

March 4, 1993

Dear David,

I hope the birthday card sent to you from Poland, this warm and Western country, got through the snows of Moscovia. Did you make a toast with the Russian vodka?

Thank you very much for your letter, The Shtetl Book, and a copy of your article in Forverts. The Shtetl Book is just wonderful, I am totally enchanted with it! Chris used the three legends about Jews first coming to Poland for his conversation classes at the University and had a good response and some very interesting comments. I am very happy that you have the first draft of your book. I am sure it will be as pleasant to read as The Shtetl Book and as comprehensive and knowledgeable as Against the Apocalypse. I cannot wait to read the enthusiastic review in The New York Review of Books that is bound to be written by Irving Howe or some other competent scholar. I found your article about demons most useful for my paper written for the London conference, especially the part about the English and Yiddish versions. This 'Christianization' and neutralization of Yiddish literature in translation is a fascinating topic as such. I also liked your article in Forverts and I sent a copy to Professor Shmeruk who was in Warsaw at that time. I read Singer's Certificate last month and I am not impressed with the translation. Most Polish names are terribly distorted, and according to Professor Shmeruk so are some Hebrew ones. Thanks a lot for your explanations of my questions. It seems that Kuzu Bemuchzus Kuzu must remain a mystery.

I feel very sorry that you, and especially Shana, are going through such a hard time. It is impossible to find the right words of consolation because I know that any attempts at comforting Shana coming from friends cannot help her much and can even aggravate her feelings since she is such a sensitive person. I can only hope that with time, thanks to your support and patience, as well as Aryeh's wonderful presence, she will feel much happier. It sounds banal, but that is how it happens in life: when you want something very much, you rarely get it.

The saddest news for us is that you are not coming to Lublin this spring but we can understand that Israel is a more suitable place for celebrating Pesach. We shall certainly come for a day to Warsaw if you make it there. Just let us know when.

I am very excited about the Singer conference and a little bit nervous (e.g. I was placed in one session with D.N. Miller, one of the most competent Singer scholars). Anyway, it will be the first conference in my life where I will be interested in all the papers; usually when you go to these big conferences you have only a vague idea of what they are talking about in 90% cases. My main worry is that I have to leave Chris and the boys for such a long (although seemingly a short) time and I know it will be hard for them.

One of the things that depress me most is the situation in former Yugoslavia. I used to go there very often in my teenage years and I remember it as one of the most beautiful countries in the world

with extremely friendly and hospitable people. It is so hard to comprehend the cruelty people are capable of and the helplessness of the rest of the world.

Lots of love. I am looking forward to reading a report (a short story, a novel, a family saga...) from Moscow 1993.

*Ilona*