anything in the world worth any enthusiasm, any desire? It is a mad idea to want to bring all the Jewry of the universe into this poverty-stricken country. It will be very difficult to enable even two or three hundred thousand Jews to live here. The Jews will go on lead-

ing among other nations their adventurous lives to-day just as they did yesterday. They can't be absorbed by them, the blood of their race is too strong, but they can't do without other races either, because is there anywhere in the world a place where they would, if they were all together, find the profits of all kinds that scattering through the universe has brought them? Wherever they are, they always carry in their heart the love of Zion. This nostalgic desire, this aspiration that they can't and don't want to satisfy, this struggle between realities and dreams makes Jewish history a drama unique in the world. It has lasted since the beginning of time. There seems to be no end to it—and it is this struggle which gives Jewish history its poetic grandeur."

THE END